

politics

35c a copy

December, 1946

<i>Factory Work</i> , by Simone Weil.....	369
FRENCH LETTER, <i>The November Elections</i> , by Gelo and Andrea.....	378
LONDON LETTER, by George Woodcock...	380
COMMONNONSENSE, by Niccolo Tucci...	382
George Orwell, <i>19th Century Liberal</i> , by George Woodcock.....	384
<i>The Story of Viet Nam</i> , by George Padmore.....	388
THE SOCIAL FORMAT	
<i>City Crowds</i> , by Paul Goodman.....	390
<i>Too Big</i> , by Dwight Macdonald.....	391

POPULAR CULTURE	
<i>The Russian Writer's Dilemma</i> , by Peter Meyer.....	392
<i>Social Significance of Eggs on End</i> , by Theodore White.....	394
BOOKS.....	395
PERIODICALS.....	397
THE INTELLIGENCE OFFICE.....	398
"Partisan Review" and "Politics".....	400
<i>The Coal Strike</i> , by Dwight Macdonald...	404

The Man from Marx
Interviews the Editor

on

THE COAL
STRIKE

Factory Work

by Simone Weil

THESE pages have to do with an experience of factory life dating back to the period before 1936. They may come as something of a surprise to many people whose only direct contact with workingmen was by way of the Popular Front. A workingman's condition is ever-changing, and it may differ from one year to the next. The years before 1936, which were hard and bitter years of economic crisis, better reflect the proletarian condition, somehow, than the trance-like period that followed.

Official declarations will have it that henceforward the French State undertakes to put an end to the proletarian condition, that is, to all that is degrading in the life of a workingman, whether inside the factory or out. The first obstacle to be overcome in such an undertaking is ignorance. Of late, it has become more obvious than ever that factory workers are, in a sense, truly uprooted beings, exiles in their own land. But the real reasons for this are not so generally known. Walks in the working-class quarters, glimpses of dark, miserable rooms, the houses, the streets, are no great help in understanding the life that people lead there. An even greater mystery invests the worker's discontent in the factory. Workingmen themselves do not find it easy to write, speak, or even reflect on such a subject, for the first effect of suffering is the attempt of thought to *escape*. It refuses to confront the adversity that wounds it. Thus, when workingmen speak of their lot, they repeat more often than not the catch-

words coined by people who are not workingmen. The difficulty involved is at least as great for a veteran worker. He finds it easy to talk of his early past, but very difficult actually to think about it, for nothing is more swiftly covered over by oblivion than past miseries. A man of talent may, through fiction and the exercise of imagination, divine and, to some extent, describe from the outside. There is, for example, Jules Romains' chapter on factory life in his *Hommes de bonne volonté*. But that kind of thing does not cut very deep.

How abolish an evil without first having clearly perceived in what it consisted? What follows may perhaps help to set the terms of the problem, since they are the fruit of a direct contact with factory life.

Conceivably a plant or factory could fill the soul through a powerful awareness of collective—one might well say, unanimous—life. All noises have their meaning, they are all rhythmic, they fuse into a kind of giant respiration of the working collectivity in which it is exhilarating to play one's part. And because the sense of solitude is not touched, participation becomes even more exhilarating. Pursuing our hypothetical lead, there are only the metallic noises, the turning wheels, the bite of metal upon metal; noises that speak neither of nature nor of life, but of the serious, steady, uninterrupted acting of men upon things. Though lost in this great hum, one also dominates it; for over this permanent, yet ever-changing drone bass, what stands out while yet somehow fused with it, is the sound of one's own machine. One does not feel insignificant as in a crowd, but indispensable. The transmission belts, supposing them to be present, allow the eye to drink in that unity of rhythm which the whole body feels through the sounds and the barely perceptible vibration of everything. Through the wan hours of winter mornings and evenings when only the electric lights are shining, all the senses are participants in a universe where nothing recalls nature, where nothing is gratuitous, where everything is sheer

impact, the painful yet conquering impact of man upon matter. The lamps, the belts, the noise, the hard, cold iron-work, all converge toward the transmutation of man into work-man.

If factory life were really this, it would be only too beautiful. But such is naturally, not the case. The joys here described are the joys of free men. Those who people the factories do not feel them, except in rare and fleeting moments, for they are not free. They can experience them only when they forget they are not free; but they can rarely forget, for the vise of their servitude grips them through the senses, their bodies, the thousand and one little details that crowd the minutes of which their lives are constituted.

The first detail which, in the work-day, makes their servitude apparent, is the time-clock. The trip from home to plant is dominated by one fact: arrival before a point in time that is arbitrarily determined. Since arrival five or ten minutes ahead of time is of no avail, the flow of time appears as something pitiless, leaving no room for the play of chance. In a man's work-day it is the first onslaught of a regimen whose brutality dominates a life spent among machines: the rule that chance has no place, no "freedom of the city," in a factory. Chance exists there, of course, as it does anywhere else, but it is not *recognized*. What is recognized, often to the great detriment of production, is the barracks formula: "Never mind the reasons!" Contradictory orders are not such according to the logic of the factory. Come what may, the work must go on. It is up to the worker to get on with the job. And he does get on with it.

The big and the little annoyances to which the human organism is constantly subjected—or as Jules Romains puts it: "That assortment of physical pin-pricks that the task does not demand and which are far from advancing it"—contribute no less to an awareness of servitude. We do not refer to the moments of pain bound up with the exigencies of the task at hand—one may even glory in the pride of bearing up under them; but to those that are needless. They wound one's spirit because generally there is no thought of complaining about them. From the very outset the conviction sets in that a snub will be the only answer, that the complaint will be taken in without a word of reply. To speak of such things, then, would be an invitation to humiliation. It often happens that if there is something a workingman cannot stomach, he will pocket the affront and "ask for his time"—i. e., quit the job. It often happens that this type of suffering is in itself very insignificant. If it becomes bitter, it is through steady accumulation of such resentments, which can find no outlet. The fact that he would like to forget, that he cannot feel at home in the plant, that he has no freedom of movement there, that he is an alien given admittance only in his capacity as intermediary between machines and the things to be machined, all this eats into body and soul; and flesh and thought shrink back. It is as though someone were repeating in his ear at every passing moment and with all possibility of reply excluded: "Here, you are nothing. You simply do not count. You are here to obey, to accept everything, to keep your mouth shut." Such reiteration becomes irresistible. One comes to acquiesce down deep that he counts for nothing. All or nearly all factory workers, even the most free in their bearing, have an almost imperceptible something about their movements, their look, and especially in the set of the lips, which reveals that they have been obliged to consider themselves as nothing.

What especially constrains them to this is the way in which they have to take orders. It is often denied that workmen suffer from the monotony of their work, because it has been noted that they are frequently annoyed by a change of work. Notwithstanding, they are morally surfeited in the course of a long period of monotonous work. A change comes as both a deliverance and an annoyance; at times as a very keen annoyance, in the case of piece work, because of the lowered earnings implied and because it has become second nature, a convention, to attach more importance to money, which is something clear-cut and measurable, than to obscure, impalpable, inexpressible feelings that possess one while at work. But even when work is paid by the hour, there is the feeling of annoyance and irritation, because of the manner in which the change of work is ordered. The new change is suddenly imposed, without advance notice, under the form of a command that must immediately and unquestioningly be obeyed. The one obeying is thus made to feel that his time is incessantly at someone else's beck and call. The modest artisan who possesses a machine shop and who knows that within a fortnight he must have ready so many braces and bits, so many faucets, or so many connecting rods, is not precisely free to do as he pleases with his time either, but at least, once an order is accepted, he may determine in advance the employment he will give his days and hours. If only an employer would say to a workingman a week or two in advance: "For two days you'd better work on these connecting rods, then the braces and bits, and so on," obedience would still be exacted, but at least it would be possible mentally to embrace the immediate future, to outline it beforehand, and in a sense, to possess it. Nothing like that ever happens in a factory. From the moment one is clocked in to the time one is clocked out, one must be ready at any instant to take an order. Like an inert object that anyone may move about at will. If one is at work on a part that is to take another two hours, it is impossible to think ahead to the third hour without thought having to make a detour that constrains it to pass by way of the Boss' unpredictable will . . . without being forcibly reminded that the Boss' orders are all that matter. If ten parts per minute are made, the same thing applies to the five minutes following. This is so even if one expects no new order to supervene; since orders are now the sole factor making for variety, to eliminate them in thought is to condemn oneself to imagining an unbroken succession of ever-identical movements, to visualizing monotonous desert regions of experience

politics

VOLUME 3, No. 11 (Whole No. 34) DECEMBER, 1946

Editor: Dwight Macdonald

Business Managers: Bertha Gruner, Nancy Macdonald

POLITICS is published monthly at 45 Astor Place, New York 3, N. Y., by Politics Publishing Co. Telephone: GRamercy 3-1512.

Subscription \$3.50 for one year, \$6 for two years. Add 30c a year for Canada, 50c a year for all other foreign countries. Single copy: 35c. Most back issues are still available.

Copyright December, 1946, by Politics Publishing Co. Entered as second-class matter March 16, 1944, at the post office at New York, under the Act of March 3, 1879.

that thought has no way of exploring. It is true that a thousand petty incidents may people this desert, but no matter how interesting one may suppose them to be at the moment they occur, they cannot form part of a mental representation of the future. If thought seeks to sidestep that monotony by imagining a change—namely, an unexpected order—it can effect its passage from present time to futurity only by way of a new humiliation. Thus, thought draws back from the future. This perpetual recoil upon the present produces a kind of brutish stupor. The only future that thought can bear to contemplate, and beyond which it is powerless to reach out, is that stretch of futurity that separates the present moment from the conclusion of the work in progress—even here, we are assuming that one is fully and emotionally engaged to begin with, and that he has the good luck of working on a project of some duration. There are moments when work is absorbing enough for thought to occupy itself within the limits just set forth. Then unhappiness, suffering comes to a cessation. But in the evening, once outside the plant, and especially in the morning when one's steps are bent toward the place of work and its time-clock, it is dismal to turn one's thoughts to the day's work looming up just ahead. And Sunday evenings! when the prospect that presents itself to mind is not one day but a whole week of such days, futurity becomes something so terribly bleak, so tremendously overwhelming that thought can only slink back trembling to its lair.

The monotony of a day in a factory, even if unbroken by a change of work, is mingled with a thousand little incidents that stud each working-day and make of it something new, in a sense. But, as in the case of changes of work, such incidents are only too often more wounding than comforting. They seem always to involve some diminution of earnings in the case of piece-work, and are hence distinctly unwelcome. But often they are intrinsically wounding. The pervasive anxiety—the anxiety of not working fast enough—that is diffused through every working moment becomes concentrated at such moments, and when, as is often the case, one has to turn to someone else in order to get on with his work, someone like a foreman, a warehouse keeper, a straw-boss, the feeling of dependency, of impotence, of counting for nothing in the eyes of those upon whom he is dependent, can become painful to the point of making a man cry. The continual possibility of such incidents—a stalled machine, an elusive toolbox, and so on—far from diminishing the weight of the monotony, deprives it of the very remedy that it generally carries within itself, namely the power of hushing and lulling the mind to a point where it may become insensitive to pain. Anxiety thwarts this lulling effect and obliges one to the awareness of monotony, though it is intolerable to be aware of it. Nothing is worse than a mixture of monotony and accident. They are mutually aggravating, at least when accident is bound up with anxiety. In a factory, accident is a source of anxiety, for the very reason that accident has no status there; theoretically, though everybody knows that such is not the case, the crates for the finished parts are never missing, the foreman never keeps one in suspense, and every slowing down of production is the worker's fault. Thought is obliged to remain in constant readiness not only to follow the monotonous progress of movements indefinitely repeated, but to find within itself resources to cope with the unexpected. Such an obliga-

tion is contradictory, impossible, and exhausting. Body may often be exhausted evenings upon leaving the factory, but mind is more so and invariably so. Whoever has experienced this exhaustion—and remembers it—may read it in the eyes of nearly all the workmen filing out of a plant. How one would like, along with his time-card, to check in his soul upon entering the plant, and then check it out intact at quitting time! But the reverse takes place. One takes it into the plant where it undergoes its ordeal; evenings, drained by exhaustion, it can do nothing with its hours of leisure.

It is true that certain incidents in the course of work do cause joy, even when diminishing earnings. To begin with, there are the cases, unfortunately rare, when a treasured testimony of comradeship is received. Then there are those in which one successfully overcomes some difficulty through unaided effort. When wits are exercised, devices tried, obstacles cunningly eliminated, one's mind is occupied with a future that depends only on oneself.

The more the work throws up such difficulties, the more the heart is lifted. But this joy remains incomplete for want of men, whether companions or superiors, to judge and appreciate what has been successfully overcome. One's superiors and the associates working at other operations on the same product, are almost always exclusively interested in the products themselves, not in the difficulties overcome. Such indifference is a privation of that human warmth which will always be in some degree necessary. Even the man least desirous of gratifying self-pride feels too much alone in a setting where it is understood that people are interested only in what has been accomplished, never in the ways and means leading up to that accomplishment. Thereby, the joys of work are relegated to the plane of unformulated feelings, impressions, that vanish as swiftly as they come to birth. The comradeship of workmen, never moving to some positive crystallization, remains but an unshapen, weakened volition, a mere velleity; and the superiors are not men guiding and directing other men, but the organs of an impersonal subordination, cold and brutal as steel. It is true that in this relationship of subordination, the Boss' person may intervene, but always in the form of something capricious. Caprice and impersonal brutality, far from tempering each other, are as reciprocally aggravating as monotony and accident.

In our day it is not only in shops, markets, and exchanges, then, that the products of labor are prized to the exclusion of the labor that created them. To repeat, the same is true of the modern factory, at least at the worker level. Cooperation, understanding, mutual appreciation, bound up with the work, are the monopoly of the higher spheres. At the worker level, the relations established among various jobs and functions are relationships between things, not men. The parts circulate with labels bearing their name, material, and degree of elaboration; one could almost believe that they are the persons, and the workers the interchangeable parts. The parts have their identity card tantamount to a description of civil condition; and when it is necessary, as in certain large factories, to show one's card with the photograph bearing, convict-like, a number on the breast, the symbolic contrast becomes poignant.

Things play the role of men, men the role of things. There lies the root of the evil. There are many different jobs

in a factory. The fitter in a machine-shop, who, for instance, makes press matrices, those marvels of ingenuity that are long in the fashioning and ever-varying—he loses nothing working in a factory. But that is a rare instance.

On the other hand, legion are those in the large factories and even in many small ones who execute at high speed, in a specified order, five or six simple movements, indefinitely repeated, each lasting a second or thereabouts, with no other respite than an occasional anxious chase after a crate, an engineer, or whatever—until the exact second when a foreman comes up to move them like so many objects to another machine where they remain until moved again. They are as much things as it is possible for a human creature to be, but things that are not licensed to put their consciousness into abeyance, for they must remain ever alert to confront the unexpected. The succession of their movements is not designated in factory parlance by the word 'rhythm,' but by 'cadence.' This is only right, for that succession is the contrary of rhythm. Any series of movements that participates of the beautiful and is accomplished with no loss of dignity, implies moments of pause, as short-lived as lightning flashes, but that are the very stuff of rhythm and give the beholder, even across extremes of rapidity, the impression of leisureliness. The foot-racer, at the moment of beating the world's record, seems to glide home slowly while one watches his inferior rivals making haste behind him. The better and the more swiftly a peasant swings his scythe the more the onlookers have the impression that, as the invariable phrase goes, he is taking his time. On the other hand, the spectacle presented by men over machines is nearly always one of wretched haste destitute of all grace and dignity. It comes natural to a man, and it befits him, to pause on having finished something, if only for an instant, in order to contemplate his handiwork, as God did in Genesis. Those lightning moments of thought, of immobility and equilibrium, one has to learn to eliminate utterly in a working-day at the factory. Manual operations upon machines can attain the required cadence only if those second-long movements follow one another uninterruptedly in something like the tick-tock succession of a timepiece, with nothing to mark the end of something concluded and something about to begin. This tick-tock, the barren monotony of which is scarcely bearable to human ears over any length of time, workingmen are obliged to reproduce with their bodies. So uninterrupted a succession tends to plunge one into a kind of sleep, yet it must be borne without falling asleep. The question here is not merely one of physical travail; if physical distress were all that resulted, the evil would be a relatively minor one. Every human enterprise demands a motive to furnish the necessary energy to bring it to completion; and it is good or bad according as the motive is high or low. To sink to the exhausting passivity that a factory demands, the motive has to be found within oneself, for there are no whips and chains; whips and chains would conceivably make the change-over easier. The very conditions of the work exclude the intervention of all motivations except those of the fear of being "bawled out" or fired, of the eagerness to fatten one's pay envelope, and, in some cases, an interest in speed records. Everything concurs to recall these motivations to thought and to transform them into obsessions. Nothing higher is ever appealed to. Moreover they must become obsessive to achieve the necessary efficacy. At the same time that these motives occupy one's spirit, thought withdraws to a fixed point in time

in order to avert suffering, and consciousness dims itself as much as the demands of the work will allow. An almost irresistible force, comparable to that of gravity, precludes any feeling for the presence of other human beings laboring away nearby. It is next to impossible not to become as indifferent or brutal as the system in which one is caught; and reciprocally, the brutality of the system is reflected and made obvious by the gestures, looks, words of those about one. After a day thus spent, the workingman has but one complaint, a complaint that cannot reach the ears of men who have never known this condition, and which would not speak to them if it did: *I thought the day would never end.*

Time drags for him and he lives in a perpetual exile. He spends his day in a place where he cannot feel at home. The machines and the parts to be turned and machined are very much at home, and, to repeat, he is given admittance only that he may bring these machines, these parts together. *They* are the objects of solicitude, not he; though, perversely enough, there are occasions when too much attention is directed to him and not enough to them. It is no rarity to see a foreman or straw-boss busy harassing working men and women, watching to see that they do not raise their faces even for the time necessary to exchange a glance, while mounds of iron-work are left to rust away in the corner of some yard. Nothing could be more bitter. But whether the plant is protected or not against waste, the workingman is made to feel that he is an alien. Nothing is more impelling in a man than the need to appropriate, not materially or juridically, but in thought, the places and objects amidst which he passes his life. A cook says, "My kitchen," a gardener, "My lawn," and this is as it should be. Juridical proprietorship is but one of the means to achieve such a feeling. *The perfect social organization would be one which, by that and other means, would give a proprietary feeling to all men.* A workingman, with rare exceptions, cannot, by thought, appropriate anything in a factory. The machines do not belong to him in any sense. He serves one or the other of them according to the latest order received. He serves them, he does not make them serve him. They are not for him a means of turning a piece of metal to a specified form; he is for them a means whereby they will be fed the parts for an operation whose relationship to the ones preceding and the ones following remains an impenetrable mystery to him.

The parts have their history; they have passed from one stage of development to another. But he counts for nothing in that history, he has not left his mark upon it, he knows nothing of what has gone on. Were he to manifest any curiosity, it would be speedily discouraged; in any case, the same muffled and permanent dread that inhibits his thought from travelling through time also keeps it from wandering through the plant and fixes it to a point in space. The workingman does not know what he produces and consequently, he experiences the sensation, not of having produced, but of having been drained dry. In the plant he expends—occasionally to the uttermost—what is best in him, his capacity to think, feel, be moved. He squanders it all, since he leaves the plant emptied; and yet he has put nothing of himself in his work, neither thought, feelings, nor even, save in a feeble measure, movements determined by him, ordered to some end. His very life slowly ebbs from him without having left a trace behind him. The factory may create useful objects, but they are not for him; and the pay that, sheep-like, he stands in line

for every fortnight, that pay impossible to calculate beforehand in the case of piece-work owing to the arbitrary, complicated accounting procedures that it involves, comes to seem more a charitable handout than the price of his hire. The workingman, though indispensable in the productive process, is accounted as practically nothing in it, which is why each physical annoyance needlessly imposed, each show of lack of respect, each brutality, each humiliation, however trivial, appears as a fresh reminder of his alien status. One can actually see women waiting ten minutes outside a plant under a driving rain, across from an open door through which their bosses are passing. They are working women and they will not enter until the whistle has blown. That door is more alien to them than that of any strange house, which they would enter quite naturally if seeking cover. No intimacy binds workingmen to the places and objects amidst which their lives are used up. Wage and other social demands had less to do with the sit-down strikes of '36 than the need to feel at home in the factories at least once in their lives. Society must be corrupted to its very core when workingmen can feel at home in a plant only during a strike, and utter aliens during working hours—when by every dictate of common sense the exact contrary ought to prevail. As long as workingmen are homeless in their own places of work, they will never truly feel at home in their country, never be responsible members of society.

It seems unreasonable to expect credence when one is but setting down impressions. Yet there is no other way of describing a *human* misery. Misery, after all, is made up of impressions. As long as it is possible to live at all, material circumstances of living do not in themselves necessarily account for unhappiness; for the same material circumstances bound up with other feelings could make for happiness. It is the feelings bound up with the circumstances of living then, that make one happy or unhappy; but these feelings are not arbitrarily determined. They are not put over or effaced by suggestion. They can be changed only by a radical transformation of the circumstances themselves. But to change circumstances, they must first be known. Nothing is more difficult to know than the nature of unhappiness; a residue of mystery will always cling to it. For, following the Greek proverb, it is dumb. To seize its exact shadings and causes presupposes an aptitude for inward analysis which is not characteristic of the unhappy. Even if that aptitude existed in this or that individual, unhappiness itself would balk such an activity of thought. Humiliation always has for its effect the creation of forbidden zones where thought may not venture and which are shrouded by silence or illusion. When the unhappy complain, they almost always complain in superficial terms, without voicing the nature of their true discontent; moreover, in cases of profound and permanent unhappiness, a strongly developed sense of shame arrests all lamentation. Thus, every unhappy condition among men creates the silent zone alluded to, in which each is isolated as though on an island. Those who do escape from the island will not look back. The exceptions turn out almost always to be more apparent than real. For instance, the same distance, despite contrary appearances, separates workingmen from the worker turned employer as separates them from the worker become a professional militant.

If someone, come from the outside, penetrates to one of these islands and subjects himself of his own free will to the

unhappiness in question for a limited time, but still long enough to be penetrated by it, and if he then relates what he has experienced, the value of his testimony will be at once called into question. It will be said that what he experienced was necessarily different from what is felt by those permanently immured in unhappiness. All this is true enough, if we suppose that such a person has merely given himself over to introspection; or if he has merely observed. But if, having lost the very memory of having come from elsewhere, he yet returns elsewhere, as though on a vacation, and begins to compare what he himself has experienced to what he reads in the faces, eyes, gestures, postures, words, in trivial and important events, a feeling of certainty within him is created—difficult to communicate, unfortunately.

The faces drawn with anxiety over the day about to begin, the dejected looks in the morning subway-trains; the profound weariness, spiritual rather than physical, reflected in the general bearing, the expression, the set of the mouth, at quitting-time; the looks and attitudes of caged beasts, after the ten-day closing when a factory reopens its doors as the signal for the beginning of another interminable year; the pervasive brutality; the importance almost every one attaches to details trivial in themselves but distressing as symbols, such as the matter of identification cards; the pitiful boasts bandied about by the crowds at the entrances to hiring halls, boasts which express so many real humiliations; the incredibly poignant words that sometimes escape, inadvertently, the lips of men and women who had seemed to be just like all the rest; the hatred and loathing of the factory, of the place of work, often evidenced in words and acts, a loathing that casts its shadow over any possible comradeship and impels working men and women, once they have cleared the factory exit, to hasten separately to their respective homes, with scarcely a greeting exchanged; the joy during the sit-down strikes, of possessing the factory in thought, of exploring its several parts, the completely new pride in showing it to their loved ones and of pointing out their work stations—a fleeting joy and pride that expressed, by contrast, in so poignant a manner the permanent suffering of minds nailed down to a point in time; all the emotional tides of workfolk, so mysterious to onlookers, in reality so easy to seize; how not trust to these signs, when at the very moment he reads them about him, he experiences within him the feelings corresponding to those signs?

The factory ought to be a place where, for all the inevitability of physical and spiritual travail, working people can taste joy and nourish themselves on it. But for this to happen, things would have to be changed, considerably in some respects, only moderately in others. All systems of social reform or transformation seem to miss the point. Were they to be realized, the evil would be left intact. They look to changes that are either too sweeping or too superficial. They would change too little what underlies the evil, too much the circumstances that are not its cause. Some promise a ridiculously exaggerated reduction of the work-day. But the conversion of a people into a swarm of idlers, who for two hours a day would be slaves, is neither desirable nor morally possible, if materially so. No one would accept two daily hours of slavery. To be accepted, slavery must be of such a daily duration as to break something in a man. If there is a possible

remedy, it is of a different order, less easily conceivable. It is one requiring an inventive effort. It is necessary to transform incentives, to reduce or abolish what makes for disgust with one's work, to transform the relation of worker to factory, of worker to machine, and to make possible a radically-changed awareness of the passing of time while working.

It is desirable neither that the prospect of unemployment should be a nightmare without issue nor that work should mean a flood of cheap pseudo-luxuries that excite desires without satisfying needs. These are scarcely contestable points. But the conclusion to be drawn is that both acquisitiveness and the fear of dismissal must cease to be the main incentives ever in the foreground of a workingman's mind and be relegated to their natural status as secondary incentives. Their place in the foreground must be taken by other incentives.

