THE EUROPEAN

THE JOURNAL OF OPPOSITION

JANUARY 1958 Vol. X, No. 5

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POLITICS BOOKS TRAVEL

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ANALYSIS

WE live in a dangerous world. We shall not reach relative safety until it is quite certain that war will mean the end of it. That is both the paradox and the platitude of this period. The reason is that neither side will dare fight when it is quite clear that the fight will mean the death of both. Before we reach this point of comparative safety, a risk exists that the Soviets may believe some temporary advantage in scientific development may give them the chance of destroying their opponent without risk of being destroyed themselves. This risk will be ended when both sides possess sufficient means of retaliation with the major nuclear weapons to wipe out the opposing civilisation, and also possess minor, tactical nuclear weapons which are numerous and powerful enough to put down such a curtain of fire that nothing can get through it. Then we can relax; like Mr. Macmillan. But not for long, because under cover of the military paralysis an intensive political struggle will then begin, which will decide the future for all of us.

Can science now give Russia the decisive advantage ?

Now that the dust has a little subsided and all the excited declarations of American errors and weaknesses have been revealed to the world and the enemy by an ever helpful press, it is possible to essay an objective appraisal of the position. The view we ventured at first sight in our issue of November last does not appear to be far wrong. The danger that Russia will temporarily secure an advantage in some new sphere of science which will enable her to destroy the defensive power of the West without being mortally injured herself, has not yet

arisen, and there is no reason it ever should. The Soviets have gained a temporary lead in long range missiles with the aid of German science, but the view remains valid that this does not alter decisively the military balance in a world which can already be destroyed by either side.

Before the balance is altered Russia must possess so many and such accurate long range missiles that she can with certainty knock out with one blow every American air base from which American aeroplanes carrying H-bombs can be despatched. Russia, too, must be able to do this before America or Europe have any retaliatory power at all in long or intermediate range missiles, if she is to achieve the new and more decisive Pearl Harbour which would give her world mastery. For Russia to have enough to do this before the West have anything at all is highly improbable.

She must in addition have missiles which can intercept American aircraft already airborne, and carrying H-bombs. (They are our principal security today, and it was not therefore very helpful of Mr. Bevan and his colleagues in a characteristic spasm of hysteria to seek to deprive us of it.) For Russia to be able both to knock out all American airbases and to intercept all airborne aircraft, before we can subject her to missile bombardment either from America or Europe, is extremely improbable.

The real danger.

The real danger as usual is now in an entirely different direction to that in which the alarmists are pointing. We observed years ago that a new danger period would be reached when Russia obtained means to hit back effectively with the H weapon. It would then become improbable that in the actual test either side would dare to use weapons which could bring mutual destruction. Under cover of that deadlock Russian armies could again march through Europe, if the Soviets were prepared to take the gamble that America would not incur her own destruction in order to defend Europe. This point of temptation for communist fanaticism is appreciably nearer; that is the only real, and substantial increase of danger. The answer again we have stressed for years; it is the development of European conventional forces, armed with tactical nuclear weapons, to a degree which renders them capable of resisting Russian invasion. And it is by no means impossible to produce sufficient of these arms which already exist and to train sufficient specialists in their use

for the threat of Russian invasion to be finally eliminated by a fire power which can annihilate mass. The crowning error of British Government was abruptly to reduce conventional forces and to impair the structure of NATO, at the precise moment when the real danger shifted to this ground. To modernise was right, to reduce was wrong. The excuse is as usual that Britain cannot support all burdens. And the answer as usual is that Britain will soon be unable to bear any burden at all, not even the burden of life itself, unless she speedily and completely enters the full Union of Europe.

Yet again it is very unlikely that the Russians will take this gamble, because the Americans certainly possess at present the means to destroy Russia. And, to their credit, the will certainly exists in powerful circles in America to risk death rather than suffer the surrender which the loss of Europe would entail; it is the shame of present Europe that a corresponding will does not always and everywhere exist in our rulers to the same degree.

The Russian conviction of political victory.

It is no great comfort to reflect that the very incapacity of our rulers, in contrast to the new capacities of science, provides us with a certain security. The Russians are quite certain in their own minds of winning the world by purely political and economic means. Their basic doctrine teaches that this is not only possible but inevitable. And when they contemplate the present performances of our rulers, they must observe that this basic doctrine is most powerfully reinforced. It is increasingly clear that once the artificial demands of the post-war period and of armament boom are satisfied, the present rulers of the Western world possess no kind of answer to the classic Marxian dilemmas. The Soviet leaders are right to think that if the West can produce no better idea and no better men, communism is likely to win. They know, too, they now have the means to intensify and accelerate the incipient disintegration of the Western economy by heavy dumping on world markets below the production costs of all other countries. They have only to deprive their own people of a sufficient proportion of their own production in order to do this, as they did previously in order to secure their rapid scientific development.

We ask again, why the Russians should risk climbing tall trees to pick apples when they believe the apples anyhow will fall into their laps? If the Soviets believe they will win politically and

economically through "the internal contradictions of capitalism," which they are now in a position artificially and powerfully to accentuate, why should they risk destruction in a war of mutual annihilation?

The grave risk of a fatal accident.

When all this is taken into consideration, one great risk remains while these weapons remain in the hands of men. The risk is the fool fanatic, or the accident. Fanatics naturally live in the Kremlin, but few great fools are likely to have survived the rigour of their experience. Yet accidents can always happen when such weapons are in the hands of men. Mr. Khrushchev was perfectly right in a press interview on November 26th to fear "a mad American pilot." We are equally right to fear a mad Russian missile expert or some other fallible human with world destruction in his hands. If Mr. Khrushchev will pardon our intrusion into the amenity of these exchanges, we might even fear that in a convivial moment some subordinate might understand him to say shoot it, when he meant to say hold it. So we can warmly agree with Mr. Khrushchev that it is important to break the present political deadlock and reduce the chance of explosion. We have often suggested the means, which can begin with private negotiations at top level and, if necessary, be continued in public debate before world opinion, until we reach at best safety or at least the political destruction of communism. We have reached the point when any sane man on either side must want to end the world danger and, consequently, negotiations might now succeed.

Disarmament difficulties and scientific possibilities.

At the same time it must be recognised that effective disarmament in the missile range is difficult to attain until science has advanced further. These missiles are easly concealed and are very mobile. We are unlikely for some time to be able to detect them by aerial reconnaissance, and until this is possible mutual inspection cannot be effective. Meanwhile, we shall run certain risks, but they are no occasion for hysteria as on balance of probability they are unlikely to occur. "It is better to die once than to live always in the fear of death."

A greater danger than a bigger and better Pearl Harbour, as

we mentioned in our issue of March 1957, is that Russia should find the means of intercepting long range missiles before the West, as well as means of effectively intercepting all kinds of aircraft. It would be a serious situation for the opponent if one side or the other could say: Go ahead, shoot your missile and see what happens; we can bring it down before it gets here, possibly over your own territory. At that point the advance of Russian armies through Europe, for example, might be facilitated. But even then the whole variety of short range missiles with H war-heads could almost certainly still be brought into play, including some which could be launched against vital centres by submarines, etc. Rather than surrender the West to subjection and death, other methods could be used, which have probably occurred to the General Staff. "The resources of civilisation are not yet exhausted," as Sir Winston Churchill used to say in his heyday. It is time to check the big blub which followed Sputnik and the dog, and the almost incidental apprehension that Russia might conquer or destroy the human race. The Soviets have a long way to go before they can finally overcome the will which desperation would evoke in the European and the American. They will prefer in the end to talk and play politics; so will we, most certainly. Both sides will have to face the facts; war is out, but the risks remain of an accident which can destroy the world. It is in the interests of sane men on both sides as soon as possible to eliminate that risk.

Political issues and Khrushchev's skill.

Meantime, we are informed by Lord Beaverbrook's Sunday paper that the Conservative Government has at last some hope of winning the next election because "a new boom in the West, set off by the rush of American defence spending, will result in a slump for the left." These gentlemen are playing with fire, not merely in risking to set the world aflame, which is an event possibly beyond their imagination, but in rousing a deep disgust among ordinary thinking men and women which can produce a really dangerous situation. Do they think they can for ever just sit tight in a position of frozen ineptitude?—only emerging from their trance every now and then to play a little squalid politics with things like armament booms? And such bad politics, such silly politics, too. In the political game Khrushchev is winning hands down; and it is better to face the fact before it is too late. He proposed a mutual withdrawal of American

and Russian forces from Europe, which would at last have brought freedom to the lands we went to war to save with the result that they have been enslaved ever since: the answer was complete silence from the West.

Khrushchev then obtains a temporary advantage with the aid of German scientists whom Western politicians presented to him at the end of the war, and soon makes the ether ring with offers to lay down his arms, abandon his advantages, etc., if only the West will meet him and talk about it, meantime, clinking his vodka glass with all mankind; again, silence from the West except for an occasional sullen grunt from Selwyn Lloyd. Khrushchev is just walking away with the game, if game it is. Also it never seems to occur to anyone in Western governments that the Russians may be as seriously concerned as we are with the prospect of the whole world being blown up. Yet even the *Times* reminds that "in 1940 the misunderstanding of a code word set the church bells ringing." In short it is more than possible the other side may be genuinely disturbed by this situation, quite possible that everyone is not quite mad. From this it follows that it might be possible at least to do deal enough to stop world destruction. In any case, as we have said again and again, why not get into the room with them and see?. If, at least in this matter, the Russians are genuine, we may save peace and save mankind from a limitless disaster. If not, Russian proposals will be proved a fake in public debate, and their leaders will come to be regarded as world criminals planning war; world communism will then suffer the greatest reverse of any political party in history. A man may be a genuine communist in politics and yet not be ready to take part in a conspiracy to destroy the world. If evidence of this could be brought home to world opinion communism as a political force is lost. At present, on the contrary, Khrushchev, by superior vigour and skill, is planting that suspicion on the whole policy of the West; quite unjustly, we know, but that does not help us. What we need now is a continuous and undaunted initiative which has some real prospect of success on the simple assumption that the rulers of Russia are not both criminal and lunatic, and therefore do not wish to destroy themselves, communism and the world. Criminal, perhaps, but it is lunacy that counts, and on recent record we do not see much evidence of that.

Missile realities and settlement possibilities.

To all of this it may be replied that we are faced with a certain

hard fact: the West despite every natural advantage has fallen behind in the missile race. Consequently America cannot leave her forward air bases and advanced missile positions in Europe. Otherwise there is a risk that Russia may be able to hit her with long range missiles without any American power to reply. If that be the case, why not say so and negotiate in the light of these facts? They have already been published to the world in a protracted shriek of hysteria from the American and British press, and have probably even been greatly exaggerated in order to make public opinion stomach the increased arms expenditure, which is also hailed as the last hope of saving the Western economic system. We live in a civilisation in which to reveal weakness and even to exaggerate it to a point that may tempt a foe to strike, is the only apparent way to get anything done, in the absence of politicians capable of arousing sufficient enthusiasm in the people by normal process of voice or pen even to concern themselves with their own continued existence.

So we have nothing more to lose by frankness. From this clear position we could say in effect to Russia: we are quite ready to accept your proposal for a mutual withdrawal from all European lands of Russian and American forces, on condition that a plan can be worked out by which neither America or Europe can be attacked without the power to hit back. Or better still that both sides shall be effectively deprived of the power to attack anyone by a general disarmament. It is necessary freely to admit that a measure of disarmament complete enough to prevent the launching of an attack cannot occur until science is either capable of detecting H missiles concealed underground by aerial survey or by any other means, or to intercept such missiles in the air before they reach the target. As we conceive, without expert knowledge, that science is still a long way from reaching that point, it is better again frankly to admit it and get on with some serious work.

The present basis of a practical settlement.

We could then reach a settlement on the basis that a mutual withdrawal of American and Russian forces from Europe can occur directly we reach a quite practical and soon attainable position (1) the ability of America to answer Russia by long range missiles with her own ICBM (2) the ability of Europe also to answer Russia with IRBMs and, still more important, with the aid of short range rockets carrying atomic warheads to resist any Russian invasion with modernised conventional

forces. It is quite clearly only a matter of a very short time before we reach these two points. It is therefore far better frankly to declare the position and our policy, and begin to negotiate. The discussion of all the practical details involved will anyhow take a long time. It is quite possible that we would reach the technical position to implement a settlement before the negotiations are concluded. On the other hand, we could make it clear that, if we reached political settlements first, we must wait until technics caught up; at the present rate of development it would not be long to wait.

Meantime, we should have greatly steadied the whole position, and very much reduced the risk of war by alarm and accidents. American bombers would still be circling European skies loaded with H-bombs, and Russian weapons would still be pointing in our direction, but the wind would not be blowing nearly so hard and there would be far less risk of anything going off in a moment of excitement. As for the political position, it would of course be greatly strengthened. Instead of sitting like a paralysed rabbit in front of a jeering boa-constrictor, we would be in a clear and honest position which the whole world could understand; we are only too glad to make peace and reduce the risk of war by malice or accident, provided we do not sign our own death warrant in so doing. We will make that peace on the very day when science gives Europe and America the power of self-defence with the new weapons which Russia claims to command, or better still the power to remove the weapons from the hands of both sides. Until then, we stand on our present positions, not because we want war but because we refuse to commit suicide by moving to a position where we can be hit without the power of hitting back. By a clear, bold policy we can both save the West from a possibly fatal political defeat and yet reduce the risks of a world explosion.

The only surprise is the degree of ineptitude.

One thing must be admitted. It is a surprise, even for those most hardened by experience of political ineptitude, to discover the extent to which Western politicians have muddled their affairs and thrown away every natural advantage. The writer, since 1929, in and out of office, has been hammering away at the encouragement and development of science, money for science, reward and honour for scientists. Persistently and consistently the subject has been

neglected, except for a few convulsive spasms of interest under the actual pressure of war. But it is something of a surprise even after this experience to find how far the Russians have advanced in relation to the West by adopting the simple principle of encouraging science and giving it priority. We do not suppose the Russian leaders have adopted the method we suggested ten years ago of "statesmen living and working with scientists as the Medici lived and worked with artists." It is unlikely because it is quite certain that the physicists and rocket experts who did this job were Germans, and the Russian communist leaders might therefore find it difficult to talk to them in terms of great intimacy. The dark cloud of this great betrayal always lowers over the sombre scene; the deliberate betrayal of a European civilisation in Germany to barbarism and to communism at the end of the war. Such crimes are seldom unrequited by fate.

But when all this is taken into consideration, it remains surprising to observe the rapid advance of a backward people by the simple principle of encouraging science, in comparison with advanced nations who have adopted the opposite principle of discouraging science. The question of encouraging or discouraging science has nothing to do with the principles of communism or capitalism, although it has something to do with the will, or capacity to deprive the present in order to serve and to develop the future. It is rather a question of the intelligence and character of the rulers, and this situation shows our present rulers in a most *pitiful* light. It is again impossible to over-estimate their weakness and incapacity. The old Shavian excuse for a slight miscalculation can certainly be pleaded by anyone at all surprised by recent developments: it is quite impossible to believe the others were so stupid. But the great fact remains, despite all: the Russians cannot conquer the world without destroying the world, and communism. That remains a bedrock fact which all the chatter cannot alter. On that fact we can build the future. Optimism, does someone say? The writer is sometimes accused of the dark crime of being an optimist, to which the answer is quite simply: "certainly not, I just don't lie down till I'm dead."

Mr. Bevan at the street accident.

The yattering Left, of course, contributes nothing but hysteria to the discussion. Mr. Bevan is about as much use in this situation as an excited old lady at a street accident. Great alarm

and despondency strike the opposition because American aeroplanes flying from Britain are actually carrying H-bombs. What does the Left want, armies without guns? Are they only willing to pay the price and take the risk of having soldiers, provided they never carry any weapons and are therefore quite useless? As we pointed out above, the only serious hope the Russians have of military victory is to knock out all the American air bases with missiles before the Americans can hit back. That is their only chance to destroy the enemy without disastrous retaliation. Until America has long range missiles, a most effective answer to that danger is to hold aeroplanes always in the air loaded with H-bombs. Of course it is dangerous, but it is not half so dangerous as telling the Russians that they can hit us without being hit back, which is what the Bevan policy would do. Think, child, think, as Bernard Shaw used to say, at least before you become Foreign Secretary. More alarming than any Russian rocket is the thought of a man of that intellectual capacity in charge of Britain's foreign policy, when Mr. Macmillan has lost his election on the happy gamble of riding to success on the new American armament boom.

Labour foreign policy in a desiccated nutshell.

And what would the rest of Labour's foreign policy be? We have it straight from the original donkey's mouth. The following appeared in the *New Statesmen, 2.11.57.* under the heading, "Britain's Last Trump" (and let us be quite clear it would be the last trump for Britain, all right): "If Mr. Bevan's notion of bargaining with the British H-bomb has any real meaning it means insisting, as the price of our continuing in NATO, on the modification of Western policy at three points for a start: first, the Oder-Neisse Line, which must be formally accepted by the Western powers as it already is by the East; secondly, the dividing line in Germany, where something like the Gaitskell plan of disengagement would go far to reduce the risk of 'war by accident'; thirdly, the supply of arms to Middle East powers, where we should accept the Russian proposal for a total embargo and invite them to join us in guaranteeing all the frontiers concerned, including those of Israel." So we have Labour policy in a nutshell: the H-bomb is no longer to be entirely discarded but retained as a means of bargaining away the life of Europe. Germany is to be mutilated, severed from Europe, emasculated and consequently driven by outraged national feeling into the arms

of Russia. France is to be browbeaten by the free supply of arms to her opponents, as at present, until a universal embargo is applied on Russian terms, and finally France's outraged nationalism, strong communist party and old tendency towards Russian alliance takes her into the same camp. Then Britain should invite Russia "to join us in guaranteeing all the frontiers concerned, including those of Israel" (Israel looks like being as lucky as Poland) with the weapons Labour foreign policy has already bargained away. Anyhow, it would not make much difference if the weapons are never to be carried in a condition in which they can possibly be fired. Such is the next Government of Britain—if nothing happens.

The eternal pantomime of free and common.

Now let us leave the harlequinade and return to the pantomime. The *Times*, 27.11.57, under the heading, "Mr. Macmillan lessens Paris fears," reported: "The question of the Free Trade Area and the Common Market (the French have been tending to regard the former proposals as deliberately hostile to the latter) rather surprisingly received little attention." Three days later the *New York Herald Tribune* under the heading, "Free Trade gets a boost in Paris," reported that the Deputy French Foreign Minister "recalled the French had successfully insisted that provisions of harmonisation (the social policies) be included in the Common Market Treaty and reiterated that it was just as essential to place competition on a fair basis among all the countries of Europe as it was for the six countries of the E.C.C. Treaty." The report ended with the words all too chacateristic of their deliberations: "No decision was reached on the matter." So we are now asked to understand that fears are lessened when Britain is not in terms accused of only being interested in Free Trade Area with a view to sabotaging the Common Market, and that Free Trade gets a boost when the unwillingness of Britain to do anything effective is simply pointed out and "no decison is reached." This is the present position of the Government whose devotion to European Union was hailed as recently as last March; under their rule Britain is becoming to an almost farcical extent the drag on the wheels of European progress to Union. The other European powers hope to make Europe in fifteen years. Britain is still not in a position to discuss matters they settled months ago, and without a decision on these affairs not even the first steps can be taken.

Who will buy the 49th State ?

So the Government flutter off again to America. It is so much easier to become the 49th State than to build a new Europe. We have always stood and always will stand for the closest friendship with America and also the closest co-operation with them in resistance to communism. Gratitude for past help and present common interest alike impel that attitude. But is there anything more in all this grand new talk of Atlantic arrangements than the hope of being chucked another dime, instead of exerting ourselves to build our own independent business in Europe? The old lady is ready to lie down for a long last sleep if only the Americans will buy and run the old folk's home. But will they buy, if we go on like this? It reminds us of the occasion when a meeting of railwaymen greeted their leader, Mr. J. H. Thomas, with cries of " you have sold us, Jimmy "'; and that pillar of the State replied, " Well, I did try, but I'm damned if I could find a buyer." Is this bitter, angry writing? Well, if so, there is plenty to be angry about. If you doubt this, look at what Britain was and what Britain is; Britain was the first power in the world, and today is a helpless dependent trying to cadge the means of more dependence. Remember this, that the whole fall has taken place in the lifetime of a middle-aged man. It is this generation which has been responsible for the whole collapse, and the people now in power are mostly responsible. Look at the task which awaits Britain in Europe and the world, then take a look at what Britain is doing. If all this does not move to anger, then the eminent Dr. Freud was right about the strength of the death instinct in certain types.

Statesmanship by accident.

In a sombre scene, also, there are some causes of optimism. Mr. Macmillan has brought the French and Germans together at last; congratulations! It did not occur in quite the way so long expected. Britain did not play the part of intermediary between Europe's historic enemies for a supreme act of statesmanship; a part for which nature, geography and history so well fitted her, and which awaited our country for over a decade after the war. Destiny must always wait while pigmies rule great peoples, and on this occasion tired of the long attendance. British Government, still busily engaged in obstructing rather than promoting European Union, obtained by the accidental result of a small, foolish and squalid act what it should

have achieved by deliberate result of a great act many years ago. Britain sent arms to Tunis, just after France had refused to send arms to Oman. Everyone at all capable of thinking, feeling and acting as a European would naturally feel indignation at this betrayal of Europe. Many Germans so felt, and the German Government expressed its disapproval. Sentiment in most other European countries was the same; a new sense of solidarity was felt in Europe. So British Government inadvertantly made its first and only serious contributon to the cause of European Union. Again, congratulations!

The overriding necessity of European solidarity.

However strong our sympathy for the Arab peoples, our duty to our fellow Europeans must always come first. We simply cannot supply arms with which brother Europeans can be killed. And, in any case, British Government in the Arab question has turned every true value upside down from start to finish. The French position in North Africa was tremendously important, because it led somewhere; it is the bridge between Europe and Africa, which leads not only to the whole of the Sahara with a real possibility of freeing all Europe from the danger of dependence on remote supplies of oil, but also to all the raw materials and potential foodstuffs of Africa on which the whole structure of the European future may depend.

Suez, on the other hand, leads nowhere; British Government in the war and after gave away the Empire at the other end of the lifeline, and, in any case, the whole Mediterranean route is closed in any time of trouble with the consequence that we should years ago have concentrated on the Cape route and the economic big tanker, as the writer suggested amid the execrations of the Tory Party some years before the war. So British Government as usual dropped the reality in favour of the shadow, refused any effective support to the French in North Africa and instead dragged them with us into the ridiculous and disastrous adventure of Suez. The result was to antagonise the whole Arab world for nothing, for no real purpose whatever, and so to make far harder the prospect of getting any reasonable settlement in North Africa which is a vital interest to all Europe. If France had not been isolated and abandoned in her long, lone struggle in North Africa she never would have felt impelled to strike back at her opponents by accompanying Britain into the meaningless Suez adventure; meaningless, because it merely served the nostalgic illusion that Britain was still a great Imperial power capable of dealing roughly with an insurgent colony.

If Britain had first analysed and then faced the facts, that folly would never have occurred. In the east of the Mediterranean we all have only one interest, and that is a common interest for Europeans and Arabs alike. It is to guard Europe and Musselman civilisation from infiltration and destruction by communism. The oil interest so long as it exists, is served by the same unity and action. Where we have interests which are divided from Arab interests, is in North Africa and there alone. If the Suez idiocy had not occurred, the solidarity which we could so easily have established with the main body of the Arabs in the Eastern Mediterranean would have enabled us to get a mutually acceptable settlement in North Africa. Once again a failure to think clearly, and also to feel and to act as Europeans, has thrown us all into a sea of unnecessary trouble. We shall not emerge by completing the betrayal of our friends. Nevertheless, congratulations once again to the Conservative Government of Britain. They have done good at last, by accident, in evoking from Europeans a wave of indignation which has swept them toward a greater unity.

Small balls on barren moors.

We pride ourselves on accuracy in facts and therefore apologise deeply for an error in our December issue in writing from memory without reference books, concerning the age of the German generals in the war of 1870. Moltke was of course over 70, but his junior, von Roon, was only 67, the present age of President Eisenhower.

We apologise too for a joke about the President's golf, which went to press before his illness; but we persist in the serious view that a statesman of this ideal age for beginning to assume the heavier burdens of statesmanship, should not lose time in chasing small balls about barren moors, nor in filling a good mind with the slush of a western novel, but should only relieve his arduous work by walking in a wood or garden in meditation on his deeper problems, or by sleeping quite frequently in that immediately relaxed condition which a lifetime of self-training should have taught him at will to command. Those who have not reached that standard are not fit to govern in the stress and the seriousness of present circumstances.

Still less should a statesman in high office dissipate his energies in sport or pastimes which involve the distracting pleasures of society. A bit of fun in life is an excellent preliminary to the period of action —it widens the sensibilities and deepens experience of the intimacies of human nature—but it is a fatal accompaniment. After all, the

decisive years of supreme responsibility are relatively few in a man's life; if he cannot concentrate even then, it reveals a dangerous weakness of character.

But to return to the generals whom we mentioned in our December issue, they were, of course, commanding armies, not at a desk in the conditions required by modern war, but in the field. Blucher too, we note, was 73 when he was wounded and had a division of his Prussian cavalry gallop over him on the eve of Waterloo. So the effect of age seems to depend more on character and the way men live than on the years. Provided they live in the classic fashion which makes ripeness and toughness coincide, old men should now find the life of action easier than in these earlier periods, because a car or aeroplane is an easier ride than a horse or a stage coach. Yet the *Daily Mirror* crowned its previous silliness by the further *obiter dictum* that young politicians are needed in the Sputnik age. What on earth does this mean? Do they want politicians who can run fast enough and jump high enough to catch the Sputnik? On the contrary, what we really want are statesmen who can sit firmly on their backsides and think out a clear answer. And that is just what the D.M., *et hoc genus omne* can never do; not even in the noisiest tavern of Fleet Street. Small blame to them.

EUROPEAN.

OVER-PRODUCTION

by ROBERT ROW

ONE DAY in April, 1948, Mr. Herbert Morrison, at that time Lord President of the Council, faced 6,000 managers and workpeople " from pretty nearly every mill in Lancashire " and told them: " You don't need to worry. The world wants what you can make. It wants all it can get. It thinks your stuff's first-class and is ready to pay good prices for it. You can turn out as much as you want to."