In all work one of the most powerful incentives is the feeling of an end to be accomplished and a job to be done. In a factory, especially in the operation of machines, this incentive is often completely absent. When, for the thousandth time, a worker brings a part into contact with a machine tool, he finds himself—aside from the fatigue of it—in the position of a child who has been put to stringing pearls in order to keep him out of mischief. The child obeys because he dreads punishment and looks forward to a piece of candy, but the only meaning he can find in his activity is conformity to an order given by someone who has authority over him. The case would be otherwise if a workingman knew clearly, from day to day, moment to moment, just what part he was playing in every step of the productive process and what place the factory occupied in society. If a workingman's job is to drop a die punch on a piece of brass destined for some device in a subway, he ought to know it. Moreover he ought to have a clear-cut image of the place and function of that piece of brass on the subway line, what operations it has already undergone and which ones are to follow before being put into place. The plea here is not, of course, for a lecture to each worker at the beginning of each piece of work. What is possible is such things as having each work group occasionally explore the plant by turns for several hours, at the usual wages, all to the accompaniment of appropriate explanations. Even better would be to allow each worker to bring his family along. And why not? Is it natural that a woman should never be allowed a glimpse of the establishment where her husband daily expends his best energies? A workingman truly wedded to his job would be proud and happy to show his place of work to his wife and children. It would also be fitting to let every workingman see from time to time the finished article in whose manufacture he has had a part, however modest, and that he should grasp exactly what his part in it was. The problem is naturally varying for each factory, each process, but it is possible to find, according to particular circumstances, an infinite variety of methods to stimulate and satisfy a workingman's curiosity concerning his work. The demands on imagination are not too exacting, once the end is clearly conceived, which is that of rending the veil that money interposes between a workingman and his work. Workingmen believe with that kind of belief not precisely expressible in words—and which thus expressed would seem absurd—that their labor is converted into money of which a small part comes back to them and the lion's share goes to the Boss. They should find it possible to understand not with that

superficial layer of intelligence that we apply to self-evident truths—they already have that kind of understanding—but with all their body and soul, so to speak, that through all their travail they are creating objects called up by the needs of society, and that they have a real if finite right to be proud of them.

It is true that as long as they are limited over long periods of time to repeating identical sequences of five or six simple movements, they cannot be said really to be manufacturing objects. As long as this is true, there will always be an abased and malevolent proletariat at the heart of society, whatever else is done. True that certain mentally arrested human types are naturally apt for this kind of work. But it is not true that their number equals the number of men who now work that way—far from it. After all, out of one hundred children born into middle-class families the proportion of these, once they have become adults, that are engaged in purely routine tasks is far lower than in the case of one hundred children born into working families; yet the distribution of aptitudes is on an average probably the same. The remedy is not hard to come upon, at least in periods when metal is normally available. Whenever an operation calls for these repeated sequences of a small number of simple movements, an automatic machine should perform them—this without exception. Men are preferably used now because they are machines that can obey a voice, and it suffices to receive an order for them swiftly to substitute a certain combination of movements for another. But there are automatic multiple function machines that can also be shifted from one process to another by substituting one cam for another. This kind of machine is still a novelty and hence incompletely developed. But no one can foresee to what point of perfection it may be brought, if the trouble is taken to develop it. Things still called machines might then make their appearance, but which, from the point of view of the man who works, would be the diametric opposite of most machines now in use. It often happens that the same word may conceal opposite realities. A specialized machine worker now has for his share in a manufacturing process only the automatic repetition of certain movements, whereas to the machine that he serves goes the whole share, stamped and crystallized in its metal, of synthesis and intelligence that an assembly-line process may imply. Such a reversal is unnatural, criminal. But if a person had for his task the regulation of an automatic machine and the contriving of the cams appropriate to the varying parts to be turned or machined, he would assume, on the one hand, his share of the synthetic and intellectual efforts required, and on the other, a manual effort involving, like that of the artisan, real skill. Such a relationship between man and machine would be entirely satisfactory.

Time and rhythm constitute the most important factor of the whole problem of work. Certainly it is not the work itself that is at issue. It is at once inevitable and fitting that work should involve monotony and tedium; indeed, what considerable earthly undertakings in whatever domain have ever been free of tedium and monotony? There is more monotony in a Gregorian Chant or a Bach Concerto than in an operetta. This world into which we are cast *does* exist; we are truly flesh and blood; we have been thrown out of eternity; and we are indeed obliged to journey painfully through time, minute in and minute out. This travail is our lot, and the monotony of work is but one of the forms

that it assumes. But it remains not the less true that our thought was intended to master time, and this vocation, for such it is, must be kept inviolate in every man. The absolutely uniform and at the same time varied and continually surprising succession of our days and seasons are exactly conformable to our misery and our grandeur. Everything that is in some degree beautiful and good reproduces in some way this mixture of uniformity and variety; everything that does not is bad and degrading. The peasant's toil is necessarily obedient to the world's rhythm. The workingman's labor is, by its very nature, relatively independent of it, but it could approximate it. What actually happens in a factory is that uniformity and variety are mingled all right, but the mixture is scarcely that achieved by the sun and the stars, to pursue our cosmic instance. For the sun and the stars, time is filled beforehand with a framework of ordered and limited variety having regular recurrences. This framework may lodge an infinite variety of events that are absolutely unforeseeable and partially innocent of order. The futurity of one working in a factory, on the other hand, is empty because of its absolute unforeseeableness, and deader than the past because of the identity of the moments, which succeed one another like the ticking of the clock. A uniformity that imitates the movements of a clock, not that of the constellations, a variety that recognizes no rule and consequently excludes all possibility of foreknowledge, make for a time that is uninhabitable and irrespirable to man.

The transformation of the machine can alone keep work time from aping clock time. But even this is not enough. The future must be opened up for the workingman through removal of the blinkers that keep him from exercising his sense of foresight. Only then may he experience the feeling of advancing on the plane of time, of moving with each effort toward a specific end. As things stand, the effort he is called upon to make, at the moment, leads him nowhere, unless to the hour of quitting-time; and since one working day gives rise to another, no more than that, the achieved end in question is nothing less than a form of death. He has no way of visualizing achievement except under the form of wages, especially in the case of piece-work, which bends him to an obsession with money. Throwing the future open to workingmen in the sense of making it possible for them to envisage it, is a problem the formulation of which must vary from case to case. Seen generally, the solution of the problem implies not only a certain knowledge on the part of each worker of the functioning of the factory as a whole, but an organization of the factory that makes for some kind of autonomy of each shop unit in relation to the whole establishment, of each worker in relation to his shop. As for immediate perspectives, each workingman ought to know more or less what will be expected of him a week or a fortnight in advance, and even have some say-so in the order of performance of various tasks. As for remoter perspectives, he ought to be in a position to stake them out, certainly not as far ahead or as accurately as those directing the plant, yet in a manner somehow analogous. Even though nothing might accrue to his actual rights, he would experience that feeling of proprietorship for which a man's heart thirsts and which, without eliminating the fact of pain, abolishes disgust with his lot.

Such reforms are difficult and some circumstances peculiar to the present time do not diminish the difficulty. On the other hand, it may turn out that suffering was the indis-

pensable condition for a feeling that something had to be changed. The main obstacles remain the moral ones. It is difficult to vanquish fear and contempt. Workingmen, certainly many of them, have become well-nigh incurably bitter after so many thousands of wounding pin-pricks and affronts, so much so that they instinctively view as a snare everything proposed from above, especially by their employers. This morbid distrust, which could render hopeless any effort at amelioration, cannot be overcome without patience and perseverance. Many employers fear that any effort at reform, however mild, would be but a new weapon in the hands of militant leaders to whom they attribute all social evils without exception and whom they picture in some way as mythological monsters. It goes against their grain to admit that workingmen may have certain moral qualities, now given no outlet, that could work toward social stability, if only the proper incentives were allowed to take their course. Even if they were convinced of the utility of social reforms, they would hang back through an exaggerated feeling of solicitude for trade secrets. Yet experience should have taught them by now that the mute bitterness and hostility deeply rooted in a workingman's heart must be far more dangerous than a competitor's inquisitiveness. For the rest, the effort to be made concerns not only employers and workingmen, but society at large. The school, notably. It must be conceived in an entirely new way, that it may shape men capable of understanding the total aspects of the work in which they will be taking part. Not that the level of theoretic studies must be lowered; rather, the contrary. More should be done to excite intelligence to wakefulness, but at the same time teaching must itself become more concrete.

The evil whose cure is here proposed concerns all society. No society can be stable in which a whole stratum of the population labors daily with a heart-felt loathing. This loathing for their work colors their whole view of life all their life. The humiliation that accompanies each of their efforts seeks its compensation in a kind of spirit of working-class imperialism, nurtured by the propagandas issuing from Marxism. Were a bolt-maker to experience a legitimate and limited pride in the making of bolts, there could be no question of infusing him with a factitious, unlimited pride by holding before him the thought that his class is destined to make and dominate history. Similar considerations are applicable to private life, notably family life and relations between the sexes. The dreary exhaustion from factory work leaves a gaping void that clamors to be filled. It can be filled only by rapid, violent gratifications the resulting corruption of which is contagious for all classes of society. The correlation is not immediately obvious, but it does exist. The family can expect no consideration among the people of this country as long as a part of that people continue to work in loathing and disgust.

Our factories have become festering-grounds of evil, and the evil of the factories must be corrected. It is difficult, but perhaps not impossible. It is high time that specialists, engineers, and others concerned, should be exercised not only to make objects, but also not to destroy men. Not to render them docile, nor even to make them happy, but quite simply not to force them to abase themselves.

(Translated by Felix Giovanelli)

EDITOR'S POSTSCRIPT

1.

In the early thirties, Simone Weil worked for almost two years in various plants in Paris, including the Renault factory. She wanted to find out from personal experience what such work was like, and she wanted to share the lives of the work-people. So she gave up her teaching and her journalistic work and became for a time a common worker. The above article is the fruit of that experience. She did not publish it, and it now appears for the first time in print.

We get another, more personal glimpse of her reactions in a letter she wrote after her first day's work; the friend to whom it was sent has kindly allowed me to print it here:

Dear X:

I hasten to write you a few lines because otherwise I should not have the courage to leave any written record of my first impressions on the job. The so-called "nice little shop" turned out to be, first, a rather big shop, and, second, a lousy, a very lousy shop . . .

Yesterday I stamped out parts on a press. Up to 4 o'clock, I turned out 400 pieces an hour (note: I am paid by the hour—3 francs) and felt I was working hard. At 4, the foreman came around and told me that if I did not turn out 800 an hour, he would fire me. "If you do 800 from now on, maybe I'll keep you on." They do us a favor, you see, by letting us burst ourselves working—and we must say thank-you. I exerted all my strength and got it up to 600 an hour. They let me come back today anyway—they are short of hands, because the shop is so bad they can't keep them, and they have rush orders for armaments. . . .

Everything is done on the run. There is a moving-belt line (it was the first time I had seen one and it sickened me) where, a worker told me, they have *doubled* the speed in four years. Today a foreman took one woman's place on the line and worked at top speed for ten minutes (which is easy enough to do if you rest afterwards) to show her that she could work faster.

You may imagine what a state I was in when I quit work last night. (Happily, my headaches have stopped.) In the locker-room, I was amazed to see that the other women were still able to chatter and did not seem to feel in their hearts the rage that filled mine. A few however—two or three—did express such feelings to me. They are ill and cannot get any rest during the working-day. (You know, I suppose, that working presses with the feet all day is especially hard on women . . .)

One girl from the belt, who went home on the trolley with me, said that after several years of it, one gets to the point where one doesn't feel it any more, though one continues to feel brutalized. That strikes me as the last stage of degradation. She told me how she and her comrades had let themselves be reduced to such slavery. (Not that I didn't know already, really.) Five or six years ago, she said, they were making 70 francs a day, and "for 70 francs you put up with anything, even if it kills you." So now there are women who, though not absolutely needing it, are happy to have, on the belt, four francs an hour plus bonus. Who in the workingclass movement—or what is called such—had the courage to think and say, during the period of high wages, that the workers were being degraded and corrupted? Yes, the workers deserved their fate. But the responsibility is collective, and the suffering, individual. Any one with decent instincts must weep tears of blood to be caught in the gears of this mechanism.

Perhaps you wonder how I resist the temptation to escape, since no necessity forces me to suffer like this. And yet, even at those moments when I feel I can't stand it any longer, such a temptation hardly arises. For I don't experience this

suffering as my own but rather as part of the general agony of all workers, and whether I, personally, endure it or not appears to me as an almost indifferent detail. The desire to know and to understand brushes aside my own feelings. . . .

Enough for now. I'm almost sorry I wrote this. You're troubled enough without my inflicting these dismal thoughts on you.

Affectionately, S. W.

2.

I want to add a few words on one aspect of "Factory Work."

As a whole, it seems to me a remarkable piece of writing, combining acuteness of analysis and subtlety of psychological observation with poetic imagination. The central theme, on the way time passes in a factory, is wonderfully developed. (Parts of this recall George Woodcock's "The Tyranny of the Clock" in our October, 1944, issue; just as there are striking similarities between other parts of her essay and certain ideas Paul Goodman has developed in these pages and elsewhere.) It is odd, by the way, that Weil's writing so often gives the impression of eloquence and distinction when, actually, she is not a particularly skillful or even expert writer. I think this is because she is entirely serious about what she wants to say, so that one responds directly to the purity and incan-

DEAR COMRADE EDITOR,

Because there are still a number of radicals and liberals who think there is Socialism in U.S.S.R., I would like to give you some information about how anybody unfortunate enough to have a relative in that "Socialist Paradise" is victimized.

I have recently received a letter from my relative asking for food and clothes. I went to the P.O. and was told that no parcels could be sent to U.S.S.R. Whether I am to blame our capitalist government or the Socialist Government for this does not much interest me. I investigated every other possibility. Finally I got in touch with two organisations; World Tours, Inc. in New York and the Jewish Immigrant Aid Society in Canada. They sent me all the regulations, with a special notice to say that now, at last, used clothing might be sent as well as new. This is real news!

The following are the rules. If I want to send an old coat to "Paradise" I must first have it valued by World Tours (this service is done free), then take it to be fumigated and get a certificate from the local health authorities to say that this has been done. Then I pay 80% of its value in duty, 10% to the U.S.S.R., 1% to the Soviet (whatever this means) \$1.65 (8/6d.) for having it inspected, \$2.00 (10/-) for a licence to send it in to U.S.S.R., 40% of its value (to whom this goes is not clear) plus the ordinary parcel post rate. I may then pack it up and send it to one of these two organisations who will graciously send it on to U.S.S.R. But I must not address it myself, only enclose the address for them to put on the parcel.

But if I can afford to send a new coat, then all the payments hold good except that I pay 100% duty on the already inflated price instead of the paltry 80% on the used coat. But, for some strange "socialist" reason, if I could send a coat worth \$100 (£25), I would only have to pay 15% instead of the 40% of its value; so that my inability to buy \$100 coats is penalized—by whom, I am not sure. But the final blame for the whole systematic robbery must rest on the U.S.S.R., as it is they who grant the licences to these two extortionate organisations.

I admit that throughout history capitalist governments have thought out and put into practice some pretty ingenious systems for extorting money, especially from their colonials; but I think they could learn something from the government of the "workers' fatherland." If anyone wishes to check the facts I have given, let him write to World Tours Inc., 1123 Broadway, New York 10, or to the Jewish Immigrant Society, 4221 Esplanade Avenue, Montreal, Canada, and ask for the conditions and rules governing parcels to U.S.S.R.

Yours for exposing these robbers,

(M. P. BRITISH COLUMBIA)

(Reprinted from "Freedom through Anarchism";
London; Oct. 5, 1946.)

descent of her ideas; the heavy, abstract expression of which one would be unpleasantly conscious in a less ardent thinker somehow gets forgotten as one becomes absorbed in what she is saying. Likewise, I imagine she herself was interested simply in expressing, with scrupulousness exactness, only as much as she really knew and felt, and felt that preoccupation with style would hurry her on to larger statements than she wanted to make. She preferred to "throw away" her effects, as the comedians put it. And when she is really in the grip of an important perception, this mechanical distinction between style and content is overcome, and the two fuse in what is excellent writing by any standard.

What I want to note here is the contrast between the main body of the article, which is critical and descriptive, and the conclusion (beginning with the words: "The factory ought to be a place where . . . workingpeople can taste joy and nourish themselves on it.") which is more positive and programmatic. This conclusion seems to me a let-down; the remedies suggested appear as superficial as the evils previously analyzed are profound.

The difficulty is not that many of Weil's suggestions are not very much to the point; indeed, they flow quite naturally from the preceding analysis. That the worker should know what he's making, that his family should feel "at home" in his shop, that he should have a sense of mastering the machine instead of being part of it, and that higher wages won't give him these things—these are all truths. In fact, they are truisms. Today a friend happened to show me, for example, a memorandum on "personnel work" just issued by a large corporation by which he is employed. A quotation will show its drift:

"Economic satisfaction alone is no longer sufficient. Social demands need to be met, such as:

- "(a) A sense of expression in their work;
- "(b) Freedom from autocratic treatment;
- "(c) A feeling of growth of individual worthwhileness."

Similar ideas have been current among industrial psychologists for years over here, as in the Western Electric studies; and I dimly recall some German group that in the twenties developed a theory as to how to make the factory "home-like" in the literal sense of bridging the gap between the home and the workplace.*

My objection to Weil's proposals is not that they are familiar, but that, in common with those mentioned above, they are vitiated by (1) being presented as improvements on the existing industrial order which can be realized without revolutionary social change; and (2) being, therefore, addressed to the bosses rather than to the workers.

(1) I think our whole social order, of which factory work is merely one aspect, is too deeply infected with exploitation to be reformed. It must be swept away, and a new structure, based on cooperation and fraternity rather than subordination and authority, must be created in its place. This may be "Utopian" but it happens also to be realistic if one is speak-

ing in terms of correcting the evils described by Weil's essay. I have had no personal experience with factory work, but I gather from friends who worked in plants during the war that the atmosphere is about as she described it, a little less sombre, perhaps, for this is a rich and easygoing country, but still frustrating, deadening, torturing. This is not because the bosses are stupid or absentminded or wicked (which is the logical assumption behind appeals to *them* to reform things) but because our social system is set up that way.

(2) It would seem more logical to appeal to those who directly suffer these evils, the workers, if one wants to see a change. Imagine what an effect it would have if any large number of workers insisted on enjoying their work, that is, altering the hours, the factory regimen, the "way things are done here" to please themselves. And in fact such humanization of factory work as has taken place is almost wholly the doing of the workers, not the bosses or their psychologists: pressure from below, via the unions, rather than enlightenment from above. Yet Weil addresses herself mainly to the employer. She even speaks of the workers' "morbid" distrust and suspicions—why should they not be suspicious considering what she describes them as enduring?

This is hardly the first time that a penetrating analysis of what is wrong has been followed by inadequate positive proposals. That seems to be a common fate of social critics in our time. It is not simply, as the philistine puts it, that "it's easy enough to criticise." Something much deeper: we find ourselves in situations we can neither tolerate nor see very clearly how to remedy. By the time she wrote this article, Weil was pretty much disillusioned about Marxian socialism and the workingclass movement. She probably felt some responsibility to give a "positive" conclusion to her criticism and, reacting against Marxism, went in the other direction. The very tone of the writing suggests that her positive ideas did not come so spontaneously to her as her criticisms. It is also suggestive that she did two versions of the article: a shorter one, omitting the whole final "positive" section; and the longer one presented here.

WHAT COLUMN D'YA READ?

The masses of Japan are no longer regimented—no longer enslaved. The Japanese citizen no longer cringes in the presence of . . . authority; his home has become his castle . . . ; he enjoys the right of assembly; . . . he enjoys the untrammelled right, individually or collectively with his fellow workers, to demand correction of unjust labor practices and conditions . . . (Report by General MacArthur to the War Dept., as printed in N. Y. Times for Aug. 30, page 6, column 2.)

TOKYO, Aug. 29: General MacArthur's headquarters . . . informed the Japanese Government today that "strikes, walkouts or other work stoppages which are inimical to the objectives of the military occupation are prohibited." At the same time General MacArthur ordered the Japanese authorities to end the seamen's strike . . . There was an indication that American occupation troops might be used if necessary. (Same paper, same date, same page, column 1.)

DEPARTMENT OF FINE DISTINCTIONS

The Philippine Government has proceeded with vigor in its campaign against the dissident Hukbalahap organization in Central Luzon . . . President Roxas has consistently refused to dignify this campaign by calling it a civil war. He considers it a police problem of sufficient magnitude to throw the available weight of the nation's military police power into it, buttressed with light and medium artillery.

—N. Y. Times report from Manila, Sept. 7.

BLESSINGS ON THEE, LITTLE MAN

In the desert fastnesses near Los Alamos, behind armed sentries and barbed-wire barricades, the nation's topnotch scientists labor to bring forth another atomic blessing for mankind.

—article in the November "Holiday."

THE PROGRESSIVE MIND (1)

Two films of morbid type are now being exhibited on Broadway: "The Killers" and "The Big Sleep" . . . They are not only unprogressive pictures but they also indicate a most disturbing bent.

—Bosley Crowther in N. Y. Times, Sept. 1.

* The November "Fortune" has an interesting article on the theories of Elton Mayo, who, with Fritz Roethlisberger, conducted the classic Western Electric studies twenty years ago. The parallelism between their analysis of what's wrong with factory work and Weil's is extraordinary—all the more so because theirs is based on an enormous scientific study (at one point, 20,000 workers were individually interviewed), while hers flows from her own observation and experience only. They began with a simple materialist-economic approach; found that didn't work; and were finally driven to a psychological approach with overtones of Freud and Durkheim. At times they echo Weil, as: "Granted that labor disputes are often stated in terms of wages, hours of work, and physical conditions of work, is it not possible that these demands are disguising, or in part are the symptomatic expressions of, much more deeply rooted human situations which we have not yet learned to recognize, to understand or to control?" A line of speculation that is anathema to the "pure and simple" trade unionist—or the p. & s. Marxist.

FRENCH LETTER

The November Elections

ON November 10, the elections for the new National Assembly took place. The following table summarizes the main results (exclusive of the 45 colonial deputies, who will not be selected for several weeks):

Party	Seats in New Assembly	Seats in Old Assembly	% Popular Vote, Nov. 10	% Popular Vote, June 2
Communists	163	148	28.2%	26.2%
MRP	160	160	26.0%	28.1%
Socialists	93	120	17.9%	21.1%
Radicals (& allies)	59	50	11.1%	11.5%
Republican Party of Liberty & allies)	42	34	12.8%	11.8%

Thus the two extreme groups gained: the Communists and the Rightwing "Republican Party of Liberty" group. The Radicals and the MRP about held their own. The Socialists lost heavily.

The big surprise of the elections was the revival of the Communists, whom almost every one (including the present writers) had believed to have reached their high-water mark some time ago and to be now in retreat. The stunning defeat of the Socialists was not so unexpected, except to the Socialists themselves, whose post-election feelings Leon Blum expressed in *Le Populaire*: "The setback was unforeseen, since our information had led us to expect at least a holding of our old position, and perhaps a slight advance." Not to mention those who, like the author of the "special to *The Call*" of October 21 dreamily anticipated "the re-emergence of the Socialists as the strongest political group in France."

To understand the returns, one must go behind the bare figures. Thus it is important to note that, while the Communists gained 15 seats, the Socialists lost 27, so that the Left will be farther than ever from commanding a majority in the new Assembly, while the bourgeois parties are relatively much stronger. The 556,000 votes lost by the MRP show—considering the votes which it lost to the extreme Right as a result of its strained relations with DeGaulle—a remarkable power of survival, while the 734,000 votes lost by the Socialists, when added to the 293,000 dropped in June, seem to indicate a real disintegration of that party. Taken by itself, the Communists' gain of 273,000 votes (only 2% of the electorate) since June does not seem too significant. But this gain makes it once more the leading party in France, and, above all, is the result of a workingclass swing back to Communism. This is the real problem. Let us examine it.

THE CP "GOES TO THE MASSES"

Up to the June elections, it was possible for the three big parties to collaborate in the government, despite their rivalry. This collaboration dissolved, however, in the face of the coming fall elections. For the June returns had confirmed what the voters' rejection of the first draft constitution had suggested: that the workingclass parties no longer had a parliamentary majority. The CP, furthermore, was no longer the strongest party in the assembly, yielding primacy to the MRP. These two facts were important because they undermined the Communist tactic of taking power legally, a tactic which was based on two assumptions: (1) that the dominant Socialist-Communist bloc in the assembly would exert a strong enough pressure to put through basic social changes; (2) that the holding of certain key ministries by the CP, to-

gether with its near-monopoly in the leadership of the unions, would make it possible to exploit these changes exclusively in its own favor.

After June, however, the CP faced the possibility that a coalition of its enemies would strip it of all governmental power; it had already lost its parliamentary majority, and might well lose even more ground in the fall elections. And so the CP was the first to break the governmental truce. The others followed suit, and soon there were 22 ministries, but each of them with the same function: Ministry of Propaganda.

The Communists unleashed a propaganda drive of unprecedented scope, making use primarily of their power-positions in the government and in society. A swarm of para-Communist organizations brought all sorts of advantages to their adherents—peasants, shopkeepers, little businessmen, women, etc.—thanks to the fact that the Communists held the Ministry of Production and so were able to get for their followers all kind of merchandise at low prices and without coupons. Simultaneously, their demagogic promises were boundless: each social group saw its special interest completely satisfied, once the Communists had enough power to act freely. The most hysterical chauvinism was also brought into play. Communist leaflets choked every letter-box, Communist posters shouted from every wall. (One slogan often found in peasant and middleclass districts was: VOTE COMMUNIST AND PROTECT PROPERTY RIGHTS!) Even the political apathy of the masses was cleverly turned to account: the Communists often did not announce their political meetings as such but rather as free showings of movies—a propaganda medium now used on a national scale in France for the first time.

But the best propaganda is effective, of course, only if it finds masses prepared to accept its message. There were two influences at work on the masses, one favorable for the CP, the other not; the first turned out to be the dominant one. Let us consider these in detail.

THE COMMUNISTS AND WAGES

The unfavorable factor was economic. By last spring, the real wages of the best-paid workers had fallen to 50% of the pre-war level; indignantly, the workers demanded that the government un-freeze wages; it was the CP chieftains who discouraged strikes most effectively, calling on the workers for patience. After the setback they suffered in the constitutional referendum in May, the Communist chiefs decided to get out from under on the question of wage-freezing, and began to agitate, through the trade unions, for a general wage rise of 25%. The realization of this increase, however, did not regain for them the confidence of the workers; for, under the circumstances, so massive a general increase could only have an immediate inflationary effect. Even before wages went up, a new price increase wiped out most of the anticipated gain, and soon afterward, prices had soared even higher. Between July and October, retail prices of food, which had slightly fallen in June, rose an average of 52.2%. Also, since the 25% increase applied equally to all wages, the result was to leave the very low wage-levels still below the subsistence mark and to accentuate that spread between high and low wages characteristic of the Russian economy.