The Observer reports that he was roundly cheered for this striking speech. Would Mr. Morrison be cheered at all if he went back to Lancashire and made the same speech today? Very likely not. Well over one hundred mills have been forced to close down in Lancashire since that happy day at Belle Vue. The cotton textile industry has lost workers at an average rate of 40,000 in recent years. Sir Raymond Streat resigned from the position of chairman of the Cotton Board in March 1957 in protest against the government's refusal to stop 150 million yards of cheap Indian and Hong Kong cloth pouring into Britain every year. In 1952 Japan began to sell more cotton textiles than Lancashire to Britain's colonial markets. In the early part of 1957 overseas competitors sold more to Britain than Lancashire sold overseas. And Mr. Alan Greene, Conservative M.P. for Preston South, says the threat of cheap cloth is " just beginning."

In 1948, the year of Mr. Morrison's optimism, Britain was still able to enjoy the position of having big world markets to herself. The world was painfully overcoming the wreckage and wastage of war. Dismantling was still in force in Germany. Japan was out of the picture. America concentrated on satisfying the enormous demand of her home market.

This situation could not last: the world has recovered from war. It has also got over the effects of the Korean War, which postponed complete recovery by a few years only. Modern industrial production is now so immense that world-wide devastation has been made good, aid (mainly dollar) has been showered on the civilised and semi-civilised world, high living standards have been achieved and maintained in most white countries and yet a great armaments boom has still been possible.

In more ways than one a " point of no return " has been passed. World war was ruled out once the H-bomb was in possession of both Russia and America. President Eisenhower's " open skies " are being achieved by the scientists, for the sputniks herald military observation stations in space in order to keep close watch on any massing of forces for invasion.

So big war is off, yet raw materials have been stockpiled for a big war, and at no time before has primary industry been able to turn out so many commodities. Yesterday's records in productivity become today's millstones of unneeded materials. Suddenly, quite suddenly, the world has awakened to the realisation that there is " over-production " of materials. Copper has been one of the worst hit, from a post-war peak of £435 to about £184 a ton at the time of writing. The position has not been helped by a British Government decision to sell large stocks of copper and nickel, on the plea that this was to help defence cut-downs. (If the government had taken notice of the warnings in *The European* since 1953, the British taxpayer would have been saved the expense of buying materials on a rising and selling on a falling market.)

The *Financial Times* in recent months has been festooned with headlines which tell their own story of events in the United States: " Sharp Falls In Zinc Follows U.S. Cut " . . . " U.S. Copper Producers in the Red " . . . " U.S. Steel Output Fall Expected " . . . " Over-Supply of U.S. Petroleum " . . . " Over-Production of Zinc " . . . " U.S. To Stockpile Eight Fewer Commodities " . . . " Drastic Plan for Lead and Zinc " . . . " U.S. Workers Redundant: Zinc, Aircraft and Rayon."

On November 15 last it published a middle-page article " Commodity Prices: How Big a Fall? " and showed by graphs that commodities have declined in price on an index with 1950 prices as 100: maize down to 90, wheat to 92, sugar to 95, coffee to 85, jute to 95, rubber to 80, copra to 65, cotton to 93, wool to 75, lead

to 85, zinc to 60, tin to 98. This is the first time since the war that all these commodities have fallen at the same time.

It stated further that half of Rhodesia's income comes from copper; half of Ceylon's from tea and one-fifth from rubber; half of Pakistan's from jute, and cotton and wool most of the rest; half of India's from tea and jute; most of Malaya's from rubber and tin; a large part of Australia's from wool, and one-third of New Zealand's also from wool.

A big fall in commodity prices resulting from " over-production " is hitting Commonwealth countries badly already. The Commonwealth is the market on which about three-quarters of Britain's export trade relies. If their commodities bring in so much less in price today, member-countries will be obliged to do one or all of three things: cut their total imports (thus putting Britain's export workers out of jobs), transfer their orders to cheap countries like Japan (which Australia and New Zealand are doing today) or draw on the sterling balances which they accumulated in happier days just after the war (Britain was in debt to the overseas Sterling Area by £2,860 million at the beginning of 1957: if this is drawn on heavily it means sending goods overseas without anything in return, a leakage which Britain cannot afford in the stormy days ahead).

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But that is only part of the story. We are living in a technological revolution. The ten years since the war have seen a greater advance in the ability of industry to produce than at any other time. Atomic power for industry, new advances in automation or rationalisation, electronic devices and a thousand other improvements in technique mean that industrial productive power is virtually unlimited. This is particularly so in America, the home of mass-production. Yet the demand of the American home market has " paused " (in some respects it is declining) just at the time when the industrial advances of the past decade are making their weight felt on the big production lines.

The West seems to be facing a major crisis in the world system to which it is tied. In addition to " over-production " in commodities, America is also faced with " over-production " of manufactured goods. There has just been a fairly large cut in American aid to the world, forced through by a determined Congress against the dire warnings of the President. This looks like leading to a big

unloading of American products on the markets of the world, quite apart from the give-away aid.

Already America is a major exporting country whose total sales advanced in 1956 by some £1,228 million. She is also a major investing country: her general investments overseas increased by about £1,400 million in 1956, bringing them to a total close on £11,000 million. Canada, and to some extent Latin America, are major fields for American investment, but Wall Street today has its eye on Europe and Africa as well. Canada has taken alarm, and talks of a "wheat war" and economic independence from the United States—with what result remains to be seen. Another "war" is developing between Britain and the United States to sell atomic piles and even guided missiles (if these brighter sales-lines are threatened by a mass-producing America, just as Labour's magic-making Comets failed to keep Britain to the front of the world trade race, what hope is there for Britain's older industries?).

Yet, as she expands abroad, America also takes precautions to make sure home industries do not suffer from foreign imports; that is traditional American doctrine. The *New York Herald Tribune* warned last August that Congress in 1958 would very strongly oppose any Eisenhower tricks in tariff liberalisation. Yet even the President is blamed for the recent stricter woollen import quotas; Mr. Selwyn Lloyd and Mr. David Eccles summoned the American Ambassador to the Foreign Office in pompous, red-faced indignation, but Washington remains unshaken.

As the *Washington Post* remarked in 1955: "At the first major application of the liberalised Buy American Act, the Administration has deliberately fallen flat on its face." British politicians should learn the facts of life, and one outstanding lesson to be learnt is that America will not suffer unemployment to keep British workers in their jobs.

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Are the upholders of the present system doing nothing to escape disaster, then? Certainly they are not blind now to the danger, and a great deal of activity is going on. President Eisenhower, in a recent "chins out" speech, said "a great deal more money" will be spent on armaments in answer to the Russian sputniks, but how much more is not yet clear.

American Federal Reserve Banks are also cutting their discount rates—yet Wall Street responds in each case with small rallies only, including the rally of 17 points only when Eisenhower made his first "chins out" speech. It looks as if the new discount rates will be little more stimulating than the old, particularly when a decline has set in, as the signs indicate.

It is looking very doubtful whether the "built-in stabilisers" are going to restore the boom in America. But whether America succeeds in gaining stability or not, whether their recession is "mild" or much deeper, there is nothing to replace an all-out expanding world boom, the only way under the present system of mopping up the "over-production" of commodities and manufactures in evidence throughout the world. Under the conditions of today only world war or a vast arms programme can do that; but Field Marshal Lord Montgomery has just announced his resignation from the N.A.T.O. command for the very good reason that "I am pulling out because I am satisfied that the danger of direct attack on the N.A.T.O. countries is now very remote."

Many on the Left believe that world control over materials and manufactures could work the trick. This is dear to the heart of Mr. Bevan, but anathema to the realists of Wall Street. The nearest Mr. Macmillan has got to it is his "super-Atlantic parliament"; the British Government has had in succession Mr. Selwyn Lloyd's "Grand Design" (received with rude noises by more vigorous Europeans); Mr. Macmillan's "European Free Trade Area" (which Mr. Eccles and others have ditched through a series of contradictory and petulent statements); Mr. Thorneycroft's "Anglo-Canadian Free Trade Area" (which did not survive one stormy visit to Ottawa).

And now Mr. Macmillan goes the entire hog, despite this record of failure, with the "super-Atlantic" idea, which he seems already to have doomed again by rousing French fury over shipment of arms to Tunisia. Yet even if there were no Western muddle, even if the politicians could agree among themselves on some plan for regulating the exchange of raw materials and manufactures, there would still be the Soviets and their plans. The Soviets are out to break the markets of their capitalist opponents in the West. As good Marxists they know enough of the "internal contradictions" of capitalism to be sure the West will drown in its "over-production" if communists pursue the appropriate tactics. These tactics

are for the Soviet bloc of countries to export at prices the West cannot touch.

Undoubtedly Moscow observed before the war the depression which resulted when Japanese undercutting captured market after market from Britain. Today the Soviets are organised on a much bigger scale than were the pre-war zaibatsu of Tokyo and Osaka. They are not out for profits but for political takeover in the West when their local Communist Parties try to cash in on the resulting mass-unemployment and despair.

The Soviet bloc is well able to follow these tactics. The régime that can steal a march on Western science by putting up two sputniks first while its women workers toil in coalmines waist-deep in water can concentrate its efforts, no matter what sacrifice is imposed on its industrial slaves. A percentage of its output is simply allocated for exporting at give-away prices wherever Mikoyan's salesmen go. It is just a question of undercutting the West by 10 per cent. or more, with no floor price.

Thus Professor Varga, a top Kremlin economist, was able last October to write in the Soviet magazine *New Times* that the Soviets were " ready and able " to supply the world with goods " on more favourable terms than the West can offer." He stated that forty years of communism had advanced the Soviet economy to this point. He further announced that the United States was " heading towards a crisis of over-production, which signals the decay and destruction of the capitalist system."

He added: " It is simply a matter of time."

An outstanding example of these tactics can be seen in the recent £46.5 million Soviet credit to India — granted immediately after India's failure to raise what she wanted in London and New York. This credit will cover important fields in industrial development, at the very low rate of two and a half per cent. Egypt has also got a £60 million credit for industrial development, again on easy terms. Ambitious Commonwealth and other countries, with visions of building thriving new industries for themselves, will not fail to draw their own conclusions.*

* The *Financial Times* (6.12.1957) reports: " Indeed, published figures suggest that the Soviet could now claim to be furnishing finance for development outside the Iron Curtain region on just as large a scale as the World Bank. It can also argue that it is doing so at less cost to the borrower. For Russian credits almost invariably carry an interest charge of only 2½ per cent., whereas recent World Bank advances have been on 5¾ or 6 per cent. basis.

"Over-production" is therefore the nightmare of the free world today. With the Soviets out to industrialise Asia even faster than capitalism has been doing, what hope has Britain (which relies on supplying many of those countries with her exports) of maintaining her trade position? But like all nightmares, it can be dismissed by a quick awakening.

The answer is to do far more than simply unite Europe (on which all men with sense agree today) or even to make Europe-Africa a self-contained economic bloc protected from a world-wide flood of goods by modern economic defences. Action must go further even than that. No matter how high the dam, there will be eventual crisis *within* Europe-Africa if measures also to deal with *internal* "over-production" are not taken.

Science is advancing at phenomenal speed in this revolutionary age, and the present European market of 300 million people would not have the purchasing power to balance European mass-production if their wages (in many cases) remain at the low level of today.

The entire question revolves round the necessity for a European Government to have the power to act and to create the scientific machine which would deliberately raise wages to absorb greater production as it comes off the delivery belt. A time-lag between higher production and higher wages to meet it could be a dangerous thing. At all times popular purchasing power must be able to consume the full quantity of goods available as they come into the shops. A highly-efficient machine is needed, not only to make purchasing power available in the form of higher wages, but also to estimate in advance what productivity is going to be. Then government will have time to get wage-rises through. A new class of experts will be called into being to estimate the future demands of European industry and people.

European Government must set out deliberately to raise the purchasing power of the peoples—in particular, the purchasing power of the primary industries, which cannot benefit directly from automation. This may provide some astonishing developments undreamed-of today by the noisy opponents of "racial fascism."

For example, wage-price leadership should not confine its high-wage policy to the white peoples only within Europe-Africa. It should offer high prices also for the minerals and foodstuffs of the black areas of Africa: the coal and cocoa of Nigeria, the copper and uranium of Bechuanaland.

The Nigerians would find this a distinct change from the policies of the old party politicians of Westminster who have robbed them with low producer-prices while preaching eternal brotherhood. In the same way Bechuanaland, potentially one of the richest areas in Africa, might soon become a second Klondike for the Bantu people of South Africa: with high prices must also go high wages. There might even be a second " gold-rush " to a territory where they would be proud to be Africans, away from the sweated wages of the " Hoggenheimer " interests and the fevered embraces of political priests with a United Nations conscience. The major problem of Africa then might be to restrain them from swamping a barely-developed Bechuanaland too fast rather than stay in some South African Sophiatown.

The same principle should apply to the West Indies. What West Indian is going to stay in Britain when his revived sugar industry at home offers wages he could not dream of before. Give sugar producers high prices and guaranteed markets among 300 million Europeans, and the black belts of Brixton, Balsall Heath and Moss Side will empty in double-quick time. When white farmers and primary producers, whether in South Africa, France or East Anglia, also enjoy high prices and wages with the industrial workers of Birmingham and the Ruhr, the total purchasing power of the peoples of Europe-Africa and associated territories can be balanced with the mass-production power of industry of the future.

The words of Mr. Morrison can then come true—but not in the way he envisaged.

CRISIS IN CONTEMPORARY (ENGLISH) CRITICISM

by ROY MACGREGOR-HASTIE

WITH the abdication of Auden in 1939, and the subsequent disillusionment of the other leaders of the "social reference" movement in English language poetry, there was little incentive in the forties to re-establish poetic premises; the Apocalyptic Reaction was scarcely an establishment, and by the end of the 1939-45 war most of the poets in England, Australia, New Zealand, South Africa, Canada and U.S.A. had retired to the obscurantism of a personal private hysteria and lost contact with each other, and with the society of which they were supposed to be the literary vanguard. There was a post-war crisis in English poetry, just as there were crises elsewhere, in the economic, social and political sectors; the economic and political crises have largely past, even if only to be overtaken by other crises, but there are few signs of a reawakening to relevance among the young writers in Great Britain and U.S.A.; Australia and New Zealand have gone their own way to maturity, South Africa and Canada are busy with other "human disciplines."

It is easy to condemn contemporary youth—and, indeed, there is not even the merit of novelty in doing this; it is easy to suggest that, for political and economic reasons, there is less likelihood of high poetry being written today than a hundred years ago; it is even easier to assume that this is not a major cause of social unrest, and hope for the best in the near future. Something must be done to help the young writers in prose and poetry whose problems of communication, private and public, are apparently too great for

them to convert into resolvable literary equations. And this conclusion has led many people to the belief that the crisis in contemporary literature, and more especially in contemporary poetry, is a corollary of the crisis in contemporary criticism, prose and poetry: the two are somehow inseparable—when the one passes the other will pass with it.

It is not difficult to find evidence of a critical crisis; a glance at *Time*, the *New Yorker*, the American quarterly reviews (*Kenyon, Hudson, Partisan* and *Sewanse*), *The New Statesman*, *The Spectator*, the *Times Literary Supplement*, the *London Magazine* and *Encounter* will confirm the suspicions one had on reading elsewhere of the attitude of the critics to Dylan Thomas' early poems, and (in a different way!) to the digests of philosophy, literature and art which flow, thinly disguised as novels, from the pens of Mr. Colin Wilson and Mr. Stuart Holroyd.

T. S. Eliot, in a "Message" to the first issue of the *London Magazine*, wrote that the second of the functions of a little magazine was "to provide critical valuation of the work of living authors both famous and unknown." In a survey of five years of the *London Magazine's* short life, Mr. Mark Roberts (Lecturer in English in the University of Sheffield, *Essays in Criticism*, vol. IV, No. 2) assesses the failure of Mr John Lehmann to achieve what, presumably, he set out to do; a selection of the phrases Mr. Roberts uses in this connection give some idea of the tenor of the assessment:

> "... one soon notices that a number of reviews simply offer descriptions of the contents of books, descriptions so innocent of critical comment, or even implication, that one can form no idea of whether the books are worth troubling to read. A more extreme form ... is the habit of talking about the subject of a book and virtually ignoring the book itself ... too many ephemeral novels and far too many travel books are noticed ... the writing too often lacks a cutting edge ... all too often unusually bad ... a certain lack of scrupulosity in the use of critical terms ... literary criticism commonly leaves almost everything to be desired."

Mr. Roberts goes on to speak of the limitations of the *Twentieth Century* and *Encounter*, and elsewhere the short-comings of other periodicals I have mentioned are analysed at length.

It would seem that literary criticism is in a parlous state. Mr. John Wain, whose criticism is often frighteningly ill-informed (c.f.

his quarterly 'review' of the *little magazines*, which he conducts with anything but an adequate knowledge of the 200 or so worth reading) makes this comment:

> "Meanwhile, good criticism is frighteningly rare. Speaking for myself, I have found it impossible to trust to the judgment of the people who amongst us have charge of this important function. So many of the people who make a living, or even part of a living from having their opinions of books printed and circulated, the people whose collective impact constitutes 'literary opinion' do not—to be frank—possess even ordinary competence."

Why is it that good criticism is frighteningly rare? There is some truth in the assertion that nations at the end of an imperial era are uncritical in every sphere of human activity, for obvious reason, but as far as one can judge from the recent achievements in the Natural Sciences, the ingenuity and inventiveness of the English and American people has not diminished. Possibly the first reason for the decline in contemporary criticism is that it has emulated the divisions of economic activity and divided and specialised itself. Until the beginning of the twentieth century the 'critical evaluator of the work of living authors' wrote at some length of the work he was evaluating, gave some account of its subject matter, assessed the style, language and tone of the work in question and related the whole to the context of human activity, past and present, literary and non-literary; his writing was itself 'creative,' in that he tried (and often succeeded) to reach the same coincidence of thought and feeling at which the poet (to particularise) had conceived the poem —his reportage of the process was a prose equivalent of the poetic experience established within the framework of the poem, and within limits, gave some account of the stature of both the writer and the writing, based on this experience.

But the twentieth century saw the coming of mass literacy promote a demand for mass media for communication—for a popular press, for 'popular' books, and 'popular critics' to comment on these books; as the class struggle became intensified and the middle and upper classes retreated to a position of defensive activity, aimed at prolonging their hegemony, so did the working class start its *reading*, not in the vulgarisation of creative literature which had been willingly offered them while there was no fear of their achieving political, economic and social equality, but in the 'gutter press' and

the 'cheap novel.' The middle class felt a need for a semi-vulgarised press, conscious as most of them were of the intellectual limitations of the bourgeoisie, and founded its reviews, hired its own 'critics' and left the 'critical evaluation' of their country's high poetry and prose to such academic critics as could find the time and money to establish serious literary journals.

The reviewer, the literary journalist whose causerie replaced the careful analysis of the critic, was the answer to the middlebrow question "How shall we show our superiority to the masses and yet not mystify ourselves in doing so?"

This is not to say that middlebrow reviews had not appeared from time to time in the more reputable journals of the nineteenth century; writers from Shelley to Henry James suffered at their hands. "The blooks of remplissage," James said, "are the dummies of 'criticism' —the recurrent, regulated breakers in the tide of talk. They have a reason for being, and the situation is simpler when we perceive it . . . th organs of public opinion must be no less copious than punctual, that publicity must maintain its high standard, that ladies and gentlemen may turn an honest penny by the free expenditure of ink."

Walter Allen, a contemporary and unusually honest reviewer, has this to say of his 'trade':

> ". . . books have to be reviewed even when there are no books to review. And the reviewer, as a journalist, must work in the normal conditions of journalism. Books are reviewed because they are news—for the same reason, in other words, as developments in foreign affairs, football games and productions of plays are reported. First of all, then, a book reviewer is a reporter. And as a reporter, if he is a regular reviewer, he is under the normal disadvantages of the reporter. He will often be writing against time; full consideration of what he is writing may be impossible; he must make immediate judgment knowing that very often it will be a snap judgment."

And this 'journalist' writes for what purports to be the journal which encourages young writers, assesses the merits and defects of their work, helps them to a higher creativity; bearing this in mind, there is something to be said for the *University and Left Review's* description of the *New Statesman* as the aging prima ballerina of the Social Revolution. But one cannot say that it is a healthy thing for one of the few reasonably intelligent weeklies to 'assess and

encourage' under the conditions Mr. Allen describes—most of the middlebrows (and especially those middlebrows who consider themselves a cut above the readers of the 'popular press') get their secondhand opinions of contemporary literature from the *New Statesman*, the *Spectator*, the *Times Literary Supplement* and the other pseudo-literary journals. Small wonder that the standard of writing is slowly falling to the standard of contemporary reading, under the influence of those people who write 'against time' about writing.

If this idle causerie, written for a self-conscious minority in Britain, is typical of contemporary 'criticism,' deplorable though it is, one must prefer it to the American reviews—both the mass media ones to be found in *Time* and the *New Yorker*, and the lesser fry. Here is what Mr Allen, who is as we have seen an honest man, and 'appears frequently on the famous Third Programme of the B.B.C.,' as we are told by *New World Writing*, has to say about the reviews in *Time*:

> "*Time* differs from the *New Yorker* . . . (it) tells you: Here's the inside dope, and nothing's secret. The brash, cocky style is part of the illusion by which omniscience is created. *Time's* book reviews set out to be news rather than criticism, but the reports are slanted, and through the angle of slanting, values are expressed . . . I often find the expression of them almost embarrassingly vulgar."

The *New Yorker* is slightly better, more intelligent and less embarrassing, even to Mr. Allen; the other review periodicals, the *Nation*, the *New Republic*, the *Reporter*, use the book-note method of squashing into as small a space as possible the maximum of irrelevant comment, including as much as a tenth of the space devoted to the publisher's name and the price of the book.

One last point must be made. The reviewer is typical of the lunatic fringe of the literary world which exists by reason of the existence of the writer, and yet treats the writer as if he were privileged in being allowed to associate with it. One suspects that many of the 'slanted reports' one reads, both in England and the U.S.A., are slanted after consultation with the reviewer's own personal interest in maintaining good relations with the magazine and book-publishing 'world.' The publisher has expended a certain amount of money in putting a book into print (one of the considerations affecting his reader's appraisal of the manuscript having been the

probable reception of the book by the reviewer, and not its literary merit) and doesn't want to lose it; a bad review can diminish the sales of a middlebrow book—and will almost certainly blacken that reviewer's name. And book publishers and magazine publishers are normally on good terms.

If the reviewer has made it almost impossible for an author to get a fair assessment of the worth of his book or collection of poems, then at the opposite end of the critical spectrum, the responsible end, the academic critic gives him either an unintelligible opinion or writes for a periodical which reaches about one half of one per cent. of the people he wants to read his work, with all its faults and virtues. The danger of being in the position ot which the irresponsibility of the reviewer has driven the serious critic is that he will spend so much time and effort attempting an exhaustive non-review type of assessment that he will go to the other extreme, and produce what amounts to a shortened text book. And there seems to be no reason why an intelligent person should not enjoy reading an intelligent book from time to time. Most serious critics are what are called academic critics, university dons who do not work under the conditions of journalism and have no commercial axe to grind; they are so far from the ordinary everyday life of the people who make up the vast mass of the members of the society to which they belong that their criticism is often adequate to the *minorities* to which they belong but inadequate for the vast *majority*—the relevance of the work under analysis is something they connot divine, or even deduce (they lack the contact atmosphere premise). When they come out of academic hibernation, as some of them have done recently, and become, because of a certain charm of manner, 'popular figures' in the television screen or on the air, they seem to be posing amusedly at a non-academic, and therefore essentially frivolous world which is made up of intellectual and emotional dimensions quite different from their own and those of their colleagues.

But from time to time, in spite of the hazards of 'donnishness' and the 'conditions of journalism' one might expect a critic or school of critics to emerge, unscathed and adequate both for a social-literary function and the more individual critic-author relationship of literary intimacy. What seems to prevent this happy event is a lack of any sort of criteria other than those proper for scientific analysis or the writing minute; the insufficiency of the preparation of reviewers for their self-imposed task of 'directing public taste' needs no emphasis—how they imagine they can find a set of aesthetic

standards without having first found the origins of those standards in some metaphysical system or sub-system no one will ever know.

Possibly they approach each new important work they are given to 'review' in the same spirit of unconscious optimism in which Paul set out for Damascus, and assume that an ability to discuss the author's literary and social intention (why he wrote the book or the poem) is no handicap. Similarly, an academic critic whose knowledge of natural and moral philosophy has been gleaned rather than discovered by the exercise of reason is a not uncommon find: nobody expects a critic to make a lifetime study of philosophy on the offchance that he will one day be given a piece of literature to criticise and appraise from every metaphysical standpoint, but at least a critic should be sure of his own position, and should know something of the common ground he shares with writers who subscribe to other systems. Unless an author's metaphysical position is at least comprehensible to the critic (and though the two most common positions, Marxist materialism and Christian idealism, are common enough in nominal frequency, few non-Marxists understand the ramications in the aesthetic sphere of Marxism and Christianity) then that critic will be unable to evaluate the author's intention, the aesthetic value of his work seen in relation to his metaphysics (from which he has deduced his aesthetic position), the necessity, social and personal of the work in question, or its general historical relevance.

He will be scarcely able to estimate the relevance of a particular work to the author's work as a whole, and it is important in these days of much talk and little said, much writing and little literature, to be able to say of a writer that this work was necessary, that work was unnecessary and frivolous or irrelevant in intention. Unless a critic can assess the worth of the poetry he is not likely to be able to make any definitive judgment of the poetry. A poet's value in society increases as he becomes aware of the proper scope of his activity, and his poetry should be judged in the context of that activity. By this I do not mean only that:

> "... (a poet should be) ablebodied, fond of talking, a reader of newspapers, capable of pity and laughter, informed in economics, appreciative of women, involved in personal relationships, actively interested in politics, susceptible to physical impressions" (Louis MacNeice)

though MacNeice's emphasis on the necessity for social contact as

a source of emotional input is important. It is with the context of a poet's output that a critic should be concerned when evaluating an addition to that output. Apart from his poetry, a poet should obviously write a good deal of prose, explanatory prose, relating his poetry to the other art forms, relating its form and manner to theirs, and setting his poetry in its social context as a cause. And if he is constructive in his poetry, in the sense of constructing harmonies out of disharmonies, then he must destroy, too, to clear the air for his creation; he must write satire, poetic and prose, though preferably prose; he must, too, write what one could term "background" —accounts of the occasions of his poems, evidence of the contact he has made with the society at all levels, and at every geographical extreme—and any limitations in his experience are of course relevant when assessing the worth of his work as a whole in a rapidly internationalising society. A critic must be familiar with the work of the poet in these genres, and be able to measure the adequacy of the poet in each one. He must be able to say: "Here is a poet, whose poetry can be read in the extremes of political and economic prose contexts, who publishes in socialist and capitalist magazines, on both sides of the Iron Curtain; here is a poet who is widely travelled, and is familiar with the social context into which his writings should fit—he has told us of the occasions of his output and justified his output. And here is his preparation, his satire. Taking the whole and viewing it as the literary activity of this poet, and finding nothing extraneous to it (no guide books, novels, or other paraphenalia) it seems likely that his activity will be worth careful study and attention." Surely the question "Is this necessary?" is the first a critic should ask when given something to appraise.