The result was a series of strikes in the less favored callings, such as postmen, bank clerks and certain types of industrial workers. The industrial strikes, incidentally, were a direct defiance of the CP, one of whose members was Minister of Production. Tied to their policy of production for the sake of a mightier France (see our article last issue), the Communists had no choice but to fight the strikes. This they did

without scruple, telling the strikers they were playing the game of the trusts—and the “Hitlero-Trotskyists”—and not even hesitating to provoke one group of workers against another, as when they led the Marseille stevedores against the striking postmen. The consequence was a strengthening of workingclass hostility to the CP—a tendency which had been gathering force for the past year. Syndicalists, Socialists, Trotskyists all gained thereby, all began to hope they could gain influence among the workers at the expense of the CP. They had some reason to expect that the decline of the CP in the big industrial centers would continue right up to the November elections.

DE GAULLE SAVES THE DAY— FOR THE CP

But now the second factor, working in the opposite direction, began to come into play. Ever since the liberation, the workers had feared the institution of a big-business dictatorship draped with the mantle of DeGaulle. But the general, whatever his private thoughts, had stated publicly when he resigned the presidency last January that he was permanently withdrawing from politics. And even though he did not keep his word strictly, his May 12 speech at Clemenceau's tomb had stressed, as in the times of national unity during the resistance, that “the nation's safety lies in a truce between political parties.” So far, so good. But then came his famous Bayeux speech of June 16 in which he openly attacked the constitutional ideas of the Communists and Socialists and urged the adoption of a constitution giving the executive strong powers—i. e., opening a road for a DeGaulle dictatorship. Two days later, groups of Gaullists demonstrated in the center of Paris, shouting: “DeGaulle to power! Hang Thorez!” That night the CP headquarters was attacked, and great piles of party literature were thrown into the street and burned. The Parisian workers replied with a huge counter-demonstration; the memory of February, 1944, revived among the workers, those days when a united class front was spontaneously presented against the threat of a reactionary *coup d'état*. Each new action of DeGaulle—interviews, statements to the press, the Epinal speech—now had the same effect, drawing the workers closer together. And when the MRP, under the pressure of DeGaulle and the Right, made its about-face on the proposed constitution (which it had agreed with the other parties to support) and announced that its first step once the new government was installed would be to propose a revision of the constitution—at this, the workingclass sensed that the danger of reaction was imminent. Nothing could more beautifully have fitted the plans of the CP.

The Communists replied boldly to each new move of DeGaulle, tirelessly agitating against the Rightwing offensive, making themselves the spirited champions of “the united front of all workers against reaction and big business.” The Socialist Party did—nothing. Its leaders did not realize that, despite the tide of workingclass hostility to the CP, an even stronger current was now running favoring united action against DeGaulle. They plotted their strategy as if the situation had not changed, and, like the French general staff since 1870, busily prepared to fight this war with the weapons and tactics of the last. The CP exploited their opportunity, picturing the SP as a party ready to compromise, out of spite against the Communists, with big business. The SP right wing made their task easier: at a time when the Communists were calling for a crusade against capitalist reaction, Leon Blum wrote in *Le Populaire* that the Socialists in the cabinet must act as “trustees of capitalist society.”

The workers, who in the liberation period had invested the

CP with a revolutionary character, now began to see it once more as the sole workingclass party in a bourgeois society, trying to unite all progressive forces against fascism. This was all the easier since the CP concentrated its fire against the MRP and was the only big party to sharply denounce the political activities of the Catholic Church. Thus the question of wages and strikes lost its immediacy for the workers, and the Communists' propaganda began to find a real audience. Much as the dictators had diverted the discontent of the masses by arousing their patriotism, so the CP exploited the fear of a Rightwing dictatorship, whose imminence it deliberately exaggerated.

And so in the November elections it won back the ground it had lost in the industrial regions, and even made new gains, drawing away from the SP a great deal of such workingclass support as it had managed to retain up to then. The electoral figures for Paris, Marseille, Lyon, the North, and the Pas-du-Calais show this clearly enough. The Trotskyists also lost to the Communists. Their total votes were bigger than in June, but only because they put up more candidates. Except for the Puy-de-Dome region, their local votes, wherever comparison is possible, were consistently lower than they had been in June; in Rhone, they fell from 4,949 in June to 2,883 in November; in Isere, from 3,673 to 2,484.

THE CP AND THE PEASANTS

The growing influence of the CP among the farmers, and its significance for the future, have been generally underestimated. This would not have saved the party, it is true, if it had not also regained much of its standing among the workers; but the combination of workers and farmers provides a specially firm base for the party.

Those farmers who by tradition favor republican government have swung toward the CP because in it they see the only party effectively opposing Rightwing dictatorship. The SP, which after the liberation became the political heir of the Radical Socialists (the once-great middleclass party), seemed to them weak, and besides, it all too often compromised with the MRP. In the West, where the conflict between the Church and the anti-clericals is especially sharp, the CP attracted the anti-clerical votes because it was the only big party that boldly and powerfully attacked the Church as a force in politics. In those rural provinces where class lines are drawn most sharply, the partisans of the Church and the anti-clericals tend to line up at opposite poles of the social structure. Furthermore, in such regions, the hatred of Germany is violent and offers great opportunities for the chauvinist propaganda the CP specializes in.

THE FACE OF THE FUTURE

The elections have settled nothing. The CP has carried out its minimum program: to become once more—by a very slight majority—the leading party, and to protect the key positions already won in the State and in the economy. But, not enjoying the totalitarian power of a Tito, the CP is still dependent on the mood of the masses. If its opposition to the workers' wage demands did it no serious damage this time, it was because of the political crisis caused by DeGaulle's taking the offensive, and because there exists no independent revolutionary movement. The SP still exists, however enfeebled, and it is impossible to be sure, so complex is the situation, that the present balance of forces between the two big workingclass parties may not later on be upset again. And even if the SP breaks up completely, the CP will by no means attract even the majority of the former Socialist voters. Reliable estimates put the number of Socialist votes which in this

election went over to the CP at 150,000; this is only one-fifth of the SP's total loss in votes. In some regions, the figures are amazing. Thus in Haute-Loire, the CP got only 530 of the 4,670 votes which the SP lost, and in Haut-Rhine, only 253 out of 16,800 lost Socialist votes! Many former Socialists failed to vote at all; the rest went to the Right.

Furthermore, the CP is threatened, not now but in the future, by the realignment that has taken place among the Gaullists. An increasing number of his followers are adopting his thesis that the national safety calls for the rapid and ruthless elimination of the Communists from every position of power. And even those who still think that, for the moment, collaboration with the Communists is necessary, have broken off friendly relations with them. (Cf. Francois Mauriac, once their intimate ally in the resistance, in recent issues of *Figaro*.) Thus we see an explosive tension building up between the two extreme parties. The conflict will not be resolved tomorrow, of course, nor can one foresee very well just how it will evolve, especially since it is so closely related to foreign policy.

So far as the interests of the workingclass are concerned—and of all those in France who aspire to the economic and social freeing of man—the Communist-Gaullist struggle is on a par with a possible war between the Anglo-Saxon powers and Soviet Russia. The workers' interests can be served only if they themselves strike out an independent line of defense of their own. Unhappily, today such a "third camp" policy is not a reality in terms of political power. The more evenly matched the Communist-Gaullist struggle is, the more time we shall have to take the first step towards safety: to liberate ourselves, as workers and socialists, from the delusion that today the class struggle still pivots around the axis of capitalism—vs.—anti-capitalism.

Many in France don't want either Communist or Gaullist dictatorship. For a while, the SP looked like an alternative, but this road now appears to end in an impasse. The passivity of the masses has undoubtedly played a part in the situation, but it won't do to blame it all on that. The sterility of the left intellectuals is also responsible for the mess we are in. Here we might remark that the impossibility of communicating with a large audience, which J.-P. Sartre and others have insisted on, seems to us only partly true. If the people don't pay much attention to the intellectuals, it is because those writers (like Sartre and his group) who don't simply hash over the platitudes of a vanished age, concern themselves almost wholly with general questions and pay little attention to the concrete phenomena of present-day social and political life.

Paris, November 22

GELO AND ANDREA

LONDON LETTER

THE keynotes of recent political trends in England are to be found in three statements by Labour ministers, which show the steady approach towards a managerial state built on co-operation between government, industrialists, financiers and trade union leaders, and which also indicate the virtual abandonment by the leading elements in the Labour Party of any real pretence of egalitarian socialism, or of control by the workers.

(1) Hugh Dalton, Chancellor of the Exchequer: "The credit of the British Government now stands so high that we are able to borrow money more cheaply than has ever

been possible before. In fact, the Labour Government is a good risk, and the City recognizes that fact." Indeed, this is not surprising, when the "nationalised" industries are to be managed by the same old business men in a new guise and the investors are to be saved from the ups and downs of ordinary investment by guaranteed rates of interest based on a very generous allocation of bonds in compensation for their surrendered shares.

(2) Sir Stafford Cripps, head of the Department of Trade, asserted that very few wage-earners were fitted to take any part in the administration of industry, and that any "joint production" schemes must be considered as consultative rather than managerial. This, of course, ties in with the fact that the only even nominal representatives of the workers on the new Boards are trade union leaders, who have already become a part of the managerial aristocracy—in some cases even of the titular aristocracy, like Lord Citrine, who is to "represent the workers" on one of the new boards for administering the nationalised coal industry.

(3) Herbert Morrison, Lord President of the Council (the Labour Government still maintain the mediaeval offices of feudal England), spoke at Birmingham, the Mecca of moneyed industrialists, and soothed the owners by telling them that the government had no wish to abolish the profit motive. It is true that he added a rider that they were "determined to make it work for the people and not the few," but it still remains to be seen how a profit motive can fail to work for the few while that few still own the means of production, or draw their dividends through guaranteed government stocks.

A further ironical news item, filling in the picture of the new Labour Government, is that the country will pay £16,500 (nearly 70,000 dollars) to fit out a house for the Foreign Secretary. Is this to be regarded as benefitting the people or the few?

These statements, read against the background of the increasing managerial tendency in industry, show the kind of society the Labour government envisages for England. It will be a society where business men are provided for among the entourage of the boards of nationalised industry, where shareholders are pensioned off in the sleepy security of guaranteed interest in government stock, and where the workers will be called to toil even harder because this is a new "socialist" Britain, "their Britain" where the men who climbed to power on their backs are now enjoying the fruits of long years of ambition and political intrigue. Conscription will be the key to the social structure—legal conscription where it is necessary, as in the case of military service and certain unpleasant occupations, extra-legal and economic conscription by means of the new social insurance scheme to prevent individuals from drifting out of industry or losing the habit of regular work.

THE recent Trade Union Congress, perhaps the most important single event in England during the past two months, did nothing more than emphasise this tendency towards a corporate and regimental system. No longer was even lip service paid to the old militant attitudes against industrial tyranny and capitalism which characterised earlier congresses. Leaders of the executive made appeals to the delegates to drop the old "restrictive" practices, which had been gained as safeguards by the struggles of generations of workers, and to adopt a new attitude towards industry, based on co-operation with the management for increasing production. A more accommodating attitude on such questions as the piecework system and "time and motion study" techniques was advocated by Dukes, the outgoing chairman, and there seems no doubt that the leaders are preparing for a sell-out on Bedaux

and Stakhanovist methods. Significantly, the appeal for higher production was made by George Gibson, who has now moved into high finance as a director of the Bank of England, and accusations of "laziness" were levelled at workers in certain industries by Lord Citrine, who announced regretfully that he was leaving trade union circles for a highly paid position as a director of nationalised industry.

The really amazing thing is that these statements were passed over without protest. Just before the war, any leader who had spoken thus would have been rightly denounced, but now, as *The Economist* put it aptly, "It is a far cry from Tolpuddle to Transport House, and the delegates to the 78th TUC at Brighton were not allowed by their leaders to forget the changed conditions that had taken place in their fortunes."

The most important issue at the Congress was the acceptance of the General Council's report on the "union shop." The General Council stated they favoured 100% unionism, under which any man must belong to a union affiliated to the T.U.C. The man who chose to join an independent union, or to stand on his own, must in the opinion of the Congress delegates, be hounded out of employment. The actual wording of the report is significant:

"Affiliated unions will without doubt continue to support the General Council in refusing to recognize any right claimed by breakaway unions or by any dissident bodies which seek to sponsor or to support the setting up of an organisation to usurp the functions of the Congress as the national trade union co-ordinating authority of the British Trade Union Movement.

"The General Council is equally confident that Congress will support it in the view that the position of non-unionists cannot be justified either on grounds of principle or expediency. The liberty of the individual is not an absolute and unqualified right. It is subject to restrictions for social ends which admit of no compromise, and one of them is that the presence of non-unionists may result, and often has resulted, in the stoppage of an entire industry."

This report was motivated by a fear on the part of the union leaders that any wide breakaway movement would undermine their position as dictators of industry. Clearly, men do not join breakaway unions for fun, but because there are radical faults in existing unions which they see no chance of rectifying, and the same applies to many non-unionists in this country. But because their purpose is to govern rather than represent their members, the present union leaders are prevented from making any changes that might turn the unions into instruments of struggle. Accordingly, they have no alternative but to make sure by dictatorial means that no one else has any chance to provide such a militant organisation or to undermine their position by withholding his support.

Throughout the industrial discussions of the conference, the operative word was 'authority.' It occurred time and again on the lips of the speakers, and any spontaneous and unauthorised actions by the rank-and-file, such as unofficial strikes, were universally condemned. Even more significant was the fact that, except on political questions, there was no real attempt on the part of the delegates to challenge this authority. Only two voices were raised against the union shop resolution, and no-one protested against the attacks on strikers. Just how far the Congress was out of touch with industrial events was shown by the epidemic of wildcat strikes which broke out in the same week among rank-and-file workers defying union executives.

In the political discussions, there was some opposition, in which the Communists contrived to give themselves more prominence than their influence deserved. When the General Council recommended the employment in England of some

160,000 Poles who had elected not to return to persecution at home, the Communists raised the cry of "Fascists," and managed to stir up enough common-or-garden xenophobia to gain a large minority vote in their favour. Similarly, when opposition arose, from a non-Communist quarter, to the Government's power politics in foreign affairs, the Communists managed to give the opposition a pro-Russian flavour, and thus to claim as supporting Russia some 2,000,000 votes which in fact represented the usual post-war desire to be done with all war.

In recent months there has been a sharp decline in the influence of the Communist Party in England. At the Trade Union Congress they were still vocal, but even there I think it was a case of individual members who had dug themselves into safe bureaucratic positions rather than a really widespread movement among the rank-and-file. In any case, the TUC delegations were chosen some months ago, and a much more up-to-date index of Communist influence has been provided by the recent municipal elections in English boroughs. The defeat of the Communists was sensational. Out of 240 candidates, one Communist councillor was elected, while they lost six seats previously held. The decline to a single councillor in all the English boroughs shows just how negligible their influence has become.

Undoubtedly one contributory factor was their sabotage of the squatters' movement. The C.P. hoped to gain some gratuitous publicity by exploiting this situation; instead, the existing squatters immediately recognised the danger to their own interests (the Hampstead camp, near my home, put up a notice denying all connection with the comrades), and the subsequent desertion of the people ejected from the C.P. occupied London flats finally destroyed any credit they might have gained at first. The authorities, in the person of the judge who tried the case of the five party leaders accused of conspiracy in the taking over of the flats, refused to help by making martyrs; instead, he just bound them over for two years with a testimonial to their good intentions. Indeed, a just reward for the good services which the Party rendered to the government in giving an excuse to halt the squatters' direct-action movement!

Another cause of C.P. unpopularity is the growing fear of war. Most people are frankly pessimistic, and the continued assurances of politicians that there will be no war make them all the more unsure. This fear breeds antagonism towards Russia, because of Molotov's activities at UNO and the Peace Conference, and the distrust of Russia rebounds on the heads of the Communists. Almost nobody wants war with Russia, but almost everybody dislikes Russian politicians, even as they distrust our own as well. And, naturally enough, the good and faithful servants of Moscow suffer for their masters.

A MILITARY scandal of the first order was aroused over the court martial of 243 paratroopers in Malaya, sentenced to two years' imprisonment each for alleged mutiny. What actually happened was that the men were placed in a camp whose conditions were, even in the opinion of the commanding officer, quite insupportable. They staged an orderly demonstration by refusing to go on parade. No violence at all was offered, and all the men did was what thousands of civilian workers do daily with impunity. But for this they were put on trial for mutiny. When the sentences were announced, there was a universal outcry in the press, and petitions circulated in various towns received hundreds of thousands of signatures. For once an injustice had been committed on such a scale that the people were stirred out of their usual apathy on such questions. The Minister for War,

faced by a hostile House of Commons, made one of those hypocritical climb-downs which we have learnt to associate with the Labour Government. He stated that the men would be released, not because their sentences were wrong or because they were in any way justified in going on strike, but because the Judge Advocate General had found technical faults in the court martial procedure! He even tried to justify the antiquated mutiny laws which govern the British Army since the 17th century and by which any two men who even discuss resistance to authority can be shot. However, in spite of this toadying to military tradition, the government felt itself obliged to establish a commission to investigate court-martial procedure, and it seems possible that army law may at least be brought up to the same nominal equity as prevails in civil law, by provision being made for appeals and also for the better representation of the accused.

THE general situation here shows only slow improvement. Apart from fruit and vegetables, which are abundant but expensive, food is still scarce, and there is talk of possible cuts in fats and meat rations. The cost of living rises steadily; a suit this year costs 30% more than last year, fares have risen, and the new household appliances which are beginning to appear on the market are almost prohibitively expensive for the ordinary person. Unemployment seems to have become stabilised, at round about 400,000, but it is still increasing in the derelict areas, where, with the closing of munition factories, the old post-war depression conditions are reappearing. We live in a world of promises and disappointments, of bread queues and identity cards, an atmosphere of extended war.

GEORGE WOODCOCK

London, November 4.

COMMONNONSENSE

STRATEGIC bombing, the kind regarded as perfectly moral by the U. N., is pretty much the same for modern Christians as was the dreaded "fire of God" for ancient pagans, only worse from a theological point of view, first because the gods of hate were never so exaggerated in their gifts, and secondly because no prayers help. It was still possible for those pagans to imagine a god or a half-dozen gods behind the thunderstorm, but behind our bombings people KNOW there is no god. If the pagans were still free to believe that something in human behavior had displeased their God—some ritual omitted, some virgin not roasted on the altars, or even too much cheer and too little fear of god—well, with all the queerness of his divine temper, that was still a god of love, because a god that wants to be feared wants to be loved and feels lonely in his heavens. But modern bombing don't even represent hatred: the fliers hardly know the name of your town; they know it by a code name to keep it secret from the enemy, and it is their specific duty to render the life of your town a secret forever and to pass on its name and the remnants of its buildings to archaeology: the only truly *modern science*.

But the fliers not only have a priority on God (to them go the first blessings of the chaplains, and the "things of God" such as Bibles, Holy Images and Stars of David are part of their standard equipment): they also have a special dispensation from responsibility and human conscience: everything is permitted and forgiven, and to those on the receiving end

of the bombings all that is permitted is a detailed knowledge of a certain comma in the Geneva Convention regarding the rights of war prisoners.

Of course to kill a flier is an ugly thing because he is now helpless on the ground, but if he is alone now in his uniform, he is not alone in his helplessness: he finds only colleagues among his captors. If strategic bombing cannot be termed indiscriminate because how can you distinguish man from way up there, what is then indiscriminate: the dying? What can the people do down there, the civilized people who know better than to impute this fire to an angry god; what can they do not to get too personal and yet to answer the attack as the laws of polite warfare would allow them to do? Spit against the clouds? Curse the god to whom the boys up there are praying for their personal salvation? Or laugh at the Ministers of all Faiths who blessed those boys and prayed for the success of the mission?

I would like to ask all those various Military Chaplains whether they are not leaving too much of the burden on the shoulders of God and refusing to take their share? Their prayers actually amount to saying: "Dear God, don't do unto us what we are doing unto the others, but help us carry out our mission. Help also those we are now going to kill, and forgive them their sins as we forgive them their stupidity. But don't ask us to help them; do not lead us into temptation but free us from the evil of disobeying sacred orders. After all you are God Almighty and you will know how to get out of this mess. Amen."

The conclusion is that their God of Love and Justice is a far bloodier monster than the gods of hate to whom virgins and calves were sacrificed that they might keep their fire behind the clouds.

This is the point and let it be their worry now to prove me wrong.

THE above notes were read by me to a number of deeply religious people, and I don't know how to tell what they said because if they hadn't said it to me I myself would hesitate to believe it. They all, but *all* said, after a few words of perfunctory horror: "Let's be practical: what better substitute would you suggest for aerial policing?" I was so angry that my only answer was: "Good bye." But now being a little calmer here, I wish to tell my reasons. I think that the discussion should not be put on the basis of a better substitute for aerial policing because this amounts to a desertion of the moral grounds on which alone the problem should be discussed. (Aerial policing, I see in EVERY definition of it given by the U. N., stems solely from moral grounds, therefore not I, but *they* are saying what I am here only repeating.) And once the moral ground is deserted, those who debate the issue would find good reason to be less ashamed of themselves than they should, on the strength of the following:

I. It cannot be avoided, someone HAS to police the world (Fatality again, man-made fatality.)

II. No use in stopping to feel how bad we are: let's find a solution in the existing frame of things. (And, incidentally, stop to feel how good we are because we wish to find a solution in the existing frame of things).

NOW, aside from the elementary remark that the existing frame of things does not exist and everybody knows it, I hold that nothing can be done and that it is time for the individual who wishes not to become a beast, either to take to the woods and become a beast, or to find a solution in the existing frame of his own things. I don't believe that three,

five or fifteen powers have to police the world and I don't believe in their honesty. I think that since the problem is now put in terms so gigantic that no human mind could master their pattern and decide for a just solution in every corner of the earth, this means that the bigness of the problem is the first evil. This, obviously, is NOT the problem, if we are to consider it a problem of government. (The U. N. exist only on this assumption: that it is a problem of government). Man is the measure, they all say when they speak of his rights. Very good then, man is the measure and it is a question of him all the time. But when the structure that houses his damned rights is so high that all the clouds and all the strato-liners, rockets, superfortresses are allowed to pass between him and the roof, he is NOT under a roof and his security is NOT the aim of those who built that structure and wish to strengthen it. However, with this re-asserted mistrust in governments and in BIG solutions, I am not talking just for the pleasure of making noise. I am after immediate and tangible results which will bring a great deal of disturbance to the people against whom I am talking. I wish to prove that the words they are using are stolen from the pockets of innocent people, I wish to deny them the right to use such words as humanity, peace, decency, honesty, respect, god, the welfare of the masses etc. Let them continue to police the people from the air: nobody can do anything against this, except give up his intention to do something against it by "understanding" their inexistent "reasons" and forgetting his own.

I am therefore against all political movements from the signed petition, through all the degrees of public rallies, to the organized revolution. I think they should be avoided like the pest. I think that the opposition consists only in one thing: words, but real ones, not just blabber or committee-talk. Therefore man should keep his workshop closed to intruders, and come out alone, or with a few casual friends, and speak only true things, then see what happens. Many will find this an idiotic attitude, for it is clear to them that only one thing will happen: he will be killed, he, the lone crackpot who carries no weapons, and killed by big powers that terrorize the world and are unable to find their microscopic man when it comes to building the house of his rights, but recognize him immediately as if they had electronic-microscopes applied to their goggles, when he begins to whisper the truth, and from their stratosphere they immediately land on him to destroy him. Why? Because in him they recognize their enemy. And that is fine. It's a thing to remember: if it is true that we are microbes and nothing but microbes all the time, for the fliers, for the U. N. Conference, for the Social Scientists, let's by God accept this lesson and begin to act like microbes. Let's infect them with us. As for those who laugh at this idiotic way of seeking information that one has beforehand, they may be reminded that they too are going to die like microbes and they know it and it keeps them awake at night, but they will die before they have ever come to life, they will die without having enjoyed one second of clarity, of opinion all theirs, of freedom.

NICCOLO TUCCI

DEPARTMENT OF OBVIOUS DISTINCTIONS

I had a long personal talk the other day with a man who is very close to the (American U.N.) delegation and who made no bones about the fact that the U.S.A. intends to stall effective action on Spain. He began by repeating the old argument that it is not the business of the U.N. to interfere in the "internal affairs" of any country; were that its function, he said, one might well ask it to put an end to the dictatorial Tito regime. Here he was obviously echoing the recent extraordinary outburst of Sumner Welles, who in linking Yugoslavia and Spain conveniently ignored the rather obvious distinction between a government put in power by the Axis and one which came to power by defeating the Axis.

—Del Vayo in "The Nation," Nov. 11.

OFFICE OF FACTS AND FIGURES

The Atomic Age began four years ago: the Army has set the official birthday at December 2, 1942. On that day, under the grandstand at Stagg Field in the University of Chicago, the scientists of the Manhattan Project made a nuclear reactor work for the first time. Announcing the birthday recently, General Groves declared: "That was the day on which man first demonstrated that not only could he release the energy of the atom but that he could also control it." An unfortunate formulation.

Denver University's National Opinion Research Center asked a cross-section of the American people what they know about the Bill of Rights. The results, as reported in "Time" for Oct. 14:

31% had never heard of it, or were not sure whether they had or not. Asked one: "What's that—some newfangled idea again?"

36% had heard of it, but had no idea what it was.

12% gave confused, unsatisfactory or entirely incorrect identifications. Examples: "Woman suffrage." "Prohibition." "It's the best thing that ever happened, but I don't know what it says."

21% had a "reasonably accurate idea" of what the Bill of Rights is.

Another Denver poll, taken last spring, is also of melancholy interest. Asked whether they expected the U. S. to be at war within the next 25 years, 68% of those queried said Yes. A year ago, only 35% said Yes.