The lack of another of the basic criteria in an era of word change and confusion is one which can be blamed on the literary myopia of a predominantly military and economic Anglo-Saxon world. Of all the language groups with a pretension to culture, English is the only one without a supreme court of appeal, an arbiter of admissibility, pronunciation and syntax. There is no equivalent of the French or Italian Academies, and Sir Lacon Threlford, President of the Institute of Linguists, said some time ago, this deficiency in our cultural constitution makes it more difficult every year to evolve and maintain critical apparatus which can be used throughout the widely dispersed English-speaking community. A British Academy was established in 1902, and receives a Treasury grant to help it 'promote . . . philological studies.' But it has not even begun to

press for the establishment of an Academy (perhaps even itself) with the authority of the Académie Française or the Academia Española.

Lacking either objective criteria, or the preparation for the evolution of subjective criteria, the 'critics' and reviewers, or near-critics, who pass judgment of a sort on the new writing published, today and yesterday, must, if they are not extraordinarily insensitive, be aware of their own inadequacy. And, of course, often they are not only *badly equipped*, they are the wrong people. To particularise in poetry again, a poet can absorb the sort of emotional punishment necessary to his art form for a number, a finite number of years—then his mind and body are insufficient for the role he expects them to play in his creative life. When he passes the 'critical age,' he is the ideal critic—perhaps the only judge of poetry who can find the common ground between conflicting subjective and objective criteria; he can give to the poetry he critically evaluates a participative objective criticism no other type of person can — and this argument applies equally, of course, to the other art forms (though painters, potters and musicians are frequently inarticulate).

Until the gaps in the critical framework in which our communication problems are set are filled and intelligently filled, then publishing will continue to be a matter of chance, writing and reading a commercially exploited accident. And at a time when its very existence is threatened, in face of the onslaught of the concepts of utility, culture will be something towards a definition of which we are, with Mr. Eliot, moving uncertainly and painfully slowly.

MEN AND BOOKS IX

SWINBURNE'S 'ATALANTA'

(Continued)

by DESMOND STEWART

BESIDES the chorus of Aetolian virgins, *Atalanta In Calydon* has ten persons. They are persons rather than characters: masks rather than faces, symbols more than men and women. There is no attempt to give King Oeneus anything more than the simplest delineation: he is a 'king full of past days and wise from years endured': but otherwise he has no more personality than Santa Claus. His impiety had been the origin of the train of accidents that had befallen Calydon. But there is no clue to this aspect of his character in anything he says, or in anything that is said about him. We are left ignorant as to whether his lapse was due to carelessness or some graver sin. Toxeus and Phlexippus are arrogant, unpleasant, correct. Nothing is put into their mouths to link them with the picture Althaea gives us of the two little boys who were the companions of her childhood. There is nothing in them to explain her present love for them, except that they are still her brothers, still bound to her by race. The huntsman, herald and two messengers are entirely masked. The huntsman is appropriately pious and eloquent, as are the others: but they lack any hint of real existence. The Chorus display an interest in metaphysics. Otherwise they are as lacking in individuality as a murmuration of starlings. In all this Swinburne was in the Greek tradition.

Atalanta, Althaea and Meleager are the three important figures in the drama: and though they too are like Greek heroes, larger than life-size, and without life's imperfections, they are important symbols, and at the same time have more to distinguish them as

individuals than might appear at first. They are not insipid; they are more vigorous, in their kind, than the classical figures in the costume-pixtures of Alma Tadema and Lord Leighton. Nevertheless, and fitly, they are more the protagonists of a myth than people existing in their own right. This accords with classical practice. Deianira could not be called colourless in Sophocles' play: she tenderly touches the objects of her household before she kills herself: for this is a relevant illustration of the wifely aspect of her character, so important in its influence on her actions. Nothing more is told, since more would be superfluous, and though it might reveal interesting aspects of her personality, it would do so at a cost too great for a Greek to consider: the marring of the general design. Swinburne, too, reveals only a little of the interests and personalities of his characters. And what he does tell us is generalised and not particularly intimate: but it explains the relation of his three important characters one to another.

Althaea is a symbol of maternal love: and through maternal love, of the attitude of nature to its creatures. She is anthropophagous, like the world:

> Than the sweet face of mothers, and the might.
> For there is nothing terribler to men

This association of terror and might with the "sweet face of mothers" is intentionally surprising, for it reveals the underlying connection with Swinburne's other doctrine, that the seemingly benign Mother-Nature loved by romantics is in truth the instrument of a baleful providence. The earth, but above all the sea, are referred to as maternal in the poems and ballads of Swinburne. The sea which Arnold found salt and estranging is to Swinburne as beautiful as mothers, and as cruel.

The quality of Althaea's love is also remarkable. She loves her son. She is proud of his strength and his achievements. But she is never free from selfishness in her attitude to him; he depends for his existence and for his continuance on her. While he reflects glory on her, he is allowed to live; when he brings shame on her, then he must die.

Dramatically, Althaea is formidable and effective: a grim and statuesque figure, archaic, and in her long silent remaining on the stage after she has burned the brand, sinister and sad. Swinburne allows her a frenzy of sorts, but no repentance. It is true that in

his "argument" he says: 'and his mother also endured not long after for very sorrow.' But he shows none of the crumbling of her stern resolve, none of the passionate repentance and regret which characterises Sophocles' heroine when she has killed Hercules. If we wished to find a companion for Althaea, we should have to go, not to "my sister Leda, sitting overseas," but to the cruel Queen of Argos. And yet Althaea is not the equal of Clytemnestra for passion or for defiance of the moral law. Althaea is of the same tribe as Medea and the Euripidean women: yet she is drawn less subtly than they, and her ratiocination is less intelligent than what we may infer was the ratiocination of Euripides' Althaea, since Ovid almost certainly copied this in his description of the conflict in Althaea's mind between her feelings as a mother and as a sister. Althaea is neither credible as a Dionysian creature beyond good and evil, like Clytemnestra; nor is she credible as a woman with womanly passions and womanly intuitions. She is a symbol, and hardly anything more. She is more an agent than an actor: and it is as the instrument of a malignant destiny that she achieves her importance. Her own emotions, her own reasons, are but shadows or dreams. She is driven to the completion of her role by something outside herself, a power greater and crueller even than she. For though Meleager calls her "the bitter mother and mother-plague of this my weary body," he also recognises that it is not simply her will that has taken away his life: it was the gods and fate who were to blame.

> I would that thou hadst let me live; but gods averse,
> But fortune and the fiery feet of change,
> And time, these would not, these tread out my life,
> These and not thou; me too thou hast loved, and I
> Thee: but this death was mixed with all my life,
> Mine end with my beginning: and this law,
> This only, slays me, and not my mother at all.

And that her son's dying diagnosis is correct we know, when we observe how little she allows mother-love to combat her love as sister: in this Swinburne's decisive matron is different from Ovid's sadly undecided mother.

> Shall Oenie joy his happie sonne in honor for to see,
> And Thestie mourne bereft of his? Nay: better yet it were,

That eche with other companie in mourning you should beare.
Ye brothers Ghostes and soules now dead, I wish no more, but you
To feel the solemn obsequies which I prepare as now:
And that mine offring you accept, which dearly I have bought,
The yssue of my wretched womb. Alas, alas what thought
I for to doe? O brothers I beseech you beare with me:
I am his mother: So to doe my hands unable be.
His trespasse I confesse deserves the stopping of his breath:
Yet I doe not like that I be Author of his death.
And shall he then with life and limme, and honor to, scape free,
And vaunting in his good success the King of Calidon bee,
And you dear soules lie raked up but in a little dust?
I will not surely suffer it . . .

For this Althaea is a woman. And when her terrible choice is made, "she turned away hir face, and with a trembling hand did cast the deathfull brand amid the burning fire."

Swinburne's Althaea also debates the two affections: but in very different degrees of strength. For Meleager, she feels a sense of dutiful love, that hardly has the strength of an editorial:

Yet how to atone at all
I know not; seeing the love of my born son,
A new made mother's new born love, that grows
From the soft child to the strong man, now soft
Now strong as either, and still one sole same love,
Strives with me, no light thing to strive withal;
This love is deep and natural to men's blood
And ineffaceable with many tears.

This is as inspired as the advice given to Caesar not to cross the Rubicon, or to Sulla to remain a civilian, in the verses which Juvenal ridiculed two thousand years ago. But when the motif of Antigone is introduced, passion is infused, and vigour, and something like sincerity as well:

or how shall I say, son,
That am no sister? but by night and day
Shall we not sit and hate each other, and think
Things hate-worthy? not live with shamefast eyes,

Brow-beaten, treading soft with fearful feet,
Each unupbraided, each without rebuke
Convicted, and without a word reviled
Each of another: And I shall let thee live
And see thee strong and hear men for thy sake
Praise me, but these thou wouldest not let live
Dead, unbeloved, unholpen, all through thee?
Sweet were they toward me living, and mine heart
Desired them, but was then well satisfied,
That now is as men hungered; and these dead
I shall want always to the day I die.
For all things else and all men may renew;
Yea, son for son the gods may give and take,
But never a brother or sister any more.

She says: " one choice we have, to live and do just deeds, and die." And having said it, she proceeds to join the gods in evil-doing.

You strong gods,
Give place unto me; I am as any of you,
To give life and to take life. Thou, old death,
Thou hast made man and unmade; thou whose mouth
Looks red from the eaten fruits of thine own womb;
Behold me with what lips upon what food
I feed and fill my body; even with flesh
Made of my body.

Atalanta's place in the symbolism of the play is more complex than Althaea's. She embodies more than one role. She is the personification of love, and its dangerous effect on men. But she is also the symbol of sterility. It is the latter aspect of her nature which is most subtly conveyed. Her first speech

Sun, and clear light among green hills, and day
Late risen and long sought after, and you just gods
Whose hands divide anguish and recompense,
But first the sun's white sister, a maid in heaven . . .

was a masterpiece of suggestion, permeated throughout with all the words and images that evoke the clear chaste beauty of the woodlands and mountain paths. Sun, clear light, green hills, the sun's

white sister, a maid hallowed and huntress holy, pure, with warm wan heights of the air, moontrodden ways, water and bloodless gifts, flowers and a golden circlet of pure hair, clean command across the white straits of the running sea, with clear winds and all their green-haired waters, no flash of swift white feet,—these are images and phrases in which Atalanta introduces herself, and for power of suggestion it is doubtful if English poetry could offer rival workmanship.

But her second speech completes the characterisation which Swinburne required for her. She is defending herself from the hunters' scorn, and so shows the other side of her nature, which Swinburne knew well:

> I shall have no man's love
> For ever . . . but a cold and sacred life, but strange,
> But far from dances and the back-blowing torch.
> Far off from flowers or any bed of man,
> Shall my life be for ever: me the snows
> That face the first o' morning, and cold hills . . .
> Me the utmost pine and footless frost of woods
> That talk with many winds and gods, the hours
> Re-risen, and white divisions of the dawn,
> Springs thousand-tongued with the intermitting reed
> And streams that murmur of the mother snow—
> Me these allure, and know me: but no man
> Knows and my goddess only . . .

Here is echoed the thought that inspired the four sonnets on the statue of Hermaphroditus, in the Louvre.

> Yet by no sunset and by no moonrise
> Shall make thee man and ease a woman's sighs
> Or make thee woman for a man's delight.
>
> To what strange end has some strange god made fair
> The double blossoms of two fruitless flowers?

The play is the answer to the question of to what strange end Atalanta has been created: her role is to kindle unholy passion in Meleager and to be the cause of new disasters for the house of Oeneus, guilty as he was of impiety towards the same goddess whom Atalanta invokes as her pattern and patron:

Thou, O mine,
O holy, O happy goddess, if I sin
Changing the words of women and the works
For spears and strange men's faces, has not thou
One shaft of all thy sudden seven that pierced
Swift through the bosom or shining throat or side,
All couched about one mother's loosening knees,
All holy born, engraffed of Tantalus?

Physically, Atalanta is as Ovid depicted her, athletic, and of that beauty intermediary between the two sexes, which in a man is effeminate, in a woman masculine, or perhaps boyish. But despite her conformity to the powerful woman of Swinburne's liking, Atalanta is unique among his characters: for though baneful in her results, she is not interested in the infliction of pain and suffering. She is cold. The more usual behaviour between victrix and victim is that of Imperia to her young page in Swinburne's early *Laugh and Lie Down.*

Imperia Come, come you are not old enough.
Frank I have bled for your sake some twenty times a month,
Some twenty drops each time; are these no services?
Imperia I tell you, if you use me lovingly,
I shall have you whipt again, most pitifully whipt.
You little piece of love.