APOCRYPHA TRUMANIA: (1) *What is the shortest speech ever made by a political leader? Answer: Truman's, the day Roosevelt died. Text: "Who, me?"* (2) *It is 1948 and a group of St. Louis haberdashers are discussing what they can do for their old friend, Harry, now returning to private life. One suggests that each chip in \$5 to make up a purse to set up Harry in business again. Another says let's make it \$10. Well, says the first, do you think Harry could handle a business as big as that?*

Re. the report on Roosevelt's \$1,800,000 estate in the last O. F. F., I overlooked one item. The total investment in war bonds was \$500.

There is some evidence that Americans are listening less and less to the radio. In the summer of 1936, the radio show with the highest "Hooper rating" (a polling service which finds out how many people listen to each radio program and gives points according to the total) had 23.7 points, and there were eleven others with more than 10 points. In 1943, the top program had 16.3 points, and six others were over 10. Last summer, the top show had only 10.8 points, and only one other was over 10. While there's life, there's hope.

Major Vassili Romanysk, champion parachute jumper of the Soviet Union, made his 1,500th jump the other day. The Major claims that if all his "falling time" were put together, it would add up to a five-day fall. But his compatriots have been falling much longer than that—and without a parachute.

The British Foreign Office has the text of the secret Russo-German treaty of 1939, an Under-Secretary revealed in the House of Commons on October 14. It has no intention of making it public. Yet.

George Orwell, 19th Century Liberal

by George Woodcock

THE English writers of the 1930's have worn badly in an ensuing decade, with perhaps three important exceptions—George Orwell, Herbert Read and Graham Greene. It is difficult not to connect this fact with their political records, for these three were the only writers of real significance who did not at one time or another become deeply involved with the Communist Party and suffer a subsequent disillusionment which drove them back to an unrealistic social isolation. For nearly five years in the middle of the 1930's, the Communist Party kept an effective hold on most of the best English writers. When events in Spain and the manifest dishonesties of Stalinist policy caused them to leave the Communist entourage, these writers tended to retire into a false and somewhat guilty detachment. Their attitude was quite different from the conscious, and in some respects valid, detachment of a writer like Henry Miller, who saw the evils of the world as part of an inevitable process of destruction, and felt he could do little more than become right within himself. The English ex-Communist writers, on the other hand, still felt something should be done, but nevertheless decided to eschew social activity. This equivocal attitude undoubtedly played its part in causing their failure to realise the promise they had shown during the formative years of the 1930's.

Of the three writers whom I have indicated as exceptions to this tendency, all had been aware throughout the 1930's of the faults of both capitalist society and also of the ascendant Stalinism. Herbert Read was an anarchist, Graham Greene a Catholic of that socially conscious type which reached its best development in Eric Gill, and George Orwell an independent socialist with libertarian tendencies, whose peculiar experiences, particularly in Spain, led him early to a distrust for the Communists which has become his best-known single characteristic. Ask any Stalinist today what English writer is the greatest danger to the Communist cause, and he is likely to answer "Orwell." Ask the ordinary reader what is the most familiar of Orwell's books, and he is likely to answer "Animal Farm." Inquire in any circle of anarchists or independent socialists who regard opposition to totalitarian communism as an important task of the militant left, and you will find Orwell's name respected as a writer who, when the Communist cause was most popular in this country, did not hesitate to denounce the falsehood and disregard for elementary human liberties which are essential to Communist methods of political action. Indeed, it is perhaps because this anti-Communist side of Orwell's writing has been stressed so much both by his critics and by his friends that it is necessary to give a wider picture of his literary achievement and of the character of his writing.

Orwell is a writer whose work is essentially autobiographical and personal. Several of his books are devoted to the direct description of his own experiences; in his novels can be seen clearly the influence of incidents which have occurred during his life, and in his political essays there is always a strong upsurge of personal likes and dislikes, of scraps of

experience which have made some recent and powerful effect on his imagination. Indeed, the connection between Orwell's work and even the minor events of his life is so close that, for those who are friendly with him, it is an interesting pastime to trace recent conversations reproduced with considerable faithfulness in his articles in periodicals. I have met few writers whose work was so closely integrated with their daily action and observations.

For this reason, it is perhaps best to begin a closer study of Orwell's work with a biographical sketch which will help to show why he evolved differently from his English contemporaries.

I.

Orwell was born into the impoverished upper-middle class, a particularly unhappy section of English society where a small income is strained to the utmost in the desperate struggle to keep up appearances, and where, for the very fact that social position is almost all these people possess, snobbery is more highly developed and class distinction more closely observed than anywhere else in the complicated hierarchy of English society. "I was very young," he tells us, "not much more than six, when I first became aware of class distinctions," and in *The Road to Wigan Pier* he gives a clear description of the whole attitude of this poor-genteel class, "the shock-absorbers of the bourgeoisie" as he calls them, towards the working class.

Later, Orwell was sent to Eton. He went there with a scholarship, and, as he tells us, "On the one hand, it made me cling tighter than ever to my gentility; on the other hand it filled me with resentment against the boys whose parents were richer than mine and who took care to let me know it . . . The correct and elegant thing, I felt, was to be of gentle birth but to have no money. This is part of the *credo* of the lower-upper-middle class. It has a romantic, Jacobite-in-exile feeling about it which is very comforting." It was the feeling of resentment that first made him think in revolutionary terms. He read the works of Shaw and Wells, the latter of whom was to become a great influence, and began to describe himself as a Socialist. "But I had no grasp of what Socialism meant, and no notion that the working class were human beings."

Up to this stage, Orwell's progress had much in common with that of his contemporary writers of the 1930's—the genteel middle-class home, the upper-class school, the continual struggle in youth between an ingrained snobbery and a sentimental revolutionism. But the difference lay in subsequent experiences. While most of the other public-school writers, who formed the backbone of the Communist support during the 1930's, went on to the universities, became schoolmasters, and gained a purely academic knowledge of social problems, perhaps ending by going to Spain as journalists or broadcasters, Orwell's life gave him the opportunity of seeing imperialism in action at close quarters, and of observing the troubles of the workers from among them, as well as ex-

periencing the Spanish civil war in a more direct manner than most English writers.

At a little under twenty, he joined the Indian Imperial Police in Burma, then still administered as part of India. He worked in this force for five years, during which he witnessed imperialism at its worst, saw hangings, floggings and filthy prisons, and was forced to assert a superiority over the Burmese which he never really felt. All this is portrayed with great vividness in his first novel, *Burmese Days*, and in one or two short sketches, such as *Shooting an Elephant* and *A Hanging*, an early essay which described the really brutal side of British rule. At the end of his five years in this service, Orwell went home. He decided not merely to eschew the service of an imperialism which he had come to hate, but also to try and do something to expiate his guilt by identifying himself, if not with the Burmese natives, at least with the oppressed lower classes of his own country. I quote at length the passage from *The Road to Wigan Pier* in which he describes his conversion:

"I was not going back to be a part of that evil despotism. But I wanted much more than merely to escape from my job. For five years I had been part of an oppressive system, and it had left me with a bad conscience. Innumerable remembered faces—faces of prisoners in the dock, of men waiting in the condemned cells, of subordinates I had bullied and aged peasants I had snubbed, of servants and coolies I had hit with my fist in moments of rage (nearly everyone does these things in the East, at any rate occasionally: orientals can be very provoking), haunted me intolerably. I was conscious of an immense weight of guilt that I had got to expiate. I suppose that sounds exaggerated; but if you do for five years a job that you thoroughly disapprove of, you will probably feel the same. I had reduced everything to the simple theory that the oppressed are always right and the oppressors always wrong: a mistaken theory, but the natural result of being one of the oppressors yourself. I felt that I had got to escape not merely from imperialism but from every form of man's dominion over man. I wanted to submerge myself—to get down among the oppressed, to be one of them and on their side against their tyrants. And, chiefly because I had had to think everything out in solitude, I had carried my hatred of oppression to extraordinary lengths. At that time failure seemed to me to be the only virtue. Every suspicion of self-advancement, even to 'succeed' in life to the extent of making a few hundreds a year, seemed to me spiritually ugly, a species of bullying."

It will be seen that Orwell's conversion came from a far deeper experience—emotionally as well as intellectually and physically—than that which made the Spenders and Audens in their college rooms and parental country rectories declare a mental adherence to communism. Orwell's socialism has never been so intellectually elaborated as that of the orthodox leftist writers. It has always been a kind of generalised conception in which the greatest tenet is human brotherhood, and Orwell has shared with most English working-class—as distinct from middle-class—socialists a profound distrust for the subtler shades of Marxist discussion. Indeed, like William Morris, he has never identified himself as a Marxist. On the other hand, his natural caution has always kept him away from the kind of silliness which made the English poets of the time create heroes out of party bureaucrats and, like Day Lewis, write inane verse about feeling small when they saw

a Communist! (However, Orwell's attitude had its own failings, which we will discuss later.)

Out of the feeling of the need for expiation arose a desire for participation in sufferings of the poorest. Following this impulse, Orwell went among the tramps and outcasts of London, the really destitute people who fill the doss-houses and the casual wards, who sleep on the Thames embankment and spend their lives tramping the roads from one end of England to the other, who live by begging and a whole variety of occupations, none of which is much more than a cover for mendicancy. For long periods, at times from choice, at other times from necessity as well, he lived among these people on the very periphery of society, the people who had been brought so low that they were pushed right outside the fabric of normal class society and reached a kind of brotherhood where a common misfortune neutralised all differences of origin under its impartial weight.

During the next ten years Orwell took a variety of jobs which all kept him near the poverty line. He worked as a dishwasher in Paris hotels and restaurants, as a private school-teacher, as a bookshop assistant, as a petty grocer in his own account. It was all grist for the literary mill.

A second turning point in his career came in 1936, when he went to fight as a militiaman in Spain. He admits that at the time his ideas of the issues in the war were extremely vague. He saw, like most English leftists at the time, a simple conflict between the Spanish people and their Fascist enemies. It was only the accident of his being sent to Spain under the auspices of the I.L.P. and thus finding himself in the Marxist opposition group of the POUM that led him to realise with a peculiar intensity the true nature of the situation within the government, by which the Communists and the right-wing elements were seeking to gain all power to themselves by the suppression of the genuinely revolutionary elements, such as the anarchists and the POUM. Orwell fought on the Aragon and Huesca fronts, was wounded and returned to Barcelona, to be involved, almost immediately, in the fighting of the May days of 1937, when the Communists sought to deprive the anarchists and the POUM of their positions of advantage within the city. Later, when the great proscriptions began, he had to escape from Spain with the Stalinist police on his heels. In *Homage to Catalonia* he combines a very capable description of conditions on the Spanish fronts and in Barcelona with one of the few clear and honest accounts of the actual events in Barcelona in May, 1937, and also an effective exposure of the propaganda lies which were used in the left-wing press to whitewash the Communists.

After leaving Spain, he lived in England and in French Morocco, and when the war began he became an official of the BBC in their Indian service. In a discussion which I had with him at the time he defended his activities by contending that the right kind of man could at least make propaganda a little cleaner than it would otherwise have been, and I know that he managed to introduce one or two astonishing items into his broadcasts. But he soon found there was in fact little he could do, and he left the BBC in disgust to become literary editor of the *Tribune*, at the period when that paper was at its best level during Bevan's campaign against Churchill. In the past four years Orwell has become a successful journalist, and the recent success of *Animal Farm* has brought him into the ranks of best-selling novelists. But he remains an important influence among the more revolutionary

of the younger English writers, a rallying point for what intelligent anti-Stalinism exists outside the right-wing on one hand and the Trotskyists on the other, and an honest exposé of things he considers evil.

2.

Orwell's work falls into two main divisions. On the one side there are the four novels, and the books of reportage, like *Down and Out in Paris and London*, in which social ideas, although present, cannot be regarded as dominant. And, on the other side, there are a number of books, written mostly since 1936, in which the social motive is more important, but where the aesthetic element enters strongly into the writing and structure, or becomes dominant in long descriptive passages, as in *Homage to Catalonia* or *The Road to Wigan Pier*. To this class belong, beside the books already mentioned, *The Lion and the Unicorn*, a heretical survey of the relationship of Socialism to the English mind, *Critical Essays* and *Inside the Whale*, two volumes of literary-political essays, *Animal Farm*, and a number of uncollected but important essays on various social themes.

In assessing Orwell's work, it might be well to take as a starting point a confession which he made in a recent issue of *Gangrel*, an English little magazine.

"What I have wanted to do throughout the past ten years is to make political writing into an art. My starting point is always a feeling of partisanship, a sense of injustice. When I sit down to write a book, I do not say to myself, 'I am going to produce a work of art.' I write it because there is some lie that I want to expose, some fact to which I want to draw attention, and my initial concern is to get a hearing. But I could not do the work of writing a book, or even a long magazine article, if it were not also an aesthetic experience. Anyone who cares to examine my work will see that even when it is downright propaganda it contains much that a full-time politician would consider irrelevant. I am not able, and I do not want, completely to abandon the world-view that I acquired in childhood. So long as I remain alive and well I shall continue to feel strongly about prose style, to love the surface of the earth, and to take a pleasure in solid objects and scraps of useless information. It is no use trying to suppress that side of myself. The job is to reconcile my ingrained likes and dislikes with the essentially public, non-individual activities that this age forces on us."

This passage of self-analysis is useful because it does give us fairly accurate clues to the nature of Orwell's writing. It indicates the honesty and indignation that inspire it, the concern for certain humanist values, the perception of fraud and the shrewd eye for pretence; it also shows, perhaps less clearly, the essentially *superficial* nature of Orwell's work, the failure to penetrate deeply into the rooted causes of the injustices and lies against which he fights, and the lack of any really constructive vision for the future of man. To these considerations I shall return. But for the present I will discuss the literary merits of Orwell's work, which, in my opinion, are much more consistent and impressive than the political qualities.

Firstly, Orwell's writing is fluent and very readable. There is probably no writer in England today who has gained such a colloquial ease of expression, at the same time without diminishing the quality of style. Even his journalistic fragments, unimportant as they may be from any other point of view, are

distinguished from the work of other journalists by their excellent style. In his novels and books of reportage, Orwell has an intense power of description. If one compares *Burmese Days* with, say, Forster's *Passage to India*, the sharper vividness with which the surface aspects of Oriental life are conveyed in Orwell's book is quite impressive. Yet this faculty of description is combined with, and perhaps balanced by, a great economy of effect and wording which gives a clean and almost athletic effect to Orwell's writing. There is no unnecessary emotion, no trappings of verbiage and superfluous imagery, no place—even in the more purple passages—where one can feel that a paragraph is unnecessary or that the book would have been as good if it had been omitted. *Animal Farm* is, of course, the best example of this virtue; no-one else could have given the whole bitter history of the Russian failure in so condensed and yet so adequate an allegory.

But these virtues of economy, clarity, fluency, descriptive vividness, are all *superficial* virtues. They do not make up for a lack of deeper understanding which is evident in Orwell's work. His description of the Eastern landscape and of the attitude of Europeans towards Orientals may be the best of its kind; nevertheless, one fails to find understanding of the mentality and peculiar problems of Oriental people. Unlike Lafcadio Hearn, Orwell has never tried to think like an Oriental. And, indeed, his work is characterised throughout by a failure to think in other than Orwellian terms, or to create situations out of the imagination. All his novels are more or less autobiographical, in that they deal with the kind of people he has met, or the kind of experiences he has had. Of course, this is not a failing in itself—but in Orwell it is part of an inability to perceive or imagine deeply, and this is perhaps the cause of the failure of the people in his novels to be anything more than caricatures, except when, like Flory in *Burmese Days*, they are true Orwellians, or, like the insurance agent Bowling in *Coming Up for Air*, they have a kind of schizoid nature, and Orwellise in their thoughts in a way which hardly fits their external, worldly natures. This failure to create three-dimensional characters, with profoundly observed inner lives like the people in Dostoevsky or even Henry James, is a common fault among the liberally-minded type of novelist who is concerned to illustrate some social theme in his work. It is to be found in all the great English radical novelists—Godwin, Dickens, Wells—and Orwell is truly in the tradition of these writers.

There is, for instance, something quite Dickensian in the unlikely straggle of events forming a novel like *The Clergyman's Daughter*, which is even endowed with that perennial obsession of English radical novelists, the fraudulent private school, and which contains a selection of peripheral characters who, for all Orwell's direct experience of this borderland life, have the simplicity and oddness of true Dickens characters. And the influence of Wells is equally clear, particularly in *Animal Farm*, which contains several echoes of *The Island of Dr. Moreau*.^{*} It is an interesting point that Orwell should have written good critical essays on the novelists whose work

^{*} The main points of contact are actually direct reversals. The rule of *Animal Farm* is "Whatever goes upon two legs is an enemy," the law of *The Island of Dr. Moreau* is "Not to go on all fours." *Animal Farm* ends with the pigs turning to men, *The Island of Dr. Moreau* with the manufactured men reverting to animals. There is also the scene in the latter book where Prendick sees the pig-men going on all fours and then upright, which may have entered unconsciously into the plot of *Animal Farm*.

resembles his own, while he fails almost completely to appreciate the virtues of more complex writers like Henry Miller or W. B. Yeats, who are little more to him than examples of the odd perversity of intellectuals who do not subscribe to the radical cause in Orwell's own simple way.

3.

Orwell's political writing is rarely satisfying. Occasional articles, on the borderline of politics and literature, such as the essays on boys' weeklies, crime fiction and political language, are small masterpieces in a limited field. But beyond such bounded fragments of observation, Orwell's social writings rarely justify completely our expectations. They concern "the surface of the earth," they generalise issues in a way which demonstrates a simplicity of thought that is part of his character and unlikely to change, they never penetrate into the deeper levels of social existence or human experience.

Orwell's role is the detection of pretences and injustices in political life, and the application to social matters of a very rough-and-ready philosophy of brotherhood and fair play. He plays, somewhat self-consciously, the part of the 'plain man,' and in this fulfills a necessary function. A hundred Orwells would indeed have a salutary effect on the ethics of social life. But the 'plain man' always has limitations, and the greatest is his failure to penetrate below the surface of events and see the true causes of social evils, the massive disorders in the very structure of society, of which individual evils are merely symptoms. I have never, for instance, seen or heard Orwell give any sound analysis of the political trends in England today, and on such important subjects as money, property and the State he seems to have little idea except the usual vague slogans which have inspired the Labour Party for many generations.

His attitude towards the State is typical. In a recent symposium in *Horizon* on the economic condition of the writer, he said, "If we are to have full Socialism, then clearly the writer must be State-supported, and ought to be placed among the better-paid groups. But so long as we have an economy like the present one, in which there is a great deal of State enterprise but also large areas of private capitalism, then the less truck a writer has with the State, or any other organized body, the better for him and his work. There are invariably strings tied to any kind of official patronage." The inconsistencies are obvious. If, when the State is only partially in control, it is a bad thing to be patronised by it, it must be worse when it is wholly in control. And if "there are invariably strings tied to any kind of official patronage," then the artist will certainly be well and truly strangled when he accepts the patronage of the total state, Socialist or otherwise. Incidentally, this passage is a good example of the obscurity into which Orwell sometimes falls when talking of political ideas. From the first clause one would imagine him an advocate of a total State, whether we call it Socialist or otherwise, but in reality he advocates no such thing. From conversations with him, I gather that he conceives, again very vaguely, something more like a syndicalist federation than a real State in the traditional socialist model.

There are times when the general superficiality of Orwell's attitude leads him to sincere but unjust condemnation of people or groups, because he has not been able to understand their real motives. His attack on pacifists because they en-

joyed the unasked protection of the British Navy, and his "demolition" of Henry Miller for leaving Greece when the fighting started are examples of this kind of injustice. Orwell has never really understood *why* pacifists act as they do. To him passive resistance during the war was at best "objective support" of Fascism, at worst inverted worship of brutality; he fails to see the general quality of resistance in the pacifist's attitude, the resistance to violence as a social principle rather than to any specific enemy.

Indeed, it is one of Orwell's main faults that he does not seem to recognise general principles of social conduct. He has ideas of fair play and honesty; concentration camps, propaganda lies and so forth are to be condemned. But in a more general sense his attitude is essentially opportunist. For instance, he contends seriously that we must have conscription during the war, but that once the war has ended we must resist it as an infringement of civil liberties. During the war we must jail "fascists," but afterwards we must let them carry on their propaganda at will. In other words, we can have freedom when it is convenient, but at moments of crisis freedom is to be stored away for the return of better days.

A similarly opportunist attitude impelled him, in *The Lion and the Unicorn*, to point out the power of patriotism over the English mind, and to claim that socialists should use this element in popular mythology as a means of gaining popular support. He failed to understand the fundamentally evil nature of patriotism as a producer of war and a bulwark of authority, and also overlooked that patriotism is not far from nationalism and that the union of nationalism with socialism is worse in its effects than plain reactionary nationalism, as has been seen in Germany and Russia.

Orwell is essentially the iconoclast. The fact that his blows sometimes hit wide of the mark is not important. The great thing about Orwell is that when he exposes a lie he is usually *substantially* right, and that he will always pursue his attacks without fear or favour. His exposures of the myth of Socialist Russia, culminating in *Animal Farm*, were a work of political stable-cleansing which contributed vastly to the cause of true social understanding, and it is for such achievements that we can be grateful to Orwell, and readily forgive the inconsistencies and occasional injustices that accompany them.

If iconoclasm is Orwell's role in political writing, then we can hardly expect the opposite virtue; and, indeed, we find that he has little to say on *how* society can be changed and what it should become. On these points he has largely accepted the Labour Party line, with a few deviations to the left, but he seems to have no clear conception of a socialist society, beyond a rather vague idea that brotherhood is the essential basis of socialism. This is, indeed, an important fact which many socialists seem to have forgotten, but it belongs less to an era of state socialism than to the liberalism of the past or the anarchism of the future. And, indeed, while Orwell is by no means an anarchist—although he often joins them in attacking specific injustices—he is very much nearer to the old-style liberal than to the corporate-state socialists who at present lead the Labour party. This distinguishes him from most of his contemporaries, for the liberal is a rare survivor in the atomic age, and a liberal like Orwell who has developed the necessary vigour of attack is even less common. His old-fashioned pragmatism, his nineteenth-century radical honesty and frankness, his respect for such excellent bourgeois mottoes as "Fair Play" and "Don't kick a man when he's down," which

have been too much vitiated by the sneers of Marxist amorality, his consideration for the freedom of speech and writing, are all essentially liberal virtues.

In one of his essays there is a portrait of Dickens which might not inappropriately be applied to Orwell himself.

"He is laughing, with a touch of anger in his laughter, but no triumph, no malignity. It is the face of a man who is always fighting against something, but who fights in the open and is not frightened, the face of a man who is *generously angry*—in other words, of a nineteenth-century liberal, a free intelligence—a type hated with equal hatred by all the smelly little orthodoxies which are now contending for our soul." The open fighting, the generous anger, the freedom of intelligence, are all characteristics of Orwell's own writing. And that very failure to penetrate to the fundamental causes of social evils, to present a consistent moral and social criticism of the society in which they lived, which characterised the nineteenth century liberals, has become Orwell's own main limitation.

The Story of Viet Nam

Paris, October 12

"ASIA is awakening and not all the forces of Imperialism can turn back this onward march of history." This is my conviction after having spent two hours in the company of one of the greatest Asiatic democratic leaders since the late Dr. Sun Yat Sen. The man, Ho Chi Minh, is the President of the new Asiatic Republic of Viet Nam. Together with members of his Cabinet, President Ho arrived in Paris last June to negotiate a treaty with the French Government. Negotiations, however, soon broke down and the Vietnamese were on the point of returning to their country to renew the struggle against the French in Indo-China, when a document providing a *modus vivendi* was signed between Ho Chi Minh and M. Moutet, Minister for the Department of Overseas France.

To us who learned from our schoolbooks about Indo-China, the name "Viet Nam" is entirely strange. French intervention in Indo-China actually began on "religious" grounds in 1787, but it was not until the second half of the nineteenth century, at the time when Africa was being carved up among the Great Powers, that France started in earnest on her acquisition of the territories of Cochin-China, Tonkin, Annam, Cambodia and Laos, which make up what is collectively known as French Indo-China.

Cochin-China was annexed outright by Napoleon III, and has since had the status of a Colony, an important fact to remember in connection with the present situation. Tonkin and Annam, which are the two provinces now forming the Republic of Viet Nam, came under French "protection" in 1883, having been reduced by a French expedition. In 1885, however, there were royalist uprisings which were mercilessly repressed by the French. Since then up to the establishment of the Republic the two provinces were administered as "protectorates."

French Indo-China, measuring 285,000 square miles, is about one and a half times the size of France itself, and has a population estimated at about 25,000,000. Of this population, the Annamese, inhabiting chiefly the provinces of Tonkin, Annam and Cochin-China, number about 18,000,000. The remainder is made up of roughly 3,000,000 Cambodians,

1,500,000 Laotians, 1,000,000 primitive peoples, 500,000 Chinese and 30,000 Europeans. As a result of French recruitment, there are today also 25,000 Annamese in France.

Ho Chi Minh's father was a minor official in the Government of the late Emperor Amman; about 1911, his father incurred the royal displeasure, so that he and his family were imprisoned. The young Ho Chi Minh, then about 19, managed to get to sea, and has since had a very varied career. He wandered about Europe, working at odd jobs and landed up in the Soviet Union. He subsequently returned to the East, going to Canton, where he became translator to the Soviet Consulate. For Ho Chi Minh is an accomplished linguist, speaking French, English, Chinese, Japanese and some Portuguese, besides his native tongue. Very early in his life he became a revolutionary, having always as his aim the independence of Indo-China from alien rule. Arrested in Siam for his political work, he spent two years in prison there, after which, in 1930, he went to Hong Kong, from where he led an organized revolt in northern Viet Nam, which failed. During the war he organized the Viet Minh, which was a united front of Vietnamese patriots, who fought to drive out both the Japanese and Vichy France.

I was accompanied to the President's house by a member of his staff, Mr. Lien Dang. Ho Chi Minh was just saying farewell to some representatives of the French Socialist Party, and extending a greeting to me, he took me into his study, where he made me immediately at home. And then, even before I got down to questioning him, he began to ask me about the Negro movement. He was particularly interested in the position of the Negroes in the Southern United States and revealed a remarkable familiarity with their problems. He expressed his indignation and shock at the recent lynchings.

WHAT IS VIET NAM?