Frank What makes you sigh still? You are now
So kind the sweetness in you stabs mine eyes
With sharp tears through. I would so fain be hurt,
But really hurt, hurt deadly, to do good
To your most sudden fancy.

And again Imperia promises the lovesick boy:

oh, Frank,
Thou shalt be lashed so soundly, sweetly lashed, Frank.

In Atalanta, this situation is not found. Atalanta is responsible for Meleager's sufferings and death; she does not return his passion; but she regrets what it has wrought for him.

I would that with feet
Unsandalled, unshod,

Overbold, overfleet,
I had swum not nor trod
From Arcadia to Calydon northward, a blast of the envy of God.

And she seems to regret her own coldness:

I would that as water
My life's blood had thawn,
Or as winter's wan daughter
Leaves lowland and lawn
Spring-stricken, or ever mine eyes had beheld thee made dark
in thy dawn.

Atalanta explicitly compares her own virginity with winter. Elsewhere the Messenger describes her at the hunt:

and evil-eyed of these
Arcadian Atalanta, with twain hands
Lengthening the leash.

This startlingly repeats the image of the first line of the first Chorus:

When the hounds of spring are on winter's traces.

Or rather, this *possibly* repeats the image, for the line is ambiguous. The hounds of spring on winter's traces can evoke two distinct pictures: winter is either seen as a pale goddess holding back the vigorous hounds of spring on her traces, or leash; or more violently, the hounds of spring are seen pursuing the traces, or footsteps, of fleeing winter. If the first is right, and winter is thought of as a goddess with young hounds pulling on the leash, then this connects Atatlanta with winter. The snows and ice have already been shown as her concomitants: now she herself is pictured as winter, the season of barrenness and death. Her hounds, which act with her in the hunt, are further reminders of the cruelty linked with her role in the drama. For hounds are everywhere in the play symbols of cruelty. Even the alternation of the hours is seen as a ritual of cruelty, in the splendid line put into the mouth of Althaea:

Night, a black hound, follows the white fawn day.

So Atalanta is the sterility, the ruin, the early death which makes Meleager an unhappy hunter: "thou art Meleager, for thine is an unhappy hunt," in the words of the Euripidean fragment, which derived his name so as to yield this sense.

Again, the wintry and chill Atalanta is identified with piety: her speech being that of a nun of Artemis, totally consecrated and totally in subjection to her goddess. To Swinburne, piety was never linked to anything but the negation of life.

There is one aspect of her character where Atalanta joins the other Swinburnian heroines. This is in the matter of her famous laugh, described first by the Messenger, then by Althaea. The Swinburnian heroine usually laughs a gentle, well-bred laugh when the hero is hurt or about to be hurt. Meleager offers her the spoil of the boar's hide:

> but thy son
> With great hands grasping all that weight of hair
> Cast down the dead heap clanging and collapsed
> At female feet, saying This thy spoil not mine
> . . . she thereat
> Laughed, as when dawn touches the sacred night
> . . . . . .
> . . . so laughed she from pure heart,
> Lit with a low blush to the braided hair,
> And rose-coloured and cold like very dawn,
> Golden and godlike, chastely with chaste lips,
> A faint, grave laugh;

This was taken as a laugh of scorn by the other hunters:

> Then one cried Lo now,
> Shall not the Arcadian shoot out lips at us,
> Saying all we were despoiled by this one girl?

Althaea takes it in the same way, assuming at once that Atalanta knew, and rejoiced at, the results which would flow from Meleager's infatuation:

> yes, and she,
> She the strange woman, she the flower, the sword,
> Red from spilt blood, a mortal flower to men,

Adorable, detestable — even she
Saw with strange eyes and with strange lips rejoiced,
Seeing these mine own slain of mine own, and me
Made miserable above all miseries made.

This does echo Imperia, or Mary Stuart; perhaps also someone even more radically bound into the fabric of Swinburne's life.

Mrs. Disney Leigh records an event in the boyhood of the poet. Against all advice he had climbed Culver Cliff, till then thought impassable. " After eating and sleeping I had an interview with my mother, of which I should not care to write except to the daughter of yours. Of course she wanted to know why I had done such a thing, and when I told her *she laughed a short sweet laugh* most satisfactory to the young ear, and said, " Nobody ever thought you were a coward, my boy." This same mother seems to have been more favourable to Swinburne's project of enlisting in the army than was his father, Admiral Swinburne.

Meleager is the third character in the play, and it is not difficult to see who provided the model for this portrait. Swinburne, himself, the flame-haired youth, delighting in the open air and in the tempestuous sea, is here self-arrayed in the panoply of a Greek hero. Meleager is not a shadowy figure, nor only a mask. He is a young man of pulsing energy, stronger than the poet, but with the poet's enthusiasms, and also something of his strange affections. He is not altogether a Greek. Apollodorus tells us that Meleager, already married to a certain Cleopatra, lusted after Atalanta, with the desire of having a child by her. The 19th century Meleager is clearly as virginal as Atalanta, and his love for her is akin to that of Keats for La Belle Dame Sans Merci. The Greek view of women was very different from that of the troubadours: and this Swinburne may have known intellectually, but not poetically. Where romantic love is hinted at in Greek literature, it is either of the woman for the man, of an older man for a younger, or of a friend for a friend. There are Medeas, Deianiras, and Phaedras: but when men are snared by Eros, it is for carnal ends. The desire to prostrate oneself before an idealised woman was as alien to the Greek world as was the desire to obtain pleasure through cruelty. Herakles, for instance, is as much snared by Eros as is Meleager: but it is not suggested that his feelings for Iole are anything but carnal. He does not contemplate a divorce, and the establishment of a new household. Meleager, on the other hand, is a product of the post-Christian era;

his love for Atalanta is essentially chivalrous. Meleager's passivity, when confronted with death, is again uncharacteristic of the Greeks, to whom the thought of death was never, except among the Socratics, anything but a stern and tragic fact of human existence. The reaction of a Greek who discovered that his mother had slain him would not be the pious resignation of Meleager's last speech. Herakles cursed Deianira when he thought she had bewitched him with evil intent. And this is the attitude one would expect from a Greek, to whom sentiment of resignation was as alien as the sentiment that one should love one's enemies. Life was a man's most precious possession, of far greater value than honour, or belief, or any abstraction except freedom: and this abstraction was only precious because it signified the ability to lead one's life as one wished.

Yet Meleager is not all acquiescence. There is also delight in life. He remembers his voyage with Jason in the Argo.

> And I too as thou sayest have seen great things;
> Seen otherwise, but chiefly when the sail
> First caught between stretched ropes the roaring west,
> And all our oars smote eastward, and the wind
> First flung round faces of seafaring men
> White splendid snow-flakes of the sundering foam,
> And the first furrow in virginal green sea
> Followed the plunging ploughshare of hewn pine,
> And closed, as when deep sleep subdues man's breath
> Lips close and heart subsides; and closing, shone
> Sunlike with many a Nereid's hair, and moved
> Round many a trembling mouth of doubtful gods,
> Risen out of sunless and sonorous gulfs
> Through waning water and into shallow light,
> That watched us.

We have already remarked how Atalanta identified herself with water and snow; and how, more covertly, the description of her with 'twain hounds lengthening the leash' recalls the first Chorus. It is now significant that in the same speech where Atalanta is so identified with winter, the Messenger identifies Meleager with her opposite:

> next her
> Meleager, like a sun in spring that strikes
> Branch into leaf and bloom into the world . . .

Meleager is the sun, the creative element, symbol of what power life has over death. He is also compared, not to the gods, but to 'a god.' Althaea already called him Ares. The Messenger describes his in the same way.

> Grave, and with gathered sinews, like a god.

Swinburne is surely not thinking here of one of the gods whom his Chorus revile. The god to whom Meleager is compared is certainly one of those deified mortals in whom the Greek mind found its noblest aspiration. And the force that finally destroys this godlike mortal is not Artemis: but something far more vast and puissant, the cosmic power beside which gods are puppets. Perhaps one name for it might be Fate. Meleager is subject to this ultimate power, closely linked with love, just as are the gods:

> For against all men from of old
> Thou hast set thine hand as a curse,
> And cast out gods from their places.

Meleager is also the day contrasted with the night. His last words recognise night's triumph over him:

> for the night gathers me,
> And in the night shall no man gather fruit.

The symbolism, then, is everywhere: and it is a symbolism in keeping with the play's theology. Everything thrusts to this one conclusion: life must be snuffed out in death, and this is the best for which life can hope. Beauty, that life turns to, and loves, is only a propulsion towards this death. And earth and nature, which create life, are eager for the death of their creature: "the hands of their kingdom are strong." There is no resisting their power; and no assuaging their malice. Meleager, the tragic hunter, with his memories of a youth of struggle and sea, is consumed: this is a perennial theme of nature—rites, the overcoming of the year: but Swinburne's use of it is new in that no resurrection is envisaged, no returning of the cycle back to life once more. Meleager dies once and for ever:

> I am gone down to the weary empty house
> Where no flesh is nor beauty nor swift eyes

Nor sound of mouth nor might of hands and feet.

And though this pessimism about death as a personal experience would be wholly Greek, yet the identification of Meleager with the year, with the sun, and with life itself, adds something that is not found in Greek mythology. Achilles and Patroclus die, and future generations of young men dance round their tombs. Herakles, too, is burned upon his pyre, and yet in the future he will be a god. Old Oedipus becomes at the end a spirit numinous for good: from the sins which have seemed such a pollution the Athens of the future will draw strength and grace. There is an element of hope in most classical deaths,—if not for the man himself, then for other men. And even when the death is wholly cruel, as is Agamemnon's on the day of his homecoming, when nothing is left to hope but that he will be avenged, yet even Agamemnon is but one man, and in no sense represents all humanity in the way in which the sunlike Meleager does, who when he dies carries all the joys and hopes of men down with him to the grave, where there is nothing: and, one feels, having been shown what a mockery life is, that nothing is almost best.

We are outcasts, strayed between bright sun and moon;
Our light and darkness are as leaves of flowers,
Black flowers and white that perish; and the noon
As midnight, and the night as daylight hours.
A little fruit a little while is ours,
And the worm finds it soon.

Another fact about the gods behind the drama, the 'sad gods sated with a 'well-head of lamentation,' is that they hardly exist; they are as much abstractions as the Greek gods had become in the Naples of Petronius. They no longer have the vitality of being, when cruelty and generosity could alike spring from them. Behind the Greek machinery is the despair of an industrial civilisation still dark as the pictures of Doré. Swinburne could not bring back the Olympians any more than the builders of Westminster Cathedral could bring back the fervour of Chartres and Seville.

A DIARY

THERE has been a variety of strikes in Paris this winter, of which, I suppose, the one most disliked by the public is the garbage men's strike, during which the streets looked very nasty edged with over-flowing dustbins, and the best-loved, at any rate by children, the school-masters' strike.

Arriving at the Comédie Française, Salle Luxembourg, to see *Le Sexe Faible*, we found the disappointed audience being sent away —there was to be no performance because the electricians and scene shifters were striking. In order to make the desired impression they do this at the last moment, when the public, having hurried through dinner, has arrived at the theatre all eager for the treat.

★ ★ ★

The lovely little Gabriel opera house inside the palace at Versailles, which one can now visit, has had to postpone its gala performances until next Spring because of strikes. The prettiest theatre imaginable, it has been upholstered in blue velvet and painted in faux marbre to set off the gilded bas reliefs so that it looks once again as it did when Marie Antoinette saw it as a fifteen-year-old bride when it was first opened in 1770.

We were taken behind the scenes onto the stage, almost as vast in depth and height as that of Garnier's Opera. It is even possible to show spectacles like *Les Indes Galantes*, where people fly about on clouds in the most elaborate way. Of course, Louis XV built it for the Court, when there was no question of sordid payment for seats, but it will not be easy to make a commercial success of performances there, unless the price of a place is made disagreeably high, because the size of the audience for which there is accommodation is so small.

There are little boxes at the back of the circle enclosed by a

latticed grille of bronze doré; they were for the royal family to use on informal occasions when they wished to see without being seen. These grilles had been thrown away and lost during the reign of Louis Philippe, and have now been made new: a triumph of modern French craftsmanship.

★ ★ ★

It is just about forty years since English women have had the vote and sat in the House of Commons, and I should have thought that everyone, from ardent suffragette to violent anti-feminist, must now agree that, fair though it is that they should be able to vote, women as Parliamentarians have been a total failure. It is surprising how hopeless even the most brilliant women are when it comes to public speaking; in fact the bitter truth is that "good" feminine speakers are often even more embarrassing to listen to than bad ones.* Oratory and debate are among the human activities better left to men.

Mrs. Thelma Cazalet Keir, who used to sit in the Commons, and still does for all I know, has written a letter on the subject of women lords to *The Times*. In this she says: "there can be very little doubt that women like Violet Bonham Carter, Stella Reading, Barbara Ward—to mention only a few—can do nothing but help to revitalize an institution which is fast becoming nothing but a great historical relic, and is as out of date as the club members in the film *Around the World in Eighty Days*—not to mention the journey itself."