We then got down to the subject of my interview. I started off by asking President Ho whether Vietnamese nationalism was a recent phenomenon. "By no means. We Annamese have always had a deep sense of our own identity which goes back even to before we became an independent people in the year 1931. After the French established 'protectorates' in our lands, our people rose on several occasions to fight for their independence. For instance, there were nationalist uprisings in 1908, under the impetus of Japan's victory over Russia; and then again in 1911 the Chinese Revolution had its repercussions among us, and there was a serious insurrection in 1912."

I learned that the opposition to the French took organized form with the foundation of the Revolutionary Party of Young Annam in 1925 in Hanoi, now the capital of Viet Nam, in the same year as the Indo-Chinese Communist Party was formed. Two years later the Nationalist Annamite Party was founded in Tonkin, and from 1929 almost up to the outbreak of the Second World War there were constant uprisings against French rule. In 1930, the year of famine, there were violent outbreaks in many parts of the three provinces of Tonkin, Annam and Cochin-China. Unarmed processions appealing for relief were mowed down by the machine guns of the French Foreign Legion. This led to a wave of unrest, which the French repressed by reprisals from the air. These revolts continued for almost two years, and the brutality of the Colonial Administrations' repressive measures only strengthened the people's desire for independence. Several attempts were made on the life of the French Governor, which were unsuccessful. As a result, the Nationalist Annamite Party was dissolved in 1933.

But with the coming into power of the Popular Front Government in France, the hopes of the Annamese people rose.

However, nothing happened. It was the threat of war which gave these people the chance of bearing arms, for in 1938 an Annamite Army was created, and there were a number of reforms. Then came the defeat of France in 1940, upon which there were Annamese risings, in which 20,000 were killed. When the Japanese entered the country, the French Army surrendered without the least resistance, and the Japanese handed over to the French those Annamese who had aided them.

Ho Chi Minh explained to me that the French simply handed over Indo-China to the Japanese in 1941, still retaining the Administration under the Japanese occupation. This collaboration continued right up to August, 1945, but the Annamese people refused to accept Japanese domination, just as they had refused to accept French domination. All the national parties united to form the "Independence League," the Viet Minh, which led the underground resistance against the Japanese occupation and worked in co-ordination with the Allied authorities of South China. After the collapse of the Japanese, the Viet Minh declared the independence of their country—which they called Viet Nam—on August 2, 1945. A week later, their Emperor Bao-Dai, abdicated, stating in his Act of Abdication that "We are happy to be a free citizen in an independent country. We will not allow anyone to use our name or that of the royal family to sow dissidence among our compatriots."

After Admiral Lord Louis Mountbatten accepted the formal surrender of all Japanese forces in South-East Asia on September 12, 1945, Chinese troops landed at Hanoi, proclaiming that they were there to receive the Japanese surrender, and that China had no territorial ambitions in the region. Then British troops were also permitted by the Viet Nam authorities to engage in the disarming of Japanese troops, but very soon they turned their arms against the Vietnamese, in order to occupy key points in the country until such time as the French would be able to send in troops; they also used Japanese soldiers to guard public buildings as well as in actual fighting. As British troops withdrew, French troops came into Cochinchina and fighting took place between them and the Vietnamese, which finally ceased when an agreement was reached between the Viet Nam Government and France on March 6, 1946.

Under the terms of this agreement, France committed herself to the recognition of the Republic of Viet Nam as a free state, having its own Government, Parliament, Army and finances, and being a part of the Indo-Chinese Federation within the proposed French Union, the establishment of which was provided for in the French Constitution which was subsequently rejected. For their part, the Viet Nam Government declared themselves ready to receive French troops, so long as they conformed to international agreements and removed Chinese troops still on Viet Nam territory.

COCHIN-CHINA: THE ECONOMIC CRUX

After the March 6th Agreement had been signed, a conference was held in April-May, 1946, at Dalat, in Southern Annam, to work out the details of Viet Nam's new status. The French and Vietnamese delegates, however, could not agree on the Viet Nam's claim that Cochinchina, on ethnic and economic grounds, should be incorporated into their republic. Conscious of the overwhelming Vietnamese character of Cochinchina's population, the Viet Nam government proposed to the High Commissioner of that province, Admiral Argenlieu, that a referendum on the question should be carried out under the supervision of a joint commission consisting equally of Vietnamese and French. Admiral Argenlieu, however, has refused to commit himself on the question of the referendum. Cochinchina has tremendous economic import-

ance as a rich rice-producing area which supplies both the domestic staple food and sends abroad a surplus amounting to half the export trade of the country. Rubber, the second most important product, made Indo-China the third rubber-producing country in the world after Malaya and the Netherlands Indies. It accounted for 27% of French Indo-China's total export trade and 6% of total world rubber production. Other leading exports are coal, tin, and iron ore.

These commodities serve as sources of raw materials for French industries in the metropolis, since every obstacle has always been placed in the way of local industrial development. In fact, the French have always tied up their Colonial possessions to France to a far greater extent than Britain. Hence in Indo-China, it was only in 1938-39 that a very limited programme was proposed for expanding, not basic industries, but merely light industries such as paper, cigarettes, silk, and so forth. In Cochinchina, the big land-owners, with plantations of approximately 1,500 acres, controlled 45% of the rice lands. Sharecropping tenants, working pieces of land of about 25 acres, were obliged to pay the landlord between 40% and 50% of their harvests, as well as heavy interest rates on money which they borrowed from him to buy tools and tide them over until the crop.

The Vietnamese now look forward to industrialising their country. But this programme is in conflict with the whole conception of Colonialism, which aims at arresting the economic development of these backward countries and keeping them politically tied to the industrialized West. The French recognize that if they can separate the rich territory of Cochinchina from the hinterland of Annam and Tonkin, the Vietnamese will, sooner or later, become dependent upon them, and that their free state will become a mockery lacking any independent basis. Thus Cochinchina constitutes the very crux of the future relations between Viet Nam and France.

As far as the "interim" Government in France is concerned, their spokesmen in Paris maintain that a referendum is not possible until a "provisional government" is established in Cochinchina. In order to try and make way for this "provisional government," and as a means of playing for time while French military reinforcements could be brought to Cochinchina, the High Commissioner placed every obstacle at first in the way of the Viet Nam delegation leaving for the Paris conversations, hoping that by the time they were allowed to depart they would be faced with an accomplished fact. Finally their delegation left Hanoi for the French capital, and the very day after their departure Admiral Argenlieu convened a conference at Dalat, collecting for the purpose a number of native stooges, mainly big landlords whose interests are definitely tied up with the French monopolies. This hand-picked assembly of Cochinchinese, together with representatives from Laos and Cambodia, was called to discuss "matters of common interest" of members of the Indo-Chinese Federation other than the Vietnamese.

The Viet Nam delegation in Paris protested strongly that this prejudged the issue of Cochinchina. The French delegation, having met together, replied that the question of the Dalat Conference did not come within their competence, and that they could only convey the Viet Nam delegation's protest to their Government.

VIET NAM DEMANDS

What are the Vietnamese demands? They ask the French to recognize their Government as a free sovereign state, as provided for under the March 6th Agreement. However, they are prepared, as President Ho told me, because of their historical ties on the one hand and their immediate technical

and cultural requirements on the other, to remain within the framework of a French democratic union, like the Dominions within the British Commonwealth of Nations.

France, on the other hand, while prepared to recognize the provinces of Annam and Tonkin as a Vietnamese "free State," demands the right of control over Viet-Nam's foreign affairs, defence and external trade and commerce, while retaining complete control over Cochinchina. This the Viet Nam Government is strenuously opposed to. They assert, and rightly so, that to surrender these essential elements of national sovereignty would be to place the country back into its former status of a protectorate.

When I asked what was the general reaction of the French people to these aspirations, Ho Chi Minh assured me that the French people as a whole, especially the sections under the influence of the Communists and Socialists, are in sympathy, particularly since they themselves have recently emerged from a temporary colonial status under Hitler's regime. But there are powerful and influential sections of the French nation, such as the Colonial and economic interests like the big banks and rich merchants, the military caste and higher Colonial bureaucracy, who, though small in number, are fighting a desperate battle to reinstitute their pre-war position in Asia. And since they are able to influence the Popular Republican Movement (M.R.P.), the present Government, which is largely dominated by Bidault's MRP, are reluctant to commit themselves on the question of Indo-China. This accounts for their hesitancy and the breakdown of the Fontainebleau Conference, and their refusal to take action in connection with the several military encroachments which the High Commissioner, Admiral Argenlieu, made upon the Viet Nam Republic during the absence of Ho Chi Minh in Paris, and on the question of the Dalat Conference.

President Ho believes that if the French can solve their own problem by evolving a really democratic Constitution and electing a Government of the Left, it is possible for an ultimate settlement of an amicable nature to be made between such a Government and the Viet Nam Republic.* But Admiral Argenlieu's aggressive behavior in Cochinchina coupled with the temporizing of the French in Paris, led the Annamese delegation to return home to rally their people against French encroachment. Ho Chi Minh, therefore, signed the *modus vivendi*, which does little more than repeat the terms of the March 6th Agreement. He hopes talks will be reopened in Paris early in 1947.

In a farewell statement, President Ho emphasized that the policy of his Government is consistent with the fundamental programme of the Viet Minh, which is:

(1) *To provide enough rice for the people, so that there shall not be a repetition of the terrible famine which last year took toll of 2,000,000 lives.* With the co-operation of the people, who have worked willingly and hard, knowing that the Government is their own, they have managed to secure a sufficiency of rice which will avoid famine conditions this winter.

(2) *To liquidate illiteracy, which reaches almost 90%.* This is the effect of 75 years of French rule in a country where before it was subdued every citizen, from the poorest to the highest, had free access to educational facilities, and where everyone could read and write and there was an ancient culture. Today voluntary groups of educated young men and women are going into the villages to teach the peasants to read and write. It is hoped, because of the Latinisation of the alphabet, that this task will not be too lengthy.

(3) *To establish democratic freedom.* For the first time

* It will be interesting to see what change in policy, if any, will result from the dethronement of the MRP by the Communists in the recent French elections.—ED.

elections took place recently on the basis of universal suffrage. Men and women were both eligible to vote and to stand for election. Freedom of movement, assembly, and so forth, have all been introduced, as well as the abolition of poll tax and similar levies.

In particular, the Vietnamese desire peace and friendship with the French, but not at the price of their liberties. They hope that through the establishment of a progressive Government in France itself that the French people will aid them to lay the foundations for the political, economic and social advancement of the Viet Nam Republic.

GEORGE PADMORE

THE SOCIAL FORMAT

City Crowds

"Communal soliloquy" — Piaget, describing the conversation of five-year-olds.

"The crowd was good-natured," say the New York papers, accurately. It is worthwhile to define this city crowd, because the crowding is not only an effect but one of the strong incentives to dense centralization.

But let us clearly distinguish the city crowd from the "mob" that is the usual subject of crowd-psychology. The mob is formed in an emotional crisis; the individualities of its members are blotted out; it is in the grip of a mass-suggested image. But the city crowd is habitual in dense populations; its members seek the occasions to form a crowd; their individualities are not blotted out but precisely affirmed in isolation by sharing in the crowd.

Like every stable (neurotic) behavior, this crowding has an expressive and a defensive function; it fulfills libido and wards off anxiety. The city crowd is the means to maintain strangeness and yet combat loneliness. Combining, as in New York, sophistication with childishness, it is a very stable way of life, viable, hard to break by either reason or madness.

Let us begin with some examples of crowding. At the one extreme is the crowding that seems most spontaneous: people bent on night-pleasure avoid a bar that is half-filled, "it's dead here," and crowd into one already too crowded but equivalent in all other respects. The same apparent spontaneity is only thinly disguised in the crowds of sidewalk superintendents of excavations: the spectacle is not particularly interesting, but it distracts the mind while the soul has an excuse to crowd.

At the other extreme is the crowding that seems forced and unwilling, typically the subway crowd. Here the surface appearance is that each unit is hostile and armored against the rest, it wants to get out of the crowd into which it has been forced by technical reasons. (This hostility is beneath the surface in every crowd of strangers.) Nevertheless, subway-riders avoid an empty car with suspicion, and they choose seats in the more crowded half of the car.

In between is the shopping and window-shopping crowd, people who consciously have some individual business but who cannily choose the time and place where there will be a crowd. So we mill in theater-lobbies for a smoke; no one steps around the corner, because then he will lose the crowd. A wonderful, and characteristically New Yorker, variant is the Garment Center crowd at twelve and five, where the social exchange of news and views is the conscious excuse for the social crowding.

I mention the theater-crowd. Here clearly there is an absorption of private mind and soul in the brightly-lit spectacle;

yet what need and guilt is it that spoils this apparently individual action if there are too many empty seats?

Let us leave the species and define the genus: the crowd is the bodily presence of like-minded strangers who continue to be strangers. The number must be sufficient to obviate conventional acquaintance, the space must be small enough for potential body-contact. There must be a transparent reason for being there so suspicion is allayed and there need be no excuses. The isolation of the individual is maintained, he will not be called on.

Now what goes on here? Both for expression of eros and defense against anxiety, three elements are noteworthy: the body-contact, the isolated individual, and the strangeness. Let us emphasize the strangeness because it is the least obvious as a motive. A man wants sexual intercourse, affection, and natural sociality, but we must assume that his past circumstances, his present character, and very likely his present circumstances make it impossible for him to have the full enjoyment of these things. Now the crowd offers an infinity of new possibilities, whereas one's friends and relations have strictly limited possibilities (those battles were fought and lost long ago.) In the crowd of strangers a much deeper and more native eros is excited. At the same time, one is safe from pleasure and adventure because these are strangers; one will not in fact touch them or talk to them. Also, because they are strangers, their intentions and powers are unknown: they may break down one's defenses, as is desired; they may prove hurtful, as is also often secretly desired. The hostility and the longing are very close; it is an ambiguous excitement.

The isolation of the individual is more pleasurably and safely maintained in the crowd. The solitary man is much less by himself, because he is threatened by his thoughts (superego) and by the undistracted sense of his body (masturbation-temptation). The crowd is his defense: how, he asks himself, is he worse than the others? At the same time, in a crowd he is less bored: that is to say, whereas his solitary thoughts are lacking in eros, unless he happens to be creative, the crowd lulls the threatening or boring images and offers endless objectively interesting symbols: nothing striking enough to bring the man to himself, yet everything changing and distracting. Thus paradoxically, the crowd is the best environment of guiltless narcissism.

Potential body-contact, too, is a pleasure and a defense. The skin-erotism is both a forepleasure in itself and symbolic of final satisfactions. At the same time the contact is literally superficial; it is something that is done to one, without enlisting motion or intention or any genital or oral drive. It is a poor man's pleasure and very safe.

The species of crowding vary with the excuses of the individuals and with the guiltiness or desire shared. Thus, the movie-crowd shares the guilt of watching the parental cohabitation, asking in suspense: "Do they do it?"—"Is it possible that *we* could do it?" But the Garment Center crowd daringly uses a conscious sociality to gratify the unconscious sociality; it is from such a crowd that there could come, in a crisis, the fraternity of street-revolutions.

So, seeking warmth and strangeness and protecting the ego, we crowd into cities. This is pathetic, but sometimes gay, always good-humored (considering how surly people might be); it is an expression of our plight. It is sick, but not especially dangerous, for, to return to our first distinction, I do not think that the city crowd easily becomes a mob: it is too strongly armored against sharing any powerful conscious aim.

On any street-corner you may observe the following property of the hurrying crowd: that the more absorbed each individual is in his private concerns and the more oblivious to

every passerby, the more strongly all of them together are in the grip of a common *habitual* motivation, plan, time-table, of which they are unaware.

PAUL GOODMAN

TOO BIG

THE trouble is everything is too damn big. There are too many people, for example, in the city I live in. In walking along the street, one passes scores of other people every minute; any response to them as human beings is impossible; they must be passed by as indifferently as ants pass each other in the corridors of the anthill. A style of behavior which refuses to recognize the human existence of the others has grown up of necessity. Just the scale on which people congregate in such a city breaks down human solidarity, alienates people from each other. There are so many people that there aren't any people; 7,000,000 becomes 0; too big.

Some episodes:

(1) A friend was going home in the subway at about ten o'clock one night. About half the seats in his car were filled. Opposite him two men were sitting on either side of a third, who was very drunk. Without any attempt at concealment, they were going through the drunk's pockets and taking his watch, money, etc. A dozen people watched the performance from their seats, but no one, including my friend, did anything, and at the next station the two men let the drunk slide to the floor and got off the train.

(2) An elderly woman I know slipped going down the stairs in an "L" station and fell all the way to the bottom, where she lay stunned and gasping. A crowd of people—it was the rush hour—were waiting on the platform at the foot of the stairs. Some of them stared at her but no one moved to help her. She told me that she lay there several minutes, too shaken-up even to speak; several people remarked "she must be drunk." Finally, a man did come forward and helped her to her feet. She was frightened by the incident. She had lived in New York all her life without realizing she was living among strangers.

(3) I was told a similar story about another person—the friend of a friend. He was knocked down on a mid-town street by a car late at night. The car didn't stop and no one saw the accident. He lay in the gutter, badly hurt and only half conscious, for five or six hours. There must have been scores, probably hundreds of people who passed by, saw him, thought "must be drunk" (the formula by which, in the city, one denies human recognition) and went on their way. Finally, the next morning, a policeman investigated and called an ambulance. (The policeman is the only person in a big city who is professionally required to see people as people, to break the shell of apartness that encases each human being.)

(4) The wife of a friend of mine last year became psychotic and is now being treated in an institution. She had been acting "queerly" for some time, but the first big outburst came about ten o'clock one night as they were returning home after visiting friends in Brooklyn. The wife suddenly began to accuse her husband of attempting to poison her; she became increasingly violent and suddenly broke away and began running down the street screaming "Help! Help! He's trying to kill me!" She ran along thus for several blocks, shouting, before he could overtake her and try to calm her. Although most of the houses showed lighted windows, for it was still early, not a door opened, not a window went up, no one paid the slightest attention. When he finally got his wife back to their apartment building, she broke away again as he was unlocking the door, and rushed into the hallway screaming for help. This lasted at least ten minutes, he

told me, and again not a door opened, no one appeared although her cries and screams echoed all through the building. Finally a youth came downstairs in his bathrobe and shouted: "Shut up! We're trying to sleep!" He disappeared again immediately. A half hour later, after my friend had persuaded his wife to go inside, he received the first help since the nightmare had begun: Again in the form of a policeman, who had been sent for by some of the neighbors. (When people are forced to see others as human beings, they make contact vicariously through the police. What a "style" of communal relations!)

But he, desiring to justify himself, said unto Jesus: "And who is my neighbor?" Jesus made answer and said: "A certain man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho; and he fell among robbers, who stripped him and beat him, and departed, leaving him half dead. And by chance a certain priest was going down that way; and when he saw him, he passed by on the other side. And in like manner, a Levite also, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side. But a certain Samaritan, as he journeyed, came where he was; and when he saw him he was moved with compassion, and came to him, and bound up his wounds, pouring on them oil and wine; and he set him on his own beast and brought him to an inn and took care of him. And on the morrow he took out two shillings, and gave them to the host, and said: 'Take care of him, and whatsoever thou spendest more, I, when I come back again, will repay.' Which of these three, thinkest thou, proved neighbor to him that fell among the robbers?" And he said, "He that showed mercy on him." And Jesus said unto him, "Go, and do thou likewise."

D.M.



The Russian Writer's Dilemma

"Generally speaking, it is rather difficult to be an author."

—Mikhail Zostchenko, recently purged Russian novelist; as quoted in "Time," Oct. 14.

IN connection with Dwight Macdonald's "The Russian Culture Purge," I wish to describe three episodes of this purge, unnoticed, so far as I know, by the English-speaking press, but significant for what seems to be the dilemma of the Russian writer.

1.

The purge was accompanied by a torrent of lamentations: art is not in step with the magnificent Soviet reality, it is not able to translate our Brave New World into artistic language, the persons of the novels and plays are just schematic shadows. Why? The official answer is simple. The writers are corrupted by bourgeois ideas—purge them!

One Russian writer tried to find another answer to this *why*. He did it very cautiously, carefully avoiding pointing out the roots of the evil, because no Russian is allowed to criticize any evil aspect of the totalitarian system. But, perhaps, a writer could, in a purely defensive way, explain why Soviet literature cannot produce more significant works. . . .

Fedor Panferov, the well-known author of many novels about collectivization, wrote, in the magazine, *Oktyabr*, an article about the crisis of Soviet literature. To describe the situation, he used a parable:

There was a wonderful forest. But one day, the green tree tops began to dry up and to fade away. The foresters looked

for parasites, they looked for fungi, but they didn't find any. Finally, somebody started to dig, and found, six feet deep, a layer of shells. The roots of the trees could not penetrate this layer and get to the nourishing sources of the deeper soil.

And this is the situation of Russian literature. The "shells" are little bureaucrats, interfering with literary creation. Panferov vividly describes what a young author has to suffer when he wants his book published. The editor-censor "cuts a piece here, cuts a piece there, here he strikes out something, there he adds something of his own," and the poor author "is so ashamed that he does not know where to look, because, finally, he will have the responsibility before the reader and the critic." So, the "right line" is being imposed; the motive is, Panferov does not conceal it, the fear of the editor to be co-responsible for "deviations."

And that—Panferov says—may be the reason why Russian literature will not be able to understand and to express the meaning of the victorious Patriotic War. There was something grandiose, something truly miraculous in the way the masses of Russian people stopped the enemy in the moment when everything appeared lost. Panferov was, throughout the war, attached to the Army. He asked soldiers, he asked generals, nobody was quite able to grasp the "miracle." Here, literature must help to discover "the truth about life, the artistic truth." But the "shells," the little bureaucrats, know all the answers: there were no defeats, there was just a strategic retreat in order to exhaust enemy forces. . . . Panferov protests: How can we forget? Did not Stalin himself say that the fate of the country hangs on a thread?

Another problem is how to describe the enemy. The "shells" have a simple formula: he is a "Kraut," without soul or spirit, cowardly, ignorant of the art of war and incapable of feeling. It is even forbidden him to turn pale; as for falling in love—quite impossible; In a word, he is a kind of "scarecrow with eyes."

But how could this scarecrow penetrate to Stalingrad? asks Panferov. And how can we understand the heroism of the Red Army if it just collected and returned to Germany such scarecrows? We know that the Nazis are scoundrels. But the enemy was strong, clever, cunning and persisted in the fight. We have to analyze his strength, his psychology; we have to explain why fascism had millions of followers. . . .

Such heresy could not remain unanswered. *Pravda* launched a violent attack on Panferov.² First of all, fascism forced "people in the West" to become its instruments through brutal terror and preaching of race hatred, but it is a perversion of truth to say it had millions of followers. And what can psychology tell us beyond the fact that the enemy is a soulless coward? Did not Gorky say that the fascists are more bloodthirsty than the beasts—and also more cowardly? That disposes of the problem.

As to the "miracle of victory," that's simple, too: "Not only generals, but even soldiers of the Red Army, and all people know and understand that our great victory was achieved thanks to the invincible force of the Socialist System, thanks to the inspiring and organizing role of the Bolshevik Party and its leader, the military genius Comrade Stalin. . . . Surprising is the frivolity with which F. Panferov opposes the correct historical statement that the Red Army, in the period of retreat, just exhausted the forces of the enemy, . . . and attributes this statement to some 'shells' . . ."

We know and, as Panferov shows, patriotic Russians are also aware of the terrible defeats, mass surrenders and desertions, and the unheard of disorganization in the first period of the war. Kravchenko's book, among many other sources, proves how unprepared Russia really was although for almost 20 years it had prepared for the war, with immense sacrifices by the population.

Even if we should grant the Stalinist thesis that victory was due to the superiority of the Soviet social system, the question still would arise: How did this superiority transform itself through the feelings, thoughts and deeds of Russian people into the "miracle of victory?" But it is forbidden to ask this question. Because there is no problem, there was no defeat and no miracle. The military genius just lured the Germans to the Volga in order to destroy them, and that's that. The writer is not supposed to look for some "truth of life," he has simply to apply the party line.

2.

Now, let us look what happens to him if he tries to follow the line. K. Simonov wrote a play called "Under the Chestnut Trees of Prague." The story is simple: the war is over, Prague has been liberated, the old doctor Prochazka wants to work in peace. But there are still "hidden fascists," and one of them, disguised, sneaks into the doctor's house, and finally kills his son. The moral lesson is simple, too: look out for enemies, everybody who doesn't agree with the communists, is a fascist, or, at best, his involuntary helper. That's quite "in line," and the critic has to praise the play: "Although it has very great artistic shortcomings, it is a play which *helps to promote the political enlightenment of the people* [the critic's emphasis] and this is, under any circumstances, one of the most important tasks of our theater and our play-writing."

So what's wrong? Well, you see, "in general, taken from a purely literary point of view, it is a very poor thing, almost a libretto, not a play . . ." Although the author wants to prove the validity of the militant stalinist *Weltanschauung* against the "bankrupt" democratic and humanitarian views of the old Czech doctor, there is no "real conflict of opinions, points of view, philosophies." That's what the Soviet critic says, and we have nothing to add except that we know why.

There is another problem. For the first time in history, our critic says, Soviet people contacted, en masse, people of other European countries. They, the Red Soldiers, came as "Sons of the Great Soviet Democracy, as representatives of an unprecedented civilization of a higher type, as incarnations of quite new views on life and man." But Simonov, the critic is sorry to say, was not able to make the "historical and spiritual superiority of the higher, Soviet type of human being" convincing. The main Russian hero, the officer Petrov, is characterized only by his "not very spiritual," "soldierly-professional" virility; as a matter of fact, he is inferior to most un-Soviet persons in the play, and even our critic wonders why, after all, the Czech girl falls in love with him. Of course, the girl says that she sees in him "an ambassador of another world." But that, the article stresses, is a declaration of the author, it does not correspond to the real personality of Petrov in the play . . .

And so ends one typical attempt to carry on the party line in art. The orthodox critic is forced to say: the line is there, all right, but where is art?

Either you try to find out the truth by yourself, then you deviate from the line. Or you follow the line, imposed on you, then there is no art. Still shorter: you cannot truthfully express a lie.

3.