In spite of this drear and barren record, however, women are determined to sit in the House of Lords, where I am sure they will do no harm to anyone, although some of the peers, who tend to use their reactionary chamber as a club, will find their presence a tremendous bore.

Now it is possible that Mrs. Thelma Cazalet Keir wrote this for a joke, but it is also possible that she did not. I think it extremely likely that only modesty prevented her from adding her own name to the list of clever ladies whom she has cast for the role of revitalizers to the House of Lords. I can hardly wait to see what they are going to do in the way of revitalizing. They must have a scheme ready to put into operation, for it does not seem likely that a public lady like Mrs. Thelma Cazalet Keir (always supposing, that is, she

* Only my personal opinion, which is unfashionable nowadays.

was not indulging in unkind sarcasm at the expense of the other public ladies) would throw out this provocative hint unless she—and they—were all prepared for action. It will be instructive to watch how the wet blankets of the House of Commons are transformed into the firebrands of the House of Lords. One cannot help feeling a little sorry for the peers, but they can always take refuge in White's if things get too hot in their House.

★ ★ ★

Left-wing newspapers have been gloating over the idea of getting rid of the Bishops from the House of Lords; I daresay if they are unseated they will not be greatly missed. My father used to call them *les touche-à-tout,* and until I was quite old I thought this was the French for Bishop. It was not that he was in the least anti-clerical, but he thought them out of place in Parliament.

Their presence has certainly done nothing to leaven the lump of reaction; the upper chamber has had a miserable record with regard to social legislation, resisting reforms every inch of the way. Its refusal to do anything about the recommendations in the Wolfenden Report is, of course, typical; though in this connexion the Archbishop of Canterbury has at least pointed out that there is a difference between sin and crime; a fact which those with no mind to certain sins prefer to ignore.

★ ★ ★

The Nash terraces in Regent's Park have been reprieved, which shows once again that agitation pays. It paid in the case of the rue Barbet de Jouy, when the *Figaro* lent its powerful support to the owners of the old houses and gardens, and succeeded in the nick of time in preventing the construction of a monstrous building which would have overshadowed the whole district.

The absence of any sense of proportion is the oddest thing about town and country planners. An old relation of mine lives in a cottage on a desolate moor. It is a strongly built stone box, about a hundred years old, with no architectural features, surrounded by various garages and stables similarly well-built but nondescript. Wishing to benefit from whatever sunshine there might be, he decided to build a windowed porch onto the south front of his cottage. He was told he must get permission to do this from the

town and country planners, who managed, incredible though it may seem, to hold up the work for months while they considered the question in leisurely fashion. Eventually he was allowed to build his porch, which has improved the look of the house and greatly added to its amenity.

All that fuss about a little Victorian house in the wilds of Northumberland—yet the town and country planners are ever ready with their pickaxes to demolish any outstandingly beautiful street which happens to have escaped the attentions of the planners who ruined London between the wars.

★ ★ ★

This is the moment when the dozen or so best known literary folk of the Establishment are invited to state which book they consider has been the Best Book of the past year. As they are either authors who sometimes do reviews, or else reviewers who are occasionally authors, they naturally all choose each other's books in an orgy of love and harmony.

Personally, I see no harm in this. Many of the books chosen will have been well worth reading. The French system, whereby young writers have to spend months every year making love to old ladies and gentlemen in the hopes of winning one of the famous literary prizes, an activity which leaves them little time for writing, is much worse. In their case, of course, the afternoon calls, flattery and *petit soins* they bestow get them into training for the lobbying which, in middle age, will land them safely in the Académie Française.

Apart altogether from back-scratching (and after all, even writers must live), how much is one influenced in one's opinion of a book by friendship for the author? In my own case, I think it prejudices me a little in the book's favour. But on the other hand personal dislike, or dislike of a writer's politics, would never make me think, or say, that a good book was a bad one.

D.M.

ENTERTAINMENTS

THEATRE IN PARIS

Marcel Aymé's 'La Mouche Bleue'

by JACQUES BROUSSE

INSTEAD of the name of Marcel Aymé's new play, this article might perhaps be headed "Fears in Solitude"; for twice during the past month I have found myself totally at variance with the whole body of French critics, and even considering the ignorance and stupidity of three-quarters of them, this is, nevertheless, depressing; sometimes at the sad hour of dusk I shudder slightly, thinking of the remaining quarter—the critics who merit attention.

The first case was *Notti di Cabiria*, a film by Fellini, hailed with enthusiasm by the entire Parisian press but which bored me very much. This was partly owing to the emphasis which made it seem merely a Catholic propaganda film, and partly because Masina in her expressions, voice, gestures, even in her walk, reproduces, without adding anything, her interpretation in *La Strada*, which is tiresome for the spectator—already made rather restive by the theme of the film.

The second case is that of the new Marcel Aymé play, which has been violently attacked by almost all the critics, but which made me laugh non-stop. In *La Mouche Bleue*, M. Aymé satirizes America. Had he, instead, been mocking the martyrdom of Hungary he would scarcely, I imagine, have made people angrier. One worthy young man filled two columns of the most intelligent literary weekly in Paris with the plea: Take pity on America! *Pity?* One cannot help wondering on what grounds, unless it be to show solidarity with the present French Government, which for the last twelve years has been receiving subsidies from the U.S.A.; but this has nothing to do with M. Aymé. Although he is now more or less indifferent to politics, at any rate in their day-to-day manifestations, he has declared himself on this subject quite clearly in the past.

In America, apart from a handful of intellectuals and artists without influence, there are 150 million good folk to whom the idea that the superiority of the U.S. in any and every sphere could possibly be doubted never occurs for a single instant—unless it be in the case of a Russian victory in technics such as the one we have recently witnessed. What harm, then, can there be, in a writer belonging to a country which, in the eyes of the said good folk, plays a lesser role in world politics than an Iraq or a Nicaragua, giving his opinion of them to his compatriots?

The truth is, we must put down the violent reactions of the press to *La Mouche Bleue*—even when they purport to criticize on aesthetic grounds—to the absence of sense of proportion which characterises the French in general and the intellectuals in particular regarding the importance attached to the works of our writers by foreign opinion. Although few newspapers have expressed their fear that Nato will be broken up because of the anti-Yankee acerbity of M. Aymé, many have nervously pointed out the advantages which communist propaganda could draw from it. This argument is equally absurd. Apart from the fact that not many militant communists frequent the theatres in the Champs Elysées, it is unlikely that French bourgeois should suddenly be converted to anti-Americanism because they have gone to have a good laugh at *La Mouche Bleue*.

The said bourgeois read daily newspapers which are written for them by journalists hired by capitalism, and which display much tender indulgence for the U.S.A.—and with good reason. If, in France, there is a certain hostility towards the country of Eisenhower it is because of its attitude over Suez and North Africa, not because of the influence of any work of literature.

In fact, by ferociously satirizing American civilization, or that which, unfortunately, takes its place, M. Aymé has caught them on the raw. It is doubtless true that some, at least, of his detractors were sincere, and that his play filled them with holy rage because it faced them with a disagreeable fact which they always prefer to forget but which it is difficult for them, at times, not to admit, which is that the logical goal of democracy is materialism pure and simple, and the triumph of the most mediocre and degrading conformism. M. Aymé, like M. Anouilh last year with *Pauvre Bitos*, has learnt to his cost that, in the year of grace 1957, it is better not to shake the taboos which were replanted in 1944 and which, becoming more rotten every day, are defended with all the more fury because of their very fragility.

As to the play itself, it is not a chef d'oeuvre, but nevertheless it possesses solid qualities, and one would have to be blinded by passion or bad faith not to recognise them. As so often in satirical plays, the characters are rather types illustrating the author's thesis than men and women in the round. But this is a defect inherent in this kind of thing — I am reminded, for example, of Evelyn Waugh's *The Loved One.* Only, perhaps, Molière . . .

What seems to me more unfortunate is that, carried away by the exasperation he feels at Anglo-Saxon puritanism, the author has reacted—possibly unconsciously—by writing scenes which not only are not in impeccable taste, but are, I think, almost impossible to imagine in connexion with Americans. Thus when Barbara, the secretary of James Dee the hero of the play, lets him see that she finds him not unattractive, this head of the Thought Department in a big New York business (the department charged with providing the directors with new ideas) throws himself at her feet and declares himself in terms of breath-taking sensuality which hardly seem appropriate coming from the conventional middle class American he is supposed to be. When we add that, a moment before, the recently engaged Chief of Personnel, unable to bear the agony which torments all those in responsible positions in American business concerns (because of the system whereby they are in constant danger of instant dismissal if they fall short of maximum productivity and no longer give complete satisfaction) goes mad and almost rapes Barbara, and that in yet another scene Barbara, in order to induce James—now her lover—to do as she wishes, opens her blouse to show him her bosom . . . Without being prim, one is nevertheless tempted to think that M. Aymé has passed the limit, as he did twenty years ago in *La Jument Verte,* which divides rabelaisian gaiety from obsession with sex.

In a general way, indeed, the weak parts of *La Mouche Bleue* are just those which M. Aymé has invented: the plot, and the scenes I have described, which are so overdrawn that they lack realism. That which is admirable is all owed to direct observation. One might reproach M. Aymé with having picked on just those vices in American society which have so often been attacked, not least by the Americans themselves: the worship of money, to which even the clergy bow down; religion empty of any profound faith, but hypocritical and pharasaical; the cult of the machine; matriarchy; the

combined ignorance and pretentiousness of the bourgeoisie—there is nothing novel in all this, as those who disliked the play hastened to point out.

The question is, does the value of a satire depend on originality? Obviously not, if we do not give way to the confusion of mind of so many journalists and intellectuals today. What count, in this story of two average Americans attempting to escape the infernal rat-race of modern life in America (and, increasingly, in Europe too) by accepting, strengthened as they are by their love for each other, badly paid work, and the failure of this attempt, are M. Aymé's comic gifts. For example, Mrs. Dee's party is a wildly funny scene, and the author's ferocious fantasies light up his profound misanthropy, while his acute observation has caught her characteristics in their very essence (Mrs. Dee is *the* typical American woman yet at the same time convincingly alive); these are the qualities which make Marcel Aymé one of our best contemporary writers, one of the few capable of getting outside himself in order to observe and describe his age, thus taking his place in the glorious company of our greatest moralists because he has the courage to take some of the craziest aspects of the modern age and kill them with ridicule.

CINEMA

The Pride and the Passion, The Sun Also Rises, The One That Got Away, Men in War

by VINCENT MURRAY

IN Stanley Kramer's **The Pride and the Passion** we may be seeing the beginning of the final death-agony of the super-spectacle, the anti-TV weapon with a vengeance. Since *The Robe*, films of a size that must make Stroheim turn in his grave have brought in audiences by the attraction of sheer extravagance, but

such vulgarity is in the end bound to pall even the most cretinous of audiences 'in the sticks,' as the trade has it. At any rate the quantity of extras, the ferocity and extent (on the CinemaScope screen) of the battles and the abysmal human content of *The Pride* make it very likely that the high- (low?) water mark for this type of film has been reached. Nothing breaks the monotony of hurrying, heaving, struggling, gasping figures working at an enormous gun for over two hours—unless the monotony of cardboard characterisation from Grant and Loren can be called a relief of sorts. Sinatra's guerrilla leader, though, has good moments, and confirms my belief that, given the right opportunities, Sinatra is one of America's best character actors. Kramer made a mistake in attempting direction; his forte is enlightened production, and in that capacity he can be of immense value to American cinema.

Fox films, on the other hand, rarely give me satisfaction. There is something routine, second-rate, dull about the majority of them, and **The Sun Also Rises** is no exception. Power and Gardner, two of the company's top box-office 'draws,' are rapidly ageing and certainly show it here. The only performance with any zest at all (from an established star at any rate) is Errol Flynn's, whose besotten Scot is a veritable delight. Probably the most personable character in the film is the young bullfighter, whose natural dignity and grace put everybody else to shame. And this despite a Hollywood convention which emasculates bullfighting just as Hemingway emasculated the hero of his novel (from which the film was adapted). Direction is uneven—even standards of continuity are disregarded and anachronisms are in one scene plain to see — and half-way through all attempts to relate a story are abandoned to Cinerama-like spectacle and noise. The happy-ending (complete with sunrise and disembodied voice) is too ludicrous for words. The Technicolor, I felt, was a little more naturalistic than is usual in Fox films, where the process always seems preoccupied with brown, sunburned shades making for appalling interiors. Much of *The Sun* takes place out of doors, which may account for the improved visual quality.

Charitable as we are as a nation, it was, I suppose, inevitable for a film of a German prisoner of war's escape to be made. Considering the state of our film industry it would have been equally possible to forecast the quality of the film: impeccably photographed, conventionally directed and all in the best of taste, of course. And that is precisely how it turns out in the event. **The One That Got Away** (can this *really* be true?) is Franz von Werra, played in fine bravura style by Hardy Krüger. Taken prisoner during the Battle of Britain, von Werra manages to escape from a train taking him to Canada, though one or two abortive attempts are first described to whet our appetite. At first glance the script-writer seems to have quite a problem with a former enemy; the hero must be sympathetic and yet retain his typically German qualities. Yet, when all comes to all, the Englishman will invariably fall for the underdog whatever nationality he may be, and von Werra is assured of this from the

moment of his capture. Just to be on the safe side the script remains firmly on the surface of character, revealing only so much as is needed for the standard 'Boys' Own' escape story. The clinical analysis of a Bresson is of course far from the producer's intention, but the long round of dully routine 'escape' films makes one long for a different approach. Maybe the German hero was thought to provide an answer to this problem, but all it boils down to is an empty gimmick.