But perhaps you escape the dilemma if you avoid subjects connected with contemporary history?

A. Gladkov wrote a play called "New Year's Eve." Three Soviet boys and three girls try to solve their personal problems

and to enjoy a bit of personal happiness "they had not been able to find before." *How* they solve their problems the critic does not say, and it is irrelevant for him, because the crime of treason has already been committed. Here is the criticism:

"There is a war going on. The fate of the Fatherland and of mankind is at stake. At Stalingrad, the Red Army crushes the surrounded and doomed division of Paulus in an iron circle . . . Against this background, they show us three so-called Soviet men, and three so-called Soviet girls, trying to achieve, in a single night, a bit of personal happiness. The deepest perversion of the play is just that . . . the idea of personal happiness is put in contrast to, and overshadows the idea of, . . . the common fate of the state, nation, and mankind."

To make things worse, there is, in the play, an old grandfather, deaf and dumb, who goes around asking: "And, tell me, what do they say in the newspapers?" Nobody answers; the young people don't want to hear about it. They want to escape, for one night at least.

But this is not the end of horrors. There is a hero who wants the girl to love him for his own sake. He is not only the hero of the play, but also a Hero of the Soviet Union and the owner of many military decorations. But he wants the girl to love him only for himself; so he conceals his heroic deeds and hides his decorations.

"Is it still necessary to prove that this is a typical petty bourgeois idea, a long time ago overcome in Soviet conditions? I am sure," says our critic, "that not one *real* Soviet Hero, even if he had read plenty of bad English novels, would ever think of something like that!"

In that great country of progress and humanity, it seems to be a crime to love or to be loved for personal qualities, and the girls have rather to be accessories to decorations.

Since our hero is fictitious, nothing worse can happen to him than that the critic calls him a "homunculus," reserving probably the title of real human being for the "virile," but "not very intellectual" officers a la Simonov.

As to the author, the magazine says rather ominously that his play invites a "*political* appreciation," because it is "objectively alien." In the contemporary Soviet jargon, "political appreciation" with emphasis on the first word means something like criminal proceedings and "alien" is identical with "treasonable."

So the attempt to escape the dilemma is likely to end with another tragedy, and it really seems that there is no honorable escape left except that of Yessenin and Mayakovsky.

PETER MEYER

REFERENCES

- (1) *Oktybar*, No. 5, 1946. Panferov's story is told in an article by V. Alexandrova in *Sotsyalistichesky Vestnik*, No. 7-8, 1946.
- (2) *Pravda*, June 24, 1946; article by O. Kurganov and A. Koloskov.
- (3) "Dramatic Production in 1945" by M. Gel'fand; in *Znamya* (the organ of the Association of Soviet Writers) for July, 1946.
- (4) *Ibid.*

MURDER THE MURDERER

a book of the times by Henry Miller
one twenty-five

BERN PORTER 2303 DURANT, BERKELEY, CALIF.

Social Significance of Eggs on End

THE DISCUSSION in the *Far Eastern Survey* about coverage of news from the Far East stresses certain unchallengeable points. It has stressed the relationship of the news to censorship and the relationship of coverage to cartelization in news channels. It omits, however, the equally grave questions raised by the whole technique of modern foreign correspondence.

The foreign correspondent, no less than the career diplomat and the commander of an overseas garrison post, is part of the apparatus of American foreign policy and national defense. The reader of the daily newspaper or weekly magazine sees and learns of the world directly through the words and interpretation of the foreign correspondent. The citizen's concept of the outside world is molded by the facts made immediately available to him; these facts, whether right or wrong, influence his individual decisions which in turn influence the whole pattern of politics. It is surprising to the returned foreign correspondent on a visit to Washington to find how greatly the members of Congress and those who enforce our national decisions are influenced by the casual dispatches turned out day after day from overseas cableheads. Collectively, the corps of foreign correspondents sent overseas by private agencies is more important in shaping America's foreign policy for peace or war than is the diplomatic corps of the government itself.

Foreign correspondence differs in essence from domestic reportage in the importance of the quality that can be called "balance." A correspondent covering Washington, or a local reporter covering City Hall, need only be honest and accurate in order to be accepted as competent. His point of view may be completely prejudiced, his reputation well known to be partisan, his sources only men who wish to use him as a device in a propaganda campaign. But a reporter writing about America for Americans can do little permanent harm: he is merely supplying a few new facts in a situation which is known to the reader over a period of years by the reader's alternate role as a participating citizen. No one dispatch, no one reporter, bears the burden of telling the whole truth. The whole truth, it is presumed, is available to the citizen as part of his education. An American reading about a draft bill, a coal strike, a political campaign can fit the supplementary truths brought by his newspaper into an understanding of events that has grown out of his entire experience and training in life.

The foreign correspondent, however, is firing into the dark. He must direct, day by day, or week by week, bundles of fact at a mass of readers who have no background or knowledge of the country described. They cannot test or absorb new facts; they must accept them whole. The success of "commentators" on the American news scene springs from the very real need for predigestion of the mass of information that pours in on America from abroad.

In judging foreign correspondence, not accuracy but "balance" is the ultimate test. There are a myriad facts that make up the political life of any country. It is in the selection of these facts that a correspondent proves his worth—he must select them judiciously so that the sum total is truth; an in-

judicious correspondent may present a thousand accurate facts which add up to a lie.

China, which I covered during the war, is the easiest field of demonstration for this principle. If you wished you could send out a string of undebatable facts: that Chiang K'ai-shek hated the Japanese, that the Chinese soldiers were brave and died heroically, that America broke many promises to the National Government and treated China's sacrifices cavalierly—and the sum of these facts would be a lie: that Chiang K'ai-shek was a noble character who cooperated with us wholeheartedly and whom we badly let down. Or you could, if you wished, alter the pattern and send out another set of truths: that the Chinese government cheated the American government outrageously, that many Chinese officers were corrupt, that the government was torn by internal discord. But the net sum of these facts is also a lie: it is a picture of people unworthy of any serious American concern or affection.

The orthodox pattern of handling any assignment is to play it "straight," i.e., to print news without any slant, letting the bare facts speak for themselves.

In covering a country like China, this orthodox pattern breaks down almost completely. It is rare indeed that a correspondent there has direct access to the news. He must get his news from official sources. Ninety percent of the agency copy out of China during the war was taken almost exclusively from the Chinese government news service, from officially censored papers, or from official press conferences. All these sources are adept in the western idiom; and when a correspondent prints news from these sources "straight" he is falling down in his assignment. When the Chinese government promises "elections" and the correspondent files the word "elections" to America, the reader understands the dispatch in terms of his own democratic world, in terms of his local polling booth; he cannot understand it in terms of the Chinese village where the local policeman registers you for "elections" only after you have sworn loyalty to the Kuomintang and have been checked for political reliability; or where five percent of the people can read and write and understand what is going on.

To play the news in any other way but "straight," means that the correspondent interlards his dispatch with paragraphs of interpretation explaining Chinese society so that the facts themselves become meaningful to the American reader. Such paragraphs run into hundreds of words, expensive cable tolls, and bore both his editor and his public. The correspondent finds himself in a dilemma: he can either editorialize, which is a cardinal sin; explain, which is a dull process; or play it "straight," in which case the reader is sure to be misled.

Demand For Color Copy

Most correspondents are caught by a further compulsion: the American press sets two duties for itself: to inform and to entertain. China traditionally in American journalism has been the source of a great deal of color copy, pure entertainment matter: minor warlords with highly-developed peccadillos, opium, famine, Dalai Lamas, and White Russian gangsters. Editorially, the American press expects a great deal of light reading matter out of the Orient. A correspondent is almost sure of success if he plays the news straight (i.e., reprints news from official sources of all factions without interpretation) leavening it with gay "color" copy collected by diligent leg-work. Correspondents being human tend to seek success

and usually follow a "straight" pattern embroidered with occasional human interest features.

A fine example of how these compulsions work out for the American reader was illustrated last spring. The great drama of China at that time was the struggle for the Shanghai delta. The Chinese Communists had launched a huge offensive in the Japanese-held areas to seize the countryside about Shanghai in preparation for the supposed American landing. It was a bitter three-way struggle between Kuomintang, Communists, and Japanese which dominated all Chinese politics. Neither the Communists nor the Kuomintang were willing to discuss the struggle publicly. The Kuomintang insisted on focusing the world's attention—and particularly America's—upon the political shadow-play in Chungking. The Communists concentrated their propaganda efforts on tearing down the Kuomintang's fictions. Both sides used the idiom of democratic terms which was easily cabled out but which obscured the basic issues of social struggle.

In the spring of 1945, therefore, America received almost no information about the struggle at Shanghai (which would have required lengthy interpretation in terms of Chinese social dynamics), only a series of abbreviated charges and counter-charges directly from the lips of the two parties about Chungking negotiations. The big story from China that spring was "color" copy—the fact that the Chinese were standing eggs on end on China's New Year's Day. American editors spread the news from coast to coast to the delight of their readers with the net American impression that the Chinese were a delightful people pre-occupied with egg-standing and experiencing some minor difficulties in establishing a constitutional Jeffersonian democracy. The fact that an inescapable civil war was being made at the China coast was signaled only briefly in one newsmagazine.

These brief notes are meant to propose no solutions, but merely to point out the working problems of the foreign correspondent and enlarge the area of discussion. These problems are bound to grow more, rather than less, important in the next few years. The entire Orient is buckling and seething with revolutionary strain. All parties to the great crisis brewing in China are now clothing their purposes and deeds by invocation of democratic phraseology. Both of them derive their power and their motives from the deepest roots of Chinese society. To understand the course of their war it will be necessary always to relate their statements and pronouncements to Chinese reality in the village and in the city however difficult the writing and reading may be. Whether or not the conventional pattern of foreign correspondence can be changed to meet the needs of the time is debatable. But if it cannot, the American people will sit in blind audience on one of the greatest dramas of our time.

THEODORE WHITE

(Re-printed, with permission, from "Far-Eastern Survey.")

OF TIME AND THE BUREAUCRAT

Mr. Dumbleton asked the Colonial Secretary what steps are being taken to develop the fishing industry in the Seychelle Islands, in view of the recent report by the marine biologist of Mauritius that 300,000 to 400,000 tons of fish could be caught annually from the islands' fishing banks.

Mr. George Hall: As a result of the report in question, funds have been provided under the Colonial Development and Welfare Act for a survey.

Mr. Dumbleton: Is my right hon. Friend aware that as far back as 1926 a survey was made there, and in view of the extreme poverty and need for food in Mauritius, could it not be expedited?

Mr. Hall: It is proceeding as rapidly as possible.

—Proceedings, House of Commons, May 8.

Books

THREE ON OUR SIDE

(1) *OUR THREATENED VALUES*. By Victor Gollancz. London: Victor Gollancz, Ltd., 14 Henrietta St., W.C.2. 157 pages; 5 shillings.

(2) *POLITICS AND ETHICS*. By Grete Hermann. London: International Publishing Co., 7 Cartaret St., S.W.1. 84 pages; 60 cents. (Order direct from "POLITICS")

(3) *SCIENCE, LIBERTY AND PEACE*. By Aldous Huxley. Fellowship Publications, 2929 Broadway, New York City. 86 pages; 50 cents.

These pamphlets all treat a theme that has been agitated in *POLITICS* of late: the disjunction between the traditional values of the Left and the actual course of modern history. All three come to much the same conclusion that some of us have come to: that neither Science nor History may be relied on to conduct us to our ends. They put the emphasis on the individual as a moral being, and they are critical of both pragmatic and Marxist doctrine.

(1) Victor Gollancz is the best type of English liberal—that is, he is really a liberal and not the peculiar product we grow over here. "Our central value," he begins, "or, to put it another way, the value that includes all our other values—is respect for personality." This is close to being a platitude. But it is not such in his case, for he has followed out its logic and has not hesitated to abandon his former sympathy for Stalinism nor to criticise in the sharpest terms such Allied policies as his own government's treatment of defeated Germany. He was the leading spirit in the "Save Europe Now" movement, which aroused British public opinion in favor of a more decent sharing of food with ravaged Europe and especially the Germans; our own liberals were more timid, or more insensitive; anyway, there has been no American counterpart of Save Europe Now. Gollancz is a liberal, not a revolutionary, which means he does not challenge basically the present social system and that he supports, however critically, the Labor Government just as he supported his government in the last war. This gives his thinking a certain superficiality. But he is willing—or is forced by his own honesty of purpose—to go pretty far in his criticisms; he has cut loose from the Progressive assumptions and put the individual human being in the center of his value-scheme. This evolution—for Gollancz' ideas have changed greatly since the mid-thirties—is painful, I can testify from personal experience; for it involves abandoning an idea, or a prejudice if you will, when it conflicts with reality. His pamphlet is a sign that what I call "radical" thinking is going on among some liberals. It is also a well-documented critique of the post-war policies of the Big Three; the chapters on Allied policies in Germany are especially good, and all the more impressive because Gollancz is a Jew.

(2) This is a consideration, in philosophical terms, of the central problem of today: the relation between ethics and politics, or, more specifically, how to realize our values in political action. The author begins by showing that the assumption, common to both 19th century liberalism and Marxism, that "the natural interplay of individual and social forces would . . . in the long run, bring mankind forward and upward, that the misuse of scientific achievement would be over-

come" can no longer be held. Chapter 2 shows the unsatisfactory nature of attempts to find a basis for ethics in some scientific concept of human nature. Chapter 3 rejects a religious basis for ethics: reference to God's will does not provide clear and unambiguous principles; to be dependable, such principles have to be accessible to man's critical reason. The bulk of the pamphlet is a discussion of the problems of free will, justice, ends and means, and how we arrive at values. The argument is too complex to be summarized here. Hermann's own approach she calls Ethical Realism; it is, as the term suggests, an attempt to avoid the extremes of *either* fatalism *or* free will, *either* materialism *or* idealism. "We found," she summarizes, "an apparent contradiction between realism, which studies the actual forces working in Nature and society . . . and the ethical conviction that one can choose one's own aims and strive for what one deems right. We also found that the contradiction is only apparent, and that in fact these modes of thought are mutually dependent and, systematically pursued, inevitably lead to each other. We only get into a really contradictory position when, to avoid a contradiction, we renounce one or the other of the approaches, and refuse either to examine and accept facts as they are, or else to accept the guidance of our sense of values. The would-be realist who will have nothing to do with scales of values fails in consistency whenever he takes considered action. Similarly the would-be idealist who rejects the struggle for power and the use of physical force in order to not to risk soiling his hands betrays his own ideals of rejecting the demands they make on him for their realization. The way out lies in a combination of the two views, resulting in what may be called Ethical Realism." Personally, I found her critique of the "scientific realist" approach stronger than her critique of the "would-be idealist," perhaps because it actually is, perhaps because my own thinking tends towards the second view. Hermann's style is verbose; there is considerable repetition; and the discussion would have profited by being related to concrete events and policies. But despite these defects, the pamphlet is a serious contribution to the key political question of our times.

(3) Huxley begins with Tolstoy's profound observation: "If the arrangement of society is bad (as ours is) and a small number of people have power over the majority and oppress it, every victory over Nature will inevitably serve only to increase that power and that oppression. This is what is actually happening." The pamphlet is a persuasive and well-written exposition of this theme. The concept of Scientific Progress is what Huxley sets out to explode, and he does it most effectively, showing its intimate relationship to such evils as over-centralization and war. His viewpoint might be called utilitarian—as against religious—pacifism; that is, he argues in terms of the practical effects on human life here below of the cult of science. This will surprise those Progressives who sneer at Huxley as simply the St. Paul of Gerald Heard. I have not read Heard's books, but I gather they are of a somewhat mystical nature, putting it mildly. There is little mysticism, and certainly no Heardism, in the present tract; indeed the apocalyptic visions of Scientific Progress are mercilessly attacked, as Tolstoy, another "mystic," attacked them, with the tools of reason and even materialism. All of which should, but won't, warn scientific-method doctrinaires of the Sidney Hook type that such swear-words as "mysticism" and "the new failure of nerve" ought to be used with more discrimination. There is nothing particularly new in Huxley's pamphlet, but it is valuable as a readable and intelligent presentation of a viewpoint which should have wider currency. The last third considers the relation of scientific workers to society and suggests how they may, as scientists, advance their personal values in political action.

D. M.

THE AMNESTY CAMPAIGN

ALTHOUGH the amnesty campaign has not yet attained its objective, it has had a marked effect on the government's policy toward jailed conscientious objectors.

When the Amnesty Committee was first organized a year ago, there were 3,000 COs in jail. Today there are more than 700 in jail. On July 3 the attorney general announced that the government was considering an amnesty this year for all COs over 26. In September the government adopted a policy of offering paroles to "sincere" COs who had served 18 months of their sentences. The pressure brought through constant amnesty appeals by organizations and prominent individuals and through picket demonstrations has resulted in the government's keeping a day-to-day tally on the CO prison population.

Support from veterans, which has marked the entire amnesty campaign, was given impetus last month when the national planning committee of the American Veterans Committee passed an amnesty resolution. Similar action had been taken previously by various AVC chapters including the one at the University of Illinois. When Sol Gordon of that chapter first wrote the Amnesty Committee for literature, he stated that an amnesty story in *POLITICS* had given him the initiative to start a campaign on the campus.

On October 16, a year ago, first day of amnesty picketing at the White House, a southern navy lieutenant threatened the pickets. But a few days later another navy officer who read about the incident in the papers, wrote the Washington Post apologizing for the southerner. On another occasion a Marine ripped the signs off amnesty pickets. The pickets succeeded in calming him and explaining what amnesty is all about. He later became quite sympathetic. Most veterans upon seeing the pickets expressed surprise that COs are still in jail now that the war is over.

Veterans, including recipients of the Purple Heart, British Empire Medal and French Croix de Guerre, took part in an amnesty picket demonstration last May. When Donald R. Tobey, a veteran with 38 months of service read a recent Amnesty Committee letter in the *New York Times* (which has run two editorials favoring amnesty) he wrote the paper saying that it "expresses what many of us feel most strongly as to the injustices done our conscientious objectors."

Following adoption of an amnesty resolution by the CIO veterans committee, the CIO passed the resolution at its national convention last month. Previously labor support for the drive had been largely limited to a few CIO and AFL officials who became sponsors of the Amnesty Committee and to a few locals which passed amnesty resolutions. However the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters (AFL) adopted an amnesty resolution and at the same time commended the successful strikes against jim-crow conducted by the COs in prison. Other major national organizations which are on record for amnesty include the Federal Council of Churches of Christ in America, the Synagogue Council of America and the National Association for Advancement of Colored People.

The Amnesty Committee is now concentrating on a Christmas amnesty campaign. *POLITICS* readers can help by writing President Truman and Attorney General Clark. If they have written already, they can do so again, pointing out that Christmas is the traditional date for granting amnesty.

If President Truman fails to grant amnesty, several hundred COs will be spending their second Christmas in prison since the war's end. And some of them face the prospect of

spending four more gloomy Christmas's behind bars, since their terms do not expire until 1950 and they will accept nothing short of unconditional release.

If there is no amnesty, Roger Axford will spend his Christmas on the steps of the Justice Department building, where he has been on a sitdown strike for amnesty since September 19. Igal Roodenko and James Otsuka will not be eating Christmas dinner, which in prison is the only good meal of the year, because they are on an amnesty hunger strike. And the more than 5,000 COs already released will remain handicapped by loss of their civil rights.

JAMES PECK

The Committee for Amnesty would like POLITICS readers not only to write the President and Attorney General urging a Christmas amnesty for the COs but also to raise the issue in organizations to which they belong. Statements of groups favoring an amnesty should be sent to the White House, Justice Department, and newspapers.

Keep us informed of your activities, too. We shall be glad to furnish additional information, free literature, and our bi-weekly *Amnesty Bulletin* to all who can use them. Of course, financial contributions will be gratefully accepted.

Committee for Amnesty
5 Beekman St., Rm. 1029
New York 7, N. Y.
BEekman 3-0463

Periodicals

I want to devote this month's column to an English journal, *Polemic*, little noticed in America but certainly one of the most cheering things in recent intellectual life. *Polemic* is edited by an intellectual of discrimination and taste, Humphrey Slater, who announces in his first issue that its concerns will be to provide a forum for free expression on the following matters: the significance of Freudianism; the relevance of semantics; the implications of Marxism; and the new mystical and anti-rationalistic philosophical and literary trends. The magazine revolves around such figures as George Orwell, Bertrand Russell, A. J. Ayer, Geoffrey Grigson. Its emphasis is libertarian in politics, experimental in the arts, rationalist in philosophy—with a heavy dash of semanticist messianism.

But a much more attractive picture of *Polemic* is gained by a rapid survey of the first five issues which have been available to me. With one or two exceptions none of the articles is brilliant or first rate, but the range of interest in and lively devotion to ideas is quite striking—especially in contrast to the more restricted American reviews. This reader at least knows of no American journal in which there appears in one issue discussions of universals in philosophy, the Christian revival in literature, the philosophical implications of psychoanalysis and the distinctions of semantics.

Orwell seems to set the tone for the magazine. Among his contributions are a long study of James Burnham, quite good but containing nothing new for the reader who has followed the American critics of Burnham; a really excellent essay, *The Prevention of Literature*, which is a scathing attack on the English version of totalitarian liberalism (much more power-

ful in that country than here); and a provocative piece called *Politics versus Literature*, a study of Gulliver's Travels with contemporary overtones: he sees Swift as a "Tory anarchist" who was "driven to a perverse kind of Toryism by the follies of the progressive party of the moment." Though Orwell is not nearly as subtle or perceptive as many of the critics writing in our literary quarterlies, he is always concerned with ideas, however narrowly empirical that concern may be; and his humanized common sense gives *Polemic* a pleasant flavor to offset the mustiness of the more academic contributions.

The first five issues carry the usual ponderous essays on dialectical materialism, which I found uninteresting (both pro and con). But, to my surprise, I found myself reading an exchange between Bertrand Russell, Rupert Cranshaw-Williams and others on "The Problem of Universals" which, despite the fact that I hadn't read anything along these lines since Philo. I, seemed relevant, lively and well-written.

Then there are a batch of pieces against the "romantic reaction" in both literature and philosophy. One of them, by Geoffrey Grigson, in the third issue, should really be read by everyone concerned with current literary developments: it is a powerful, flaying polemic against the new obscurantist trends among English writers. Another, on the Christian Literary Revival, by R. C. Churchill is a more specialized analysis of the turn to God by England's young writers. But sometimes things are carried a bit too far, as in Edgar Wind's none-too-subtle attempt to smear Sartre and the Existentialists with the Nazi brush—Sartre was a pupil of Heidigger, who became a Nazi, etc.—and in David Paul's insensitive swipe at Kafka as an anti-humanist neurotic.

By now you may already gather what the weaknesses of the magazine are: it stands for all the right things, but it doesn't say much about their relevance to today, and therefore it has a certain air of musty unreality which the existentialist journals, for instance, do not have. And some of *Polemic's* worries are a little quaint. To prove in 1946 that words have a connotative as well as denotative aspect . . . well, this is where we came in, or at least where the generation before mine came in, I'm told.

But if *Polemic* seems a little reminiscent, it has succeeded in one essential: it has given to English intellectuals (at least some of them) a central and unifying discussion platform. At the moment there is nothing comparable in America; seldom before has there been less real contact among intellectuals in this country, and seldom before so little concern about establishing it.

Some of the early issues are eyesores—one being set up completely in bold type: the visual equivalent of a sustained peroration by Hitler—but the fifth issue has hit upon a fairly readable wide column with the innovation of a narrow, small type column on the right hand side in which footnotes are conveniently placed and annotative replies printed. The latter use is most effective; Orwell does it very nicely in a reply to an attack on him by a Stalinist who isn't much brighter but who can write better than most of our local variety.

Polemic's address is: 5 Bathurst St., London W2, England. It costs two shillings, sixpence a copy. There is no mention of a subscription price, English magazines being generally either coy or casual about such details.

THEODORE DRYDEN

READING-IS-BELIEVING DEPT.

To mark the complete reconstruction of Guernica, seat of the ancient Basque Parliament, which was destroyed during the civil war by his air-men, Generalissimo Franco received today the freedom of the borough of Guernica in token of official gratitude by a delegation of its leading citizens.

—"N. Y. Times," Oct. 25.

The Intelligence Office

Slips

Sir:

Re. your footnote, p. 339 past issue: I saw Professor Sidney B. Fay today but thoughtlessly forgot to inform him that he's dead.

CAMBRIDGE, MASS.

B.L.S.

To B.L.S. and other readers who have called my attention to Professor Fay's happy survival, thanks and apologies. I'm also grateful that so far no one has mentioned Mark Twain.—D.M.

Sir:

Please note these exceptions to George Woodcock's review of British publications in your October issue:

The Socialist Vanguard Group is not a sectarian party of the SPGB or the Trotskyist variety. It is an international socialist group which participates in the regular channels of the British Labor Party, the trade unions, the Fabian Society, etc. Its monthly publication, *Socialist Commentary*, far from being "unreliable and sterilized by group dogmatism" is generally considered one of the best-informed and level-headed journals of the British left. Its pages are open to socialists of many "schools." The Socialist Vanguard Group is a part of the Militant Socialist International, whose members played leading roles in the fight against Hitler for international socialism in virtually every continental nation. They are today playing leading roles in the re-creation of socialist militancy and internationalism on the Continent, particularly in Germany and France.

Tribune, of course, does not take the same opposition attitude towards the Labor Government as it did toward Tory and "National" governments. Its support of the Government is sufficiently critical, however, to permit it to constantly needle the Labor Party as to its plans for steel and other nationalizations, and to consistently voice its impatience with the Colonial Office and its marked dissent from the Government's policy in Palestine, Greece, Spain and Germany.

Mr. Woodcock makes no mention of *Left News* published by Gollancz. Its regular International Socialist Forum is one of the few sources of reliable news of the activities of socialist movements throughout the world that we have today. More important, its pages incessantly call for an internationalist approach to all problems.

POLITICS and Mr. Woodcock are unconcerned with the task of building a militant, international, social democratic movement. Those of us who see in such a movement the only hope for realizing the objectives which we share with Woodcock and POLITICS find the journals mentioned above of far greater value than the esoterically revolutionary journals of which Mr. Woodcock is so fond.

WILLIAM C. GAUSMANN,
Washington Rep., Socialist Party.

—I agree that "*Left News*" should have been included, for its excellent international section, and also that "*Socialist Commentary*" is neither sectarian nor unreliable (though perhaps a bit academic). As to "*Tribune*"—it's still the best London political weekly I know, but I agree with Woodcock that it's fallen off sadly in vigor and interest since Labor took power. Personally, my main dissent from Woodcock's evaluations was as to the kind words he has for the I.L.P. weekly,

"*The Socialist Leader*," which I have been reading for two years now without yet finding either fresh and reliable information or any ideas that have not been excruciating platitudes in the socialist movement since 1900. Its make-up is slovenly and degraded almost beyond belief; our own Hearst papers look dignified and readable in comparison. In fact, "*The Socialist Leader*" appears to me the worst political weekly now being published in the English language, and I include our own Trotskyist papers and also Reader Gausmann's party organ, "*The Call*."—D.M.

Soviet Culture: Mandelstam

Sir:

The Chinese Wall that closes in Stalin's totalitarian world is so high that only now do we learn of the death, several years ago, of one of the greatest modern Russian poets. A recent issue of *The Socialist Courier*, the New York menshevik organ, brings us this news, and at a time when various magazines in Italy and France are publishing translations of his work without, apparently, being aware he is dead.

Ossip Emilievitch Mandelstam was born in 1891. He was a Russian Jew. By the time he was twenty, he had become known as one of the most talented poets of the period. Together with Nicolas Goumiev (shot in 1921), he led the "Akmeist" group, which opposed symbolism in the name of the immediate and intuitive expression of reality (interior and external). The quality of his work is impossible to suggest briefly: perhaps it may give some idea if I say that it had something in common both with Appolinaire and Valery (whose verse, indeed, he loved). I knew him in Leningrad and Moscow for many years (1925-1933). He was shy and modest, an independent spirit who insisted on his freedom; rather short, pale and anxious expression, brown eyes whose usual expression was one of sadness and even suffering. Up to 1931, he was not persecuted, though he had difficulty getting published; he lived in poverty, while the "official" poets made big royalties. In 1931 or 1932, he tried suicide, but bungled it. All that I know of his life after that is the following. He wrote a satiric quatrain which hinted at dictatorship; although this subversive joke was circulated among only a few people, he was at once arrested and sent to prison for a few months, or perhaps a year or more—precise information is lacking. Freed, he came back to Moscow, full of plans and projects. Arrested a second time, he was sent to a work-camp in the Far East. He died of typhoid fever on the way.

The Union of Soviet Writers made no inquiries about his fate. No one knows what has become of his wife, or of his unpublished work. His name must be added to the long list of Soviet writers who have mysteriously disappeared: Boris Pilnyak, Babel, Galina Serebriakova, Voronsky, Lelevitch, Gorbachev, Parassov-Rodionov, Meyerhold.

MEXICO CITY

VICTOR SERGE

Blurb

Sir:

I am one of the privileged over here who receive POLITICS, and I judge it the best paper of its kind I ever read. I am a refugee and I read myself through a lot of papers of different epoques, different opinions and different countries. To begin with, the German Weimar press, afterwards the Nazi press, then the different French papers—prewar, occupied, liberated—and every English or American paper I can get. I never found such a highstanding intellectual level and such objectivity in every matter as in POLITICS. What I liked most is that you are never afraid to call everything by its right name and that you don't mind to step on somebody's feet if it's necessary. The most I reproach to nowadays French papers is that there is no objectivity in them, whatever party or in-

fluence they belong to. What their men do is perfect, the rest a heap of evil adjectives. They eat each other with much polemics, or they are of a strict conformism, but never an objective critique. It's probably a remainder from the occupation mentality: either you are for it or against it, without any discussion, and without looking in any other direction to see if there won't be anything good in that camp . . . Even though we are in a democracy now and we have every liberty we need, there are still some subjects which are taboo—for instance, the army or army methods. If somebody would allow himself to write an article as I read several in *POLITICS*, he would go to jail immediately.

I write you all this to tell you why I like *POLITICS*, because it says what the others don't say.

PARIS, FRANCE

ERNST X

NEW ROADS: Discussion

Sir:

It is true, we agree, that so far the criticisms of "The Root Is Man" have yielded no positive results. We also agree that the traditional theories can no longer cope with the problems of today. It doesn't do any good to pretend otherwise. We are convinced, however, that an answer to these general problems will be found only by intensive study of concrete events; lacking that, we shall never arrive at a clear understanding of man and his history. And without some new "world-view," taking in both the general and the particular, no renewal of the revolutionary socialist movement is possible. Here in France, the Trotskyists have certainly "gone to the masses"—supporting their strikes, agitating and propagandizing in public meetings, workshops and factories. But they have gone with their hands—or rather their heads—empty. The results are now clear: zero. Nor is this only because of the attitude of the masses. On the contrary, during the past year, the atmosphere was by no means only hostile.

It seems to us that no one so far has met the other questions that your article raises, and especially that having to do with the relation of the individual's own values with History considered as an ordered evolution—in a word, as Progress. This problem, which appears to many people today as either absurd or meaningless, has nonetheless bothered thinkers ever since the modern idea of history was first sketched out by Vico; i.e., since the end of the 17th century. "When we think about this," wrote Kant, "we cannot but be amazed at one conclusion in particular: all preceding generations go through their painful toil only to fulfill the aspirations of generations to come. . . . Only the very latest generation, and it alone, experiences the delight of living in a mansion to build which a long line of earlier generations have labored . . . without, however, for even an instant, having any part in the happiness which their toil has prepared." Kant evaded the cruel problem he raised; he offered an explanation that hangs in the air: this has to be, he said, because a metaphysical necessity requires that the *species* develop as far as possible. Herder and others refused to accept this sacrifice of the individual to the species; he insisted it was the *individual* who had a right to realize all his potentialities. But how can this be in a history which *progresses*? Herder finally arrived at a law of immortality (under certain conditions). And Lessing went all the way to metempsychosis: the same individuals keep returning to earth to carry on their development. Even more curious was Lotze's solution: the dead come back as spectators of later evolution, which they spy on from the other world—doubtless to their intense satisfaction.

Such fantasies hardly meet our need. We must really say that in the 18th and 19th centuries mankind, so far as philosophy goes, was in an infantile state.

A Specialized Bookshop

Offering a Selected Stock of New & Used Books

THEATRE — DANCE — FILM — LITTLE MAGS

Lawrence R. Maxwell

45 Christopher St., New York City 14

Open 2 to 10 Daily. Phone WA 9-3494

(Books and magazines purchased)

But we cannot deny the reality of the problem, which today takes on a special intensity in the light of a strong tendency to "solve" it by simply denying the individual's right to a free flowering of personality. Here in France, it is existentialism—if one speaks in terms of movements—which rebels against this "solution." It is precisely this rebellion which some critics cannot forgive. Thus the Marxist, Naville, reproaches Sartre for "exaggerating the significance of the present," refusing to accept the "responsibility" exacted by the "historical necessities" of "progress." (Not that we want to deny progress—only this particular conception of it.) Will the French existentialists succeed in what they have undertaken? Or at least make some contribution? Whatever the answer proves to be, the renaissance of philosophy under their stimulus is certainly a step forward. We might add that the most interesting political thinking now being done over here finds expression largely in the pages of Sartre's magazine, *Les Temps Modernes*.

GELO AND ANDREA

Sir:

In attempting to establish once again that scientific knowledge in itself is not sufficient to determine questions of value, *The Root Is Man* is, I think, beating a thoroughly dead horse. Ever since science and morality were torn apart by Kant, the pretensions (to use Kant's own word) of rationality have been taking one blow after another. Today it is a truism among most so-called value theorists (and one which most students of philosophy have heard repeated *ad nauseum*) that "you can't get an *ought* from an *is*." Nobody needs to say any more that the scientific method in itself cannot determine or underwrite values—everybody from the Pope to Henry C. Link and from Milton Mayer to Alfred Rosenberg has already said it (even including, I think, if you read him right, John Dewey).

We are in fact now reaping the harvest of this separation and the desertion of reason in morality. How else explain the floodtides of mysticism, Gerald Heardianism, existentialism, neo-Thomism, religious fundamentalism à la Barth and Niebuhr and Kierkegaard, Steinerism, Ramakrishnaism, etc., etc.? The search for the sources and guarantors of values has turned into a veritable stampede, and there is no telling where it will stop. Orwell and Koestler, it appears, have now also joined the party (although with many more reservations than most).

This trend goes hand in hand with more and more political irresponsibility and extreme individualism. A full-blown loss of faith in the masses and return to the "great man" principle is underway—although now the great man is saint (Heard) or the yogi (Koestler). The more thorough-going (in point of pessimism) wind up with something like the streamlined theocratic caste system of Heard or the hidden Christian hierarchism of T. S. Eliot. Those who aspire to be the saints or those who are just simply worried are advised to club together in "oases," purify themselves, witness for the truth, engage in occasional token actions and wait for the darkness to recede.

The Root Is Man did not, of course, go as far as most of the panic-stricken, but it betrayed certain ominous symptoms. There was the same insistence of the fact-value dualism, the same skepticism about mass action, the same emphasis on moral purification and individual "witnessing" (doing the right thing for its own sake without particular reference to a larger program), the same despair of results and of affecting the present situation. We are tempted to think that the author, if not actually on the road to Quakerism and the Fellowship of Reconciliation, is at least looking at the sign posts.

It is time now, I think, to reverse this trend by which facts become more and more public (and nature and history more and more alienated from man) and values become more and more private and whimsical. This has to be done, not by a retreat to supernaturalism or self-appointed messiahs, but by emphasizing the *unity* of fact and value in Man. Man has to be given back his rightful place.

The dualism of your article is only one side of the shield. "There are two worlds, not one," we are told. But, on the other hand, *The Root Is Man*, i.e., there is *one* root. What looked at objectively is a dualism, looked at subjectively is a monism. There is one man inhabiting two worlds or two worlds inhabiting one man. This is not mere word play; it matters where the emphasis is put. The emphasis *should* be put on the fact that it is in Man that the unity of fact and value occurs and that that unity cannot be violated without disastrous consequences.

Calhoun is right in defending the indispensability of science for morality. At the same time there is another kind of knowledge which is indispensable, and that is self-knowledge. If values are to be responsible (if they are to be "good" values), they must be determined by knowledge and self-knowledge and not alone by intuition (wasn't that what Hitler was supposed to have?), insight, conscience, hunches or what have you. A new and more valid humanism must be based on the introspective self-knowledge of religion and psychology as well as the objective knowledge of physical science.

The skepticism about mass action and about results arises from the insistence on the same dualism. People feel themselves spectators (and victims) of history rather than participants in it. But just as those who say that "scientifically speaking, man is of no importance" need to be told that "scientifically speaking, man is the scientist," so those who feel themselves outside the forces of history need to be told that man is the maker of history. Both science and history need to be humanized and personalized.

I am not suggesting that facts be made a function of values and science merely another type of valuation (although that would be just as logical as to follow the positivists and make values a function of fact). I am saying that both are a function of Man and that they *cannot be separated*. The real problem is to understand Man.

At the point where we as individuals are able to recover the sense of historical participation, we are able to act, and it is essential to act. Questions as to the possibility of results, affecting the present situation, the attitude of the masses, etc., become basically irrelevant. There will be no mass action and no results unless some people assume that there will be and act on that assumption now. To postpone action in order to purify ourselves or to wait for better times may be a very popular course in Times of Troubles, but it is to invite worse disaster. And it is also another instance of sacrificing the present to the future.

ROY FINCH

believes the article widens. The misunderstanding here—which, I gather from other reactions, is by no means peculiar to him—is no doubt partly my fault. But I suggest it is also due to this awkwardness: that the Marxist concept of consciousness as the exclusive product of materialistic environment, from which it follows that large-scale changes in institutions are the only "real" kind of political action—that this idea has become so widely accepted that when one expresses his scepticism about it as a guide towards socialism, he is assumed to be "escaping" or "retreating" to some private sphere disconnected from the general fate of mankind. What I am trying to do, however, is to find a new connection between the private and the public worlds. The dualism to which Finch objects is an attempt, unsatisfactory enough I admit, to find a footing for personal values in a world that is evolving in an unfavorable direction; Marx's monism at best offers no such footing, and at worst—as in the case of Stalinists and certain Trotskyists—precipitates us down the slope to totalitarianism.—D.M.

"Partisan Review" and "Politics"

IN the new *Partisan Review* the editors print a number of letters pro and con their Summer editorial, "The Liberal Fifth Column"; they defend the editorial (which said that Russia is Bad, America is Good, and the liberal weeklies are "fifth columnists" betraying American national interests); and they counter-attack their critics. These they divide into three categories: Trotskyists, Liberals, and—much too flattering—me. Their rebuttal of the Trotskyites I must confess I found masterly, as far as it went, since it repeated what I myself have said often in these pages. The more serious weaknesses today of the Trotskyist position, however, escaped them; no one has as yet pointed them out in print. Their reply to the liberals' spokesman, Heinz Eulau, was less impressive, partly because they relied too much on their own ideas, partly because Eulau was shrewd enough to explain rather than defend the liberals. My own low opinion of the liberal weeklies, is, I hope, sufficiently on record so that I will not be accused of "fifth columnist" leanings when I say I thought he had the better of the argument.

I.

The criticism of POLITICS runs along the familiar lines: escapism, religiosity, passivity, "moral uplift" instead of political "realism," etc. A quote may suggest the tone: "What, then, is going to stop Stalinism? But it is precisely at this point that Macdonald flaps his wings and soars to an empyrean of moral rectitude and passivity . . ." (Why choose to retain, from the Bolshevik tradition, only the one element that has nothing good to be said for it: the coarse polemical style?)

There is one serious mis-statement: that POLITICS insists there is no qualitative difference between the Russian form of society and our own. It is alleged that Theodore Dryden, reviewing the PR editorial in our September issue, "accused" it of "being so *impure* [their emphasis] as to weigh the differences and the contradictions between democratic capitalism and Stalinism." This is just not true; Dryden neither states this nor implies it. Later on, it is further alleged: "According to Macdonald, democratic capitalism is equally evil" (to Stalinism). And still again, I am charged with "refusing to make a distinction between democratic capitalism and Stalinism." These statements are also untrue. POLITICS

—One of the main intentions of "*The Root Is Man*" was to find a way of narrowing that separation between Man and History (or, private values and political action) which Finch

has consistently pointed out the qualitative differences between our own social system and that of Stalin. My article on "The Russian Culture Purge" in the October issue developed this theme in detail. For instance: "A qualitative difference, disturbing in its implications, does seem to have developed in the last fifteen years between Russian culture and our own. Such principles as freedom, justice, truth, mercy, such notions as the Rights of Man or our own 'life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness,' a certain respect for the independence of the individual, even of the artist—these still have some currency in the West and retain some force for most men. But they are apparently by now totally lacking in Russian culture . . . which has become debased to a point more barbarous, irrational and psychopathic than the worst Hollywood can show us." There is thus no basis for PR's thrice-repeated statement.

"Since Macdonald has dismissed every possible opposition to Stalinism," continue my late colleagues, "what his position comes down to—in objective terms—is a complete surrender to Stalin. With a truly oriental passivity, Macdonald prostrates himself beneath the wheels of the advancing juggernaut."^{*}

All this is true only if one assumes in advance precisely the point to be argued: whether there are other ways of opposing Stalinism beyond those favored by PR: power-plays by the U. S. State Department, backed up by the atom bomb and the biggest navy and air force in the world. As a socialist and a pacifist, I believe there are, and have written in detail on this point. (See, for example, "The Responsibility of Peoples" and "The Root Is Man.") My view is, briefly, that the results of the defeat of Stalinism by the present governments of America and Britain will be no more successful so far as socialist aims go than has been the defeat of Nazism by the same methods; that the result of using such methods is to corrupt and brutalize ourselves first of all; and that our job as intellectuals is to criticise and expose both our own government's actions and those of Russia as leading towards war, to persuade our fellow-men that love is better than hate and freedom than servitude, and to try to find ways for them, and us, to express these values in action. It will be said that there is small chance of success visible now for such a program. I agree, but would insist that, theoretically and pragmatically, the "realistic" alternative of working through the status quo is realistic only if one is concerned simply to have "our side" win, and not at all realistic if one wants to realize the traditional aspirations of socialism. And I would submit PR's editorial as an instance, for its theme is that, a scant year after Nazism has been overthrown in a hideously destructive war, we now confront the same thing, in an even more threatening form, in Stalinism, and we must be prepared to use the same methods against it. I see no end to this chain-reaction.

As for the business about my position meaning "in objective terms" surrender to Stalinism—I had hoped that this kind of reasoning had been discredited by now. It amounts to saying that there are only two factors in the political world today: the Kremlin and the State Department, and if one doesn't choose one, one *must* choose the other. (Why, then, is POLITICS not also "objectively" helping the State Department when it criticises Stalinism?) Orwell made the same "objec-

tive" point against the English pacifists during the war, I recall, in PR itself; he had the good sense, later on, to retract.

2.

If we are to talk in "objective" terms, it is interesting to compare the objective results of the PR and the POLITICS approach to Stalinism.

Our first issue appeared in February, 1944. Between then and the present, the following major articles criticising Stalinism have appeared: Clair's "Stalin's Policy in Europe" (Feb. 1944), Meyer's "The Soviet Union: a New Class Society" (March and April 1944), Serge's memoirs (June 1944, March and April 1945), my own expose on Warsaw (Oct., Nov., Dec. 1944), "500 Red Army Men" (Oct. 1945), two sets of documents on the Russian atrocities in Berlin (Jan. and Oct. 1946), Ciliga's "A Talk with Lenin in Stalin's Prison" (Aug. 1946), and my own "The Russian Culture Purge" (Oct. 1946).

During the same period, the only expose of Stalinism PR printed was the editorial here considered (Summer 1946). It also printed one other article directly concerned with Stalinism: Burnham's "Lenin's Heir" (Winter 1945), which at best was ambiguous in its attitude toward Stalin, and, to some of us, appeared to be an apology for Stalinism. This record is all the more striking when one considers the considerable amount of anti-Stalinist material printed during the six years I was an editor of PR (1937-1943). (Note that only major articles are taken into account here; it is true that PR between 1944 and 1946 printed some book reviews and short pieces that were critical of Stalinism, but so did POLITICS—not to mention the frequent treatment of the theme in our editorial columns.)

We now confront a mystery: the "positive," "responsible" and "activist" political line of the PR fire-eaters produced the *objective* result that for over two years they printed not a single major article exposing Stalinism, while the "quietistic" and "escapist" line of POLITICS had the *objective* result that many such attacks on Stalinism were printed. The solution is simple: Russia was allied to the U. S. in the war, PR supported the war, POLITICS didn't. Passivity, whether oriental or not, was the result of PR's "politics of commitment," while activity was the result of our "politics of detachment." Or, put broadly: only by developing a perspective looking beyond the interests of both imperialist camps can one preserve one's freedom of action to tell the truth and combat totalitarianism.

My point is not a competition in anti-Stalinism, for that frame of reference seems to me intolerably narrow. But just that: (1) it is silly for the editors of a magazine which once was intimately concerned with political issues and is so no longer, to talk of political "escapism"; and (2) it is disingenuous for the editors of a magazine which soft-pedalled criticisms of Stalinism during the war, to now present themselves—on the strength of a single article printed a year after hostilities ceased—as consistent and principled opponents of totalitarianism.

3.

One of PR's formulations is worth a little semantic analysis: "Macdonald's notions about politics are advanced, to be sure, under the banner of 'morality.' Actually, however, they are neither political nor moral, being rather a peculiar hodgepodge of both . . ." My dictionary defines "hodgepodge" as "same as HOTCHPOTCH," which in turn is defined as "a various mixture; a jumble." A jumble means that disparate

* What I do like about PR is its prose style, so filled with nostalgic echoes for one brought up on Colonel Bob Ingersoll and Brann the Iconoclast. We know, of course, that orientals are passive, but who in this oversophisticated age except the editors of PR would dare reaffirm this homely truth? And as for that "advancing juggernaut"—I haven't met up with that since Bryan's Cross of Gold speech.

things are arbitrarily mixed together, without organic or logical connection; the way to restore order is to separate these elements. The "neither political nor moral" also implies that morality and politics exist in watertight compartments and that it is confusing and irresponsible to mix them; it's got to be one or the other. Now this is a big statement, by no means to be accepted, as the PR editors do, as self-obvious. The problem of how to relate morality and politics, how to "politicalize" the one or to "moralize" the other, has been an agonizing one among philosophers and political thinkers for a long time; it bothered Plato, Kant, Rousseau, Hegel, Marx and Proudhon—to name the first that came to mind; it bothered Max Weber, whose subtle analysis of the question, in his "Politics as a Vocation," I have just been reading. The point is that they all agreed at least that there is some connection between ethics and politics, and that there is a problem involved: what is it? They felt the necessity of some theoretical structure large enough to house both these apparent dichotomies; none of them took the simplistic view, so congenial to the American pragmatic turn of mind, that there isn't any connection, and hence no problem. The most recent proponent of that view is James Burnham, and the PR editors, who prefer to do their thinking vicariously, have simply adopted the "commonsense" notion that Burnham derived from Pareto: morality is "a personal matter," while politics is "what really happens in the world." (This term, "really"—or its derivatives, "realistic," "actual"—could be analyzed at length; it's a much more complicated business to determine what is "real" than the commonsense mind realizes.)

Far from agreeing that to attempt to relate ethics to politics—or, put differently, the individual to history—is to create a hodgepodge (see HOTCHPOTCH), I have come to believe that this is the most significant task which political thought can accomplish. What appears to my late colleagues to be no problem at all, to me appears to be the key political question of our times. I must grant one point to the PR *realpolitikers*: no one so far, from Plato to Weber, has succeeded in finding a satisfactory answer to the problem. Which, of course, shows that it is a waste of time to break one's head on it, just as the fact that no one has yet solved the problem of creating a perfect poem shows how fantastic it is to continue to make poetry.

4.

Finally, a few words on the PR editorial itself. In reply to a correspondent who complains of its low intellectual level, the editors refer to "Professor Dewey's kind compliment" and "hope it is not discourteous to cite the opinion of America's leading philosopher as our answer." There is something disarming about the frankness with which "America's leading philosopher" is brought into the discussion; the snob-appeal to big names is not usually so explicit. But although I agree that Dewey is a "leading philosopher," and although I have the most profound respect for his personal honesty and courage, his prose style has never appealed to me, nor have his political ideas appeared profound. This opinion is confirmed by his evaluation of PR's editorial: "It is a pleasure to have plain speaking beautifully phrased."

As to the "beautifully phrased," I submit to Dr. Dewey's consideration, as a philosopher who has written a lot about esthetics, the following:

"The two events [the atom bomb and Russia's invasion of Manchuria] were also a simultaneous political explosion which blew the war honeymoon to bits, ushering in the new groupings in world politics and opinion." (p. 281)

"Instead of trying to needle this timidly conservative De-

partment into a more aggressively democratic policy, the 'liberals' are trying to make it stoop lower to the despicable service of pulling Stalin's chestnuts out of the fire for him." (p. 286)

"Perhaps they are the most incorrigible of myth addicts as still to believe that Russia is socialist in fact or tendency? (sic) Then they put themselves beyond the pale of serious consideration, they lose authority to speak seriously on any issue, since they will obviously be immune to any and all facts wherever convenient for them." (p. 289)

In the above, there are many broken-backed prose rhythms, at least four journalistic clichés, one ungrammatical sentence (the first sentence of the last quote), and no stylistic distinction. It is run-of-the-mill journalese, and could have been written by Max Lerner as one of his daily editorials, except that he has a better ear for cadence. If Dr. Dewey can show me one "beautifully phrased" paragraph in the whole editorial, I will print it in bold type in this magazine.

Now as to the "plain speaking." It is true that the editors are bold as lions in attacking Russia. But if this is to be applauded as "plain speaking," why not include *The Chicago Tribune*, Winston Churchill, the Republican Party, the U. S. State Department, and innumerable radio and newspaper commentators? Does it really take such courage to speak out, in the USA, against Russia and to denounce the liberals as "fifth columnists?"* It would have been courageous "plain speaking" to have dissociated themselves from American imperialism while attacking Russian imperialism; but this is just what the PR editors did not do. Nor did their "plain speaking" lead them to profess openly the alternative viewpoint: to side with the State Department against Russia. "The three available political alternatives thus boil down," they write, "... to three [beautiful phrasing there!]: you are an international revolutionary, or an American patriot, or—a Russian patriot." But what category do *they* fall into? Their plain-spoken editorial neglects to tell us. The last may be eliminated as a matter of course. Perhaps the first? But in their later rebuttals, they violently repudiate the two main variants: the Marxist and the pacifist. We must conclude, then, that, stretched on their own Procrustean bed, they fit into the second: "American patriot." And indeed the whole tenor and logic of their reasoning lead to this conclusion. But why then not say so? Because such an explicit avowal would not go down at all well with the more sophisticated of their readers. Small beer, really, to come down to being simply "American patriots!" The easiest way out is to get all the polemical advantages of such a position without actually taking it.

Nor does their "plain speaking" extend to their position on Russia. One of their readers, Jules Kolodny, after praising their analysis of the liberal position, asks: "Are we then to assume that you desire the State Department or our military to threaten war to make him [Stalin] withdraw? ... If your thinking leads you to conclude that Stalin's aggressions cannot be stopped by appeasing his insatiable appetite and that war is the only alternative, stop beating around the bush and say so." There is a full page of doubletalk in reply to this awkward question; the operative sentence is: "If Mr. Kolodny wants to know whether we will support America in a war with Russia, we can only say now that that will depend on the existing situation when and if war comes." This, of course, is not what Kolodny asked—though it would be interesting to

* This term was first used by Franco to describe the secret forces he had working for him behind the Republican lines. Its emotive value is, therefore, pro-democratic. But there must be assumed a democratic policy that the "fifth column" threatens. This might be the progress of socialism, or it might be just America's "national interests" as expressed by the State Department. The main criticism of the PR editorial is that it sees the latter as what is threatened by the liberal "fifth column."

know, since the PR editors reject both the pacifist and the international revolutionary positions, just what kind of a hypothetical "existing situation" they have in mind. The question asked, however, was whether they were prepared to follow out the logic of their position that (a) Stalinism must be curbed, (b) appeasement won't work, (c) neither a pacifist nor an international socialist line is realistic in the face of this threat, which can only be met within the framework of the status quo, that is, in terms of Anglo-American power politics vs. Russian power politics, to the conclusion (d) that force must therefore be used—diplomatic force, economic force, and, if it comes to that, military force, i.e., war. It is humanly understandable that the editors of PR would draw back from this dreadful conclusion, and it does credit to their hearts that they do. But not to their heads. Nor does it reflect credit on other parts of their anatomies that they evade this consequence of their thinking, and, as Kolodny puts it, "talk war in parables of peace."

5.

When I sat down to write this reply, I thought of it in terms of a 500-word job; and indeed on the logical plane the arguments could have been adequately dealt with in a couple of satirical paragraphs. But as I got into it, the thing grew; for, despite their best efforts to sink to the "American patriot" level, the PR editors remain intellectuals. It would be tedious and unrewarding to polemicize against, say, The New Leader, since the whole level is so low, the terrain is, so to speak, so marshy, that one would have to spend most of one's energy defining what the argument is about. But the PR editors, being in a more discriminating cultural tradition, are gifted—or, in this particular instance—cursed with enough lucidity and power of generalization to make it profitable to quarrel with them. Their very attempts at evading the consequences of their thinking may be made to show, as I have tried to do, what those consequences are. PR's political evolution is also significant as an index of our times, for here we have the best American literary magazine (and one that years ago was also a rallying-point for the rebellious and the critical) explicitly making its peace with the status quo.

DWIGHT MACDONALD

*The only way to be sure of getting every issue of **politics** is to subscribe. It costs \$3.50 a year, \$6 for two years. Add 30c a year for Canada, 50c elsewhere.*

Address Nancy Macdonald, Bus. Manager.

Nancy Macdonald, Politics, 45 Astor Place, New York 3, N.Y.
Enclosed find \$..... Please send me one (two) year(s)
of "Politics."

NAME

ADDRESS

CITY..... UNIT..... STATE.....

BACK ISSUES AVAILABLE:

1. **February, 1944 . . . 25c**
Walter J. Oakes: *Toward a Permanent War Economy*
2. **March, 1944 . . . Exhausted.**
3. **April, 1944 . . . 25c**
C. Wright Mills: *The Intellectual in Society*
4. **May, 1944 . . . 25c**
Kurt List: *The Music of Soviet Russia*
5. **June, 1944 . . . Exhausted.**
6. **July, 1944 . . . 25c**
Don Calhoun: *The Political Relevance of Conscientious Objection*
7. **August, 1944 . . . 50c**
Bruno Bettelheim: *Behavior in Extreme Situations*
8. **September, 1944 . . . 25c**
Dwight Macdonald: *Notes on the Psychology of Killing*
9. **October, 1944 . . . Exhausted.**
10. **November, 1944 . . . 25c**
George Orwell: *The Ethics of the Detective Story*
11. **December, 1944 . . . 25c**
Llewellyn Queener: *Inter-Enemy Ethics*
12. **January, 1945 . . . Exhausted**
13. **February, 1945 . . . 25c**
Simone Weil: *Reflections on War*
Dwight Macdonald: *The Responsibility of Peoples*
14. **March, 1945 . . . Exhausted.**
15. **April, 1945 . . . 50c**
"Why Am I Fighting?"
16. **May, 1945 . . . 25c**
Daniel Bell: *The Political Lag of Commonwealth*
17. **June, 1945 . . . 25c**
Conscription & Conscientious Objection, a Symposium
18. **July, 1945 . . . 25c**
Paul Goodman: *The Political Meaning of some Recent Revisions of Freud*
19. **August, 1945 . . . 25c**
Louis Clair: *The Peace Criminals*
Text of General Patton's D-Day-Minus One Speech
20. **September, 1945 . . . 25c**
The Atomic Bomb—3 articles
21. **October, 1945 . . . 25c**
P. J. Proudhon: *Selections, with introductory article*
22. **November, 1945 . . . Exhausted.**
23. **December, 1945 . . . 25c**
New Roads (1)
Dwight Macdonald: *Shall Europe Starve?*
24. **January, 1946 . . . 25c**
New Roads (2)
25. **February, 1946 . . . 25c**
Karl Jaspers: *The Rebirth of the University*
New Roads (3)
26. **March, 1946 . . . 25c**
Philip Spratt: *Marxism and Ethics*
Simone Weil: *Words and War*
27. **April, 1946 . . . 35c**
Dwight Macdonald: *The Root Is Man (I)*
James Agee: *Dedication Day*
28. **May, 1946 . . . 35c**
Ethel Goldwater: *The Independent Woman—a New Course*
29. **July, 1946 . . . 35c**
Dwight Macdonald: *The Root Is Man (II)*
30. **August, 1946 . . . 35c**
Anton Ciliga: *A Talk with Lenin in Stalin's Prison*
The Story of Cyprus, a Documentary
31. **September, 1946 . . . 35c**
Anton Pannekoek: *The Failure of the Workingclass*
32. **October, 1946 . . . 35c**
Dwight Macdonald: *The Russian Culture Purge*
33. **November, 1946 . . . 35c**
Gelo and Andrea: *The Anti-Capitalist Revolution in France*

Sets of all the above issues that are still in print (27) are available at \$7 a set . . . Special Back Issue Bundle: 8 issues for \$1 (Nos. 3, 4, 10, 13, 16, 18, 28 and 30).

The Great Coal Strike

The Man from Marx Interviews the Editor

THE Man from Marx, first cousin to that Man from Mars who is widely known in journalistic circles, dropped into the office the other day to get straight about the coal strike. He had been absorbed for months in writing a monograph on The Economic Preconditions for Socialism (he was in high spirits, for his researches showed they have been ripe—"and over-ripe" he added—since 1911) so he was almost as ignorant about the coal strike as his celebrated cousin would have been.

First give me a brief idea of what happened, he began. Then we can discuss its historical significance.

Well, I answered, you recall that last spring there was a five-week coal strike which was finally settled by the Government's taking over operation of the mines and signing a new contract with Lewis. This contract gave Lewis most of what he wanted. It was bitterly denounced by the operators, and was hailed at the time by the United Mine Workers' journal as bringing "the greatest economic and social gains registered by the UMW in a single wage agreement since the birth of the union in 1890." This fall, a few weeks before the elections, Lewis served formal notice that he wanted to open negotiations at once on a new contract setting wages at a higher (unspecified) rate. On November 15, after two weeks of obscure and devious maneuvers on both sides, Lewis broke off negotiations and served notice that the contract would lapse on November 21; i.e., the miners would then go on strike until a new contract was negotiated.

But what were the workers' demands, interrupted the Man from Marx.

That is an obscure point. Lewis has gotten out of the habit of taking either the miners or the public into his confidence on such matters. He did drop a hint at one point about a pay rise of some 50%, but without explaining the reason for this particular figure. Throughout the strike he had nothing to say to the press, except for Chatauqua lectures at dramatic moments; his lieutenants didn't dare say anything; and the 700,000 members of his union didn't know anything and so had nothing to say. But anyway—on November 18 the Government got a court injunction forbidding the strike. When the strike began as scheduled on November 21, the UMW was held to be in contempt of court, and on December 4 fines were levied on Lewis and the union of \$10,000 and \$3,500,000 respectively. President Truman, who had personally undertaken to break the strike, refused all concessions and prepared to make a nation-wide radio speech on December 8. The day before, that is on December 7, Lewis abruptly called off the strike and ordered his miners back to work under the old contract. The strike was a total failure.

So the miners defied the capitalist courts and the power of the bourgeois State! exclaimed the Man from Marx. I suppose they acted under the spur of economic necessity, and that they are among the lowest-paid of American wage-slaves?

On the contrary, they are the best-paid of all occupation groups, with one exception.—Which is?—Employees of stock-brokerage houses, who get \$4 a week more. Last June the soft-coal miners were earning an average of \$63.58 weekly, as against \$49.45 in auto, \$46.56 in steel, \$41.10 in food, and \$35.35 in clothing. Since 1939 their wage-rates have increased over 200%. I might add that there are over 10 mil-

lion workers in this country who are now getting less than 65 cents an hour, that is, less than \$26 for a 40-hour week.

But aren't these high earnings the result of an inhumanly long work week?

It is true that Lewis made much of the "brutal 54-hour week," but this is a maximum, not the actual average. Even last June, when the mines were running near top production, the miner's week averaged only slightly higher than that in manufacturing: 41.7 hours as against 40 hours.

Then the union's militancy must have been due to the very fact that the miners are highly paid. We Marxists can explain that, too; high wages provide a good materialistic base for militancy.

A theory which can explain similar effects from contradictory causes is useful for polemic if not for prediction. But this track will never take us to an understanding of the strike. There is not only no discernible relationship between the miners' economic interests and the strike, but there is not even a traceable relation between the miners themselves and the strike. In the thirty years he has been running the union, Lewis has changed it from one of the most democratic and socially conscious—indeed, between 1900 and 1914 the mine workers were a stronghold of the Socialist Party—into a bureaucratic dictatorship which could learn nothing from Stalin. UMW conventions have all the free discussion and spontaneity of a session of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR. In fact, Stalin is eclipsed by Lewis, for he has collaborators and even competitors in the Politburo, while Lewis rules singlehanded. Any reader of *POLITICS* could name three or four other Russian leaders, but who can name a single other UMW leader? Lewis has used violence, trickery and arbitrary fiat to suppress any expression of the rank and file and to smash the slightest opposition. Many, if not most, of the district presidents are not even elected by their districts but are appointed by Lewis. The UMW is thus simply an extension of the personality of John L. Lewis. Its 700,000 members are not consulted about going on strike, nor about calling off a strike, any more than a plebiscite is taken to make war or peace. Their attitude is like that of the conscripted GI: they "do the job," without much feeling either pro or con something they feel is too big for them to affect. They showed no particular enthusiasm or resentment about going out on strike, and the same apathy greeted Lewis's order to go back to work after the costly and fruitless adventure. "It's up to John L. Lewis" was one typical reply to reporters' questions. Another was: "The boss has said it, and that's all."

Well, of course, personal dictatorship is bad. But you'll admit that the workers have to organize and present a common front to their enemies.

That's what they tell us in wartime.

But you can't at least deny the splendid militancy and unity they showed—hardly a scab among so many!

That happens in war too.

So you think it all comes down to just Lewis's own motives?

Yes.

Well, how do you explain Lewis? Isn't he a good business unionist? And wasn't he acting for the good of the workers in calling a strike to protect the union's past gains and win new ones?

Lewis used to be a good business unionist, but I think he's gone to seed. He got enough from the Government last spring to last any business unionist a long time: an 18½ cents an hour raise (on top of successive raises yearly since 1939 that had made the miners the best-paid workers in the country); more union control over mine safety; recognition of the right of foremen to join the union (put into effect by the Government administrator last summer); a 10-day paid vacation at \$100 a week instead of the previous \$75 rate; and, above all, a health and welfare fund, administered entirely by the union and financed by a royalty of 5 cents on every ton of coal mined, paid direct into the union treasury. This last item—which was the chief reason the private operators refused to sign a contract—will come to around \$25 millions this year. He risked losing these gains in order to get another pay increase only six months later. And in the face of a political situation—for he called the strike after the Republican victory—of the most unfavorable kind. This isn't business unionism; it's more like a gambler whose luck has run out.

But perhaps he took such risks in order to spearhead a general movement for higher wages? Perhaps he wanted to put himself at the head of the workingclass fight against exploitation? You'll admit that wages have fallen far behind prices today.

It's true that the 18½ cents an hour increase won last winter (which, incidentally, was gained by only a few strong unions; the average increase in manufacturing was only 11½ cents) had been wiped out by higher prices even before it was won. And certainly the workers have justice on their side when they demand higher wages now. But there is no evidence that Lewis, aside from oratory about "shrunk bel-lies," is in any way concerned with this situation, either as a crusade or as an opportunity. He consulted with neither the CIO nor his own AFL before making his moves; if he had, it is certain their leaders would have tried to dissuade him. Any other industry—steel, auto, rubber—would have been tactically superior to coal as a starting-point; a strike in coal, coming before the economy had completely recovered from last spring's five-week coal strike, could be expected to cause a national crisis in a few weeks and provoke Governmental intervention. Of course, once the injunction had been issued and the fantastic fine levied, both Green and Murray had no choice but to support Lewis—their necks were involved, too. But note that this support did not go beyond words; there was no talk of sympathetic strike action, either from the CIO and AFL leaders or from rank-and-file trade unionists. And indeed Lewis made no effort to arouse any such sentiment; he ignored the labor movement as he ignored his own union membership, disdaining to appeal to either the sympathies or the intelligence of the workers (or the public). It was a one-man guerilla expedition, whose effects were those of a global war. As for leading the workers against capitalist exploitation—Lewis has voted Republican in every presidential election except 1936, and has proclaimed his belief in "free enterprise" on many recent occasions.*

* As at the Labor-Management Conference called by the White House in November, 1945. Murray of the CIO offered a resolution suggesting that wages were closely related to prices and supporting Governmental price controls. "The resolution," boomed Lewis, "seeks to perpetuate Government controls of prices, profits and the fixation of wages I am opposed to labor's being required to bargain collectively within these limits. I want free enterprise and free collective bargaining. Free enterprise and free competition have acted in the past and will act in the future as a brake on profits and will bring lowered costs to the consumer We must not inhibit industry from making profits What Mr. Murray and the CIO are asking for is a corporate state, wherein the activities of the people are regulated and constrained by a dictatorial government Whenever we get production started, the competitive

But at least Lewis believes in a "free capitalist" ideology—and this, in a period when the greatest menace comes from the State, as an instrument of monopoly capitalism, makes him objectively a fighter for freedom. You must admit that—objectively—Lewis was struggling to curb the State's power when he went through with his strike.

I agree that during the war, Lewis "objectively" fought some daring and brilliant campaigns against the State, puncturing Roosevelt's "national unity" ideology time and again, forcing the State to take over the mines five times between 1943 and 1945 in order to settle strikes called in defiance of the wartime "no strike" pledge. But, perhaps because of a lack of any subjective vision, these objective victories bore little fruit, except that the miners gained a few more dollars per week. The latest strike, however, has not even this "objectively" anti-State-control character. It was the State which last spring granted the UMW "the greatest economic and social gains" since its birth in 1890; private enterprise had refused these gains. In calling the strike, Lewis did not want to escape this delightful bondage to the State; he simply wanted, in the one-word definition Gompers is said to have once made of trade-union aims: More. In fact, it was Secretary Krug's proposal that Lewis should bargain with the operators instead of with the Government that provoked Lewis to break off negotiations and declare the contract ended. Nor, so far as we know, did Lewis try to make a deal with the operators during the strike, and thus undercut the Government's position in the most effective possible way. A few specially interested businessmen—Cyrus Eaton, whose Chesapeake & Ohio Railroad is one of the great coal-carriers, and Moses of Frick Coal, the U. S. Steel "captive mine" subsidiary (steel was hit harder by the strike than any other industry)—talked to him "informally" and tried to find a compromise; but these efforts came to nothing, and Lewis must have known they would not, for the temper of "free enterprise" after the Republican electoral victory was not receptive to granting even as much as Lewis had won from the State last spring, let alone something more.

Perhaps, even if you are right, Lewis's personal dislike of State control may be behind the strike. And this, given favorable historical circumstances, may have great consequences.

The evidence shows that Lewis's thunders against State slavery and for free enterprise are to be taken in a Pickwickian sense. His successes as a labor leader have been gained largely through manipulation of the State. He was one of the main authors of the famous Section 7-A of the National Industrial Recovery Act which in 1933 made it possible to revive his shattered UMW and later to organize CIO.

But naturally a labor leader takes advantage of the concessions he wrings from the bourgeois State.

Naturally. Only Lewis is supposed to be a Free Enterpriser. When NIRA was killed by the Supreme Court, Lewis joined with the operators in putting the Guffey Act through Congress in 1935, fixing minimum prices and extending unionization. When this in turn was invalidated by the Court, Lewis and the operators replaced it with the Bituminous Coal Conservation Act of 1937. Also: during the war, Roosevelt took over the mines only after Lewis had been unable to get what he wanted through "free collective bargaining," and

situation will take care of prices. Ford's entire policy in the last 30 years has been to raise wages and lower prices. General Motors . . . the same The stock market is advancing There is no cause for pessimism. To quote the immortal James A. Garfield: 'America is sound. God reigns and the flag flies over the Capitol in Washington.'" (At which point, Murray shouted: "The CIO is not afraid of anybody and I am not afraid of you!" Lewis: "Nuts." Murray: "Nuts to you.")

the State always settled the strike by giving Lewis more than he had been able to get from his fellow free-enterprisers, the operators. In short, Lewis's behavior in the late strike cannot be classified as either business unionism, or social leadership, or free capitalist enterprise. Even shorter: its materialist base appears to be lacking.

(At this point, the Man from Marx became incoherent. The gist of his reactions was as follows: then what IS behind it all? Vanity? Spite? Senility? Do you seriously maintain that such vast consequences can flow from such absurd and petty causes?)

Yes, when through the workings of the impersonal big-scale bureaucratic tendency of our times—this, comrade, is dialectical—a single individual is able to occupy a strategic position of such power that other individuals are unable effectively to oppose him. The chief motivation for this strike on Lewis's part seems to me to be his personal psychology, which is that of a ham actor. I think it is a real question how closely he is in contact with reality; he seems to be living more and more in a fantasy world and to seek his ego-satisfaction in the gestures and language of the theatre (the old-fashioned melodramatic theatre that flourished around 1900). Like other labor leaders, Lewis has always had a weakness for corny rhetoric, but of late this has gone beyond all bounds. Consider the following three exhibits, and remember that in each case the most serious issues, affecting the lives of all of us, were involved:

EXHIBIT I (Excerpts from Lewis's speech to the mine owners on April 10 last, at the final unsuccessful conference on the coal strike): "To cavil further is futile. We trust that time, as it shrinks your purse, may modify your niggardly and antisocial propensities. . . . For four weeks we have sat with you; we attended when you fixed the hours; we departed when weariness affected your pleasure. . . . When we sought surcease from blood-letting, you professed indifference; when we cried aloud for safety of our numbers, you answered, 'Be content—'twas always thus.' . . . You scorn the toils, the abstinence and the perils of the miners; we withhold approval of your luxurious mode of life* and the nights you spend in merriment."

EXHIBIT II (Excerpts from Lewis's letter to Secretary Krug, on November 15, breaking off negotiations and declaring the contract would end on November 20): "Your attention was again directed . . . to the brutal, 54-hour schedule of men laboring in the bowels of the earth. . . . Your proposal . . . is sheer folly and empty platitude. . . . You now, at the last hour of the last day, yield to the blandishments and soothing siren voices of the operators and seek to place the United Mine Workers of America between Scylla and Charybdis. This course we refuse to follow. . . . We do not propose to be driven like dumb beasts to the slaughter of slow strangulation envisioned by your proposal."

EXHIBIT III (Excerpts from the N. Y. Times report of the press conference, on December 7, at which Lewis announced the ending of the strike): "A dramatist, Mr. Lewis carried himself with an almost casual air as he faced sixty or more reporters in the basement room of the UMW building. . . . Photographers were poised in front of the table and newsreel lights blazed at him. . . . 'I have a few words to say,' he began slowly, 'and they may be of something a little more than local interest. . . . The statement will be self-explanatory and self-interpretive. It will require no questions after it is read to you. This statement is wholly mine. It is a poor thing, but 'tis mine own. . . . I will read it to you with meticulous precision, and copies will be immediately furnished to you,

after which the press conference will be terminated. I wish to read it to you myself so that you will be assured it is my own. Questions as to the motive will be purely speculative. Some philosopher has said the pursuit of motives is the most elusive task in all the world.' . . . Mr. Lewis put on his spectacles and read the letter with slow, measured intonation. He concluded his reading with 'sincerely' and added parenthetically in a low voice: 'signed by this speaker.' 'Sit down, gentlemen,' he directed as there was a stir in the room. Mr. Adams passed out copies of the letter and then Mr. Lewis called out, 'All right, open the doors. Let them out.' . . . Mr. Lewis remained behind to re-read portions of the letter for the newsreels."

That this is the language and behavior of an old-style ham actor is obvious. It also seems clear that Lewis derives the most intense personal gratification from such posturing. To say that the coal strike was to Lewis simply a stage on which he could strut and roar and swell about is an extreme statement. Yet I have been unable to find any more rational or weighty explanation for his actions.

So you're lining up with the bourgeois State against the workers! You're backing Truman's strike-breaking tactics! Well, I suppose we might have expected this when you abandoned dialectical materialism. You'll end up in the church yet.

On the contrary, I think the Government behaved even worse than Lewis. When Lewis asked for the contract to be reopened, Secretary Krug retorted that a clause made it binding for the entire period of Government operation. So he refused. But there was also another clause stating that all provisions of the old contract which were not specifically cancelled should be understood to be included in the new Government contract; one of the clauses not so cancelled was Section 15, which provides that either party may give 10 days notice for reopening the contract, and that 15 days after negotiations have begun, it may terminate the contract on 5 days' notice. Lewis appealed to this clause. On October 29, Attorney General Clark ruled against Krug and for Lewis, on orders from Truman. That is, the Government officially gave legal sanction to the reopening of the contract and thus to the possible "termination," or strike, that might follow as outlined in Section 15. Two weeks later, on November 17, Truman reversed his position and ordered his Attorney-General "to fight John Lewis on all fronts." The Attorney General then obligingly discovered that Krug's interpretation of the contract was right and Lewis's wrong. (Actually, the contract was self-contradictory and could be read either way.) On this flimsy basis, the Government erected its whole case against the UMW.

There are two explanations, both unsavory, for this amazing reversal—reminiscent of Truman's shift on Wallace after the latter's foreign-policy speech. One is that Truman appeased Lewis on October 29 because he hoped to buy off the UMW, which had been opposing Senator Kilgore (Dem.), who was up for re-election in the mining state of West Virginia. But the UMW support was not forthcoming. The N. Y. Times in reporting Truman's "fight Lewis" order after the elections, noted: "The straw that broke the camel's back was an attack by one of Mr. Lewis's lieutenants against Senator Kilgore, who was running for re-election in West Virginia." The Truman crowd runs the country as though it were the Sixth Ward of St. Louis, Mo.; it seems to me not at all improbable that such petty political spite was behind the Government's vast policies, just as petty personal motives were moving Lewis to his far-reaching actions. The other explanation of the reversal is that Lewis made a deal with Truman: he would hold off the strike until after the elections if the Government would agree to reopen negotiations. But after the sweeping Republican victory, Truman decided, as he phrased

* Lewis's salary: \$25,000 a year, plus expenses.

it in his simplehearted way, to "beat the Republicans to the punch" in settling accounts with labor. So he doublecrossed Lewis, as he had Wallace, and issued his "fight on all fronts" order. Good Sixth Ward politics.

The particular tactics Truman used followed closely the editorial recommendation of *The New Republic* of November 4: "The policy to be followed is simply for the Administration to jump on Lewis with both feet, forgetting all other issues except the cheap political trick in which he is indulging. Then, if he provokes a strike by voiding the contract, legal action of the most drastic sort is available. Nothing would gather in the votes so quickly or build Democratic capital so surely as vigorous application of that legal action." Truman carried out this cynical formula to the letter. In getting an injunction against the strike, his Department of Justice reversed a trend in labor law which had produced in 1932 the Norris-LaGuardia Anti-Injunction Act. The deadly effectiveness of the injunction as an employer's weapon, its infringement of the right to strike and even to organize—all this was behind the passage of the Norris-LaGuardia Act. In reviving this poisoned weapon, the Government made the dangerous argument that the Act does not apply in cases where the Government (as against a private employer) asks for an injunction against a union in order to "exercise its sovereign functions." Its brief even cited, as a precedent in its favor, what has long been considered the most scandalous abuse of the injunction: the Federal injunction which jailed Debs and broke the American railway strike of 1894. The judge who presided over the case against Lewis accepted the Government's argument, noting: "This complaint was not filed by a private employer. It was filed by the sovereign power of society itself." (The legal mind can take no cognizance of Harry Truman's annoyance with John Lewis about the West Virginia elections.) The unprecedented \$3,500,000 fine imposed on the UMW (the mere \$250,000 which the Danbury hatters had to pay in 1908 has made their case famous to this day) was actually set by the prosecution; the judge simply asked the prosecutor how much he should fine the defendants. "The Court does not feel," he noted, "that it should disregard the recommendations of the Government. In this situation, the Government speaks for the people." If the Supreme Court sustains this judgment, the *New Republic's* "legal action of the most drastic sort" will have greatly tightened the grasp of the Federal Government over the labor movement.

The Man from Marx had listened with unwonted patience to this long speech. But it was plain that he had had enough. As he rose to go, he summed up his impressions: Your analysis is weak, comrade; in fact, it is little more than a mishmash of petty-bourgeois confusionism. You want to maneuver between both sides of the class struggle, piously condemning both, in order to escape your historical responsibilities. You may turn your back on History, but History won't turn her back on you! What you say boils down to this: the largest historical consequences flow from petty, personal, even accidental actions of individual leaders. This is not only logically contradictory, but it makes it impossible to understand history.

Contradictory, I admit. But this is History's fault, not mine. We live in a period when the most vast and tragic consequences for all of us result from the mysterious and incalculable actions of a few individuals in key positions. The coal strike slowed down the whole national industrial mechanism; it forced embargoes to be placed on mail and express shipments, both domestic and foreign; if it had lasted two months instead of two weeks, economists estimate that industrial production would have been cut 25% and the loss in wages would have been equivalent to 5 million workers being unemployed; it had begun to shut off the 2 million tons of coal a month the

U. S. has agreed to supply to Europe—the political consequences of this are obvious; it caused the British Food Ministry to postpone an increase in the bread ration; it caused a loss in wages to the coal miners that is estimated at \$62,500,000; its possible consequences for the American labor movement we have just examined. And all of this because Lewis is a ham actor