Analysis of men at war, however, is seriously attempted in a new film whose prosaic, deliberately unsensational title **Men in War** gives some idea of the producer's intention. The idea that war is anything but valiant feats of daring and just one thrill after another (with a touch of romance thrown in) is gradually making sense in Hollywood—and box-office sense at that (which is what counts in Hollywood). We must be grateful to United Artists for risking such a venture at the present time and entrusting it to a director of no known individual style, for it always takes courage to step onto a slowly moving band-wagon with little backing from previous experience. Mind you, Lewis Milestone had made successes of *All Quiet on the Western Front* and *A Walk in the Sun*, but they were isolated achievements and had had small following. *Men in War* is about a platoon of Americans in Korea in 1950, of the battle to take a hill and its result. Most of the film is devoted to discussions and conversations between the men, and the futility of war, the unfortunate necessity of fighting, the nature of the war-hero are amongst the foremost topics. Anthony Dann, the director, has done well to maintain a fluent visual style, and, like Milestone in the films just mentioned, has succeeded in breaking up the necessary dialogue scenes and imparting filmic life to what could so easily have degenerated into staginess. Part of his success is certainly due to Ernest Haller's superb photography. The cast give uniformly sound performances, though one would have preferred more individuality in some of the roles in what is a most individual piece of film-making.

NEW BOOKS

Death of a Man by Lael Wertenbaker (Heinemann, 15s.).

THIS repellant, courageous, honest, unreticent book has been greeted by shrill applause from English reviewers. It is a deeply American book, written by an American woman about her American husband: yet an America is revealed which has its roots in Puritanism and the 17th century, more than Eastern Europe, or the Bronx. Only the total lack of reticence in the writing justifies an equal lack of false kindness in the reviewing.

The subject is simple: an American writer, living in France with his family, suddenly discovers that he has cancer. Instead of floating out to sea to drown, he decides to go with his wife to New York to be opened up, in case there is a chance of saving him. His wife is told by the surgeon that the operation has disclosed that the cancer has already spread to the liver, and is inoperable; the operation itself may well accelerate the course of the disease.

This brings up the first moral impasse of the book: should she tell Wert the truth? She does, because her man would prefer to have his dignity as a man, than a false hope. This is splendidly told: and wins one's heartfelt admiration. Wert at the same time decides that he will only live while he can be a man: conscious, manly, willing his own decisions. Again excellent. Husband and wife take a liner back to Europe, determined that Wert's last action —his death—shall be as complete as any other in his life: he will not hand himself over to the syringes of the physicians, to glide into a disgusting somnolence for the last months. He will go out fighting.

On the liner, his stomach wound bursts; we are spared nothing, of the pain, or the stench. With difficulty, he is kept together by elastoplast and sanitary towels. In an ambulance, he reaches home, where a few months of painful life remain, and some hours of intense happiness. He survives Christmas, but by the New Year he is done for; the drugs they have smuggled into France to alleviate the worst pain are running out; the time has come to kill himself. His wife and he pump the remaining morphine into his body: their hands bleeding as their haste breaks the capsules. The drug, instead of killing him, gives him a day's recovery, when he feels splendid. The wife cables desperately to friends in Paris: Wert won't die! What are we to do? What they do is to cut his wrists into red casseroles, and finally he does manage to die, as she reiterates her love and her encouragement 'to go on and die': a brutal scene.

This is a completely post-Christian book: and none the worse for that, in that we live in a post-Christian world. Not once is any religious issue even mentioned. Life is good; and after life there is

complete blackness. It is paganism, as the dustcover hints, dragged into a world of hypodermics and motor cars.

But—and here I state why I think this book repels: it does not have the wholeness of true paganism. It has the strength of desperate post-Christian intensity; it has the honesty of a woman whom we admire and the hemingwayesque courage of a man whom we admire, even if one would have been uneasy in his presence, even if he would have disliked us—if he had noticed us. (He makes a distinction between his American friends, and the Europeans whom he likes: in tones reminiscent of the way Englishmen used to write about their ayahs in India.) To read the death of Socrates is sad; it is also ennobling. I can think of no better reading for any man on his death bed. But I gave this book to a friend, who had Asiatic 'flu, and it delayed his recovery by two days.

Why? Perhaps because like the Ancient Egyptians, the Americans try to deny death; the habit of embalming is no accidental link. Again and again in this book one is made to feel that death is a unique blow that has fallen on this one man; that other people don't die; that Fate has somehow been particularly ruthless to this middle-aged pair. There is no sense anywhere of society, of the race, of mankind. We may not believe in the doctrine of the mystical body of Christ; we may oppose the conception of a proletariat, or a Nordic race, or a Dar al Islam. But all these communities give a strength to their members. Death is a grief; but it is also part of the natural order of things. It is not a unique calamity; it is a daily occurrence; and the dying man goes out in company, not of his wife only but of the whole planet. Either to join the saints in Paradise, or the heroes in Valhalla, or at least, the same nothingness that embraces the great men of the past, and the ordinary men and women whom the dying man has loved. In this book, more than in any that I have read for a long time, I was again conscious of how different an American is from a European, and of what a void underlies the luxury of time.

D.S.

Tempo di Roma by Alexis Curvers.

THE Rome of the Caesars had long been undermined by Christianity when the *Satyricon* appeared, a work which gave an account of the daily life of Roman society and which was also the precursor of a literary genre later to flourish as the novel.

After reading *Tempo di Roma* one cannot help wondering what new and rather terrible metamorphosis may be in store for this unique city; so much does the book appear to fix for ever the memory of a period, never to recur because a cycle of time has come to an

end. It seems as if the author, feeling that some catastrophe threatens the eternal city, has wished to consecrate to these last moments a book which will carry their image down the centuries. Even if this were not his conscious design, his concentration and fervour have assured that it will be so. In any case, the will to produce a work which will glorify Rome is evident, and the sole reproach one could make would be that it insists almost too much on this aim.

Perfect though the chants of praise which succeed one another in this picturesque novel may be, there are moments when one wishes they would flow less smoothly, when a carelessness or an awkwardness could give us a moment's respite. Alexis Curvers himself observes that in Rome, among the glorious churches and magnificent palaces, there are desolate areas; it might be well if, in his book, there were similarly dull passages to set off the splendours.

To say this is to complain of a surfeit of talents. All those which might be expected of the last of the humanists are to be found in *Tempo di Roma:* eloquence, elegance, irony, subtlety, the art of telling a tale and of composing a picture, an irreproachable style. If one could also detect the impatience of genius, we should have before us a chef d'oeuvre. It is one, indeed, in parts. There are pages of touristic commentary of marvellous liveliness, a sort of Baedeker written by Ruskin; and other tenderly equivocal and fairy-like, a *Grand Meaulnes* for the canaille, sweet, sad and elegiac. When the somewhat despicable character who tells his adventures discovers the love which the man who has died bore him, when he named him his heir, the writing attains serene and true beauty. A poignant, delicate song is heard, a miracle of grace, reserve and sensibility.

Similarly, when he describes the Mass which his friend the Bishop in Partibus of Omphalopolis comes to celebrate in the prison where he is unjustly confined, and the strange confession he makes to him during the service, one feels the special pleasure—so rare today—which is given by prose poised between irony and poetry. These pages will doubtless take their place in future anthologies, between Proust and Valéry Larbaud on the one hand, and Gil Blas on the other. In other words, *Tempo di Roma* is a classic; its charm lies in the combination of a manner which is ordered, clear and harmonious, the traditional canons of beauty, with matter which has neither nobility nor virtue. It reminds one of a formal French garden in which the perfect design is carried out in nothing but nettles and weeds. Thus it would please the eye but fail to satisfy the intelligence.

Tempo di Roma illustrates the most vigorous and fecund of the classic norms, those proceeding from life itself. Beneath the arabesques, curves, pirouettes and entrechats of the style lies a profound and unchanging happiness. This *bonheur de vivre* is accompanied by various perversities of the kind one often notices in the child of old parents. Alexis Curvers' novel, a late-comer among the chants of praise of Rome, has also the graces of such a child.

JULES VAN ERCK.

MANNERS AND EMPIRE

by KAIKHOSRU SHAPURJI SORABJI

WILLIAM OF WYKEHAM'S motto for his famous school "Manners makyth man" suggests a footnote something like this, "Ill-manners unmakyth Empires," with especial reference to the abdication of the British Raj in what used to be called India. The present writer has long harboured the suspicion that the ground was prepared for that loss in no small measure by bad manners, bad manners on the part of a later (and much baser) breed of what we used to call "pillars of Empire"—as they undoubtedly were, in the best days; and he is encouraged in that view by the great man who was at once a citizen of the world and at the same time a devoted and dedicated head of his people, his late Highness the Aga Khan, who says so in his memoirs published a year or two since. It is particularly to the point that the Aga, a steadfast and constant friend of England, and close friend of five of its monarchs, is at pains to stress the fact that the separatist movement in India would never have attained the force and impetus it did, with the rise into power of the political carreerists of Congress, but for this. The mess of incompetence, graft and corruption they have made of their India, which should more properly be called Hindostan, is borne witness to by independent observers who have neither political nor ideo-political axe to grind (about which some devastating disclosures are made both by Colonel Rémy in regard to Goa, in his *Goa, Rome of the Orient,* and even more so by Senhor Roldão Anton Souza in his *What About Goa?* than which no more complete dynamiting of the Nehru pretensions with regard thereunto can be imagined), a thing on which the author of the *Autobiography of an Unknown Indian* also animadverts with just severity.

The ground was thickly sown with bitter resentment at the often outrageous behaviour of the British official in the latter years of the 19th, and early part of the 20th centuries. One stresses these periods,

for this deplorable deterioration in British behaviour only dates from that time. The Aga Khan well asks what was the reason for this sinister and ill-omened change, so different from the courtesy and easy social contacts of an earlier and better time, before everybody who lived in India, other than the English, came to be treated and regarded by them much as caste-Hindus regard the untouchables. Here, in passing, it is to the point that when the high caste Hindu sets himself up, as Nehru does, as the champion of "coloured" peoples against "colour bars" and all the rest of it, this is the most blatant hypocrisy. Nehru is himself, as a high caste Hindu, what he is by virtue of the cruellest and most ruthless colour bar the world has ever known, namely the caste system, imposed upon the dark-skinned aborigines of India by the lighter skinned invaders from whom Nehru and his like are descended.

Of the vastly different behaviour of the British of an earlier time, the Aga Khan gives very many instances. Particularly admirable and heartening is his account of Queen Victoria's anxiety, expressed to him personally, that English tourists should behave in Hindu temples with as much decency and circumspection as they would in one of their own churches, and her lively concern that English officials should behave with proper courtesy to Indian gentlemen and nobles. Her grandson George V expressed himself as deeply distressed and shocked when he went to India for the Durbar in 1911 (by which time the lamentable change for the worse in British manners and conduct had already become the normal usage) at what he saw, as for instance the failure on the part of the British to acknowledge a polite greeting on the part of an Indian. This is paralleled by what Beverley Nichols relates in his *Verdict on India.* When he asked a Briton what was the correct phrase for "thank you," he was told that one *never* thanked an Indian for anything, it "just wasn't done."

The combination of sheer ignorance, bad manners and social obtuseness landed the English in some fantastic situations at times. There was the Turkish Consul who was a Bosnian, that is to say, a pure Slav, as white as even the rosiest Englishman could wish, who because he was a Muslim by faith, was regarded as a "black man" and treated accordingly.

This sort of thing, astronomically multiplied, has provided fertile and all-too congenial soil for anti-British and anti-Imperial propaganda on the part of the evil forces of communism. It is hoped that the lesson has been learnt; though most emphatically not to the

extent of turning this country into a dumping ground for unemployed from every corner of the earth with all the problems and perils of mass-mongrelisation that this can bring in its train, and indeed, is already bringing.

Generally speaking, it can be laid down that extra-racial marriages are only safe on the highest levels and between races cognate and psychologically akin; safe, that is, for the offspring and the peoples concerned. As for the anti-Imperialist and anti-colonialist propaganda that is a commonplace of the contemporary Hindu politician, this is as utterly spurious and dishonest as all the rest. The caste-system is itself the result of colonialism, the colonialism of the Aryan invaders of India who brought the caste-system with them and imposed it on the aboriginal inhabitants. No great civilisation or culture has at any time or in any place arisen that has not been the result of "colonialism." England is what she is as the result of successive waves of colonialism, Roman, Celtic, Danish, Norman, all of them being woven into the rich pattern of the nation's life. My mother's country, Sicily, with its incomparable cultural traditions, is what it is by reason of the successive colonialisms of Greeks, Romans, Arabs, Normans, Byzantines, who have each contributed strands of unparalleled richness to a unique pattern. And, given a little more *souplesse*, a little more well-bred manners, a little more of the behaviour that Queen Victoria had both the good sense and good taste to demand of her servants abroad in the Empire, the whole of what used to be called India might still be the brightest jewel in the Imperial Crown, and not only the brightest, but far more important to all, still there.

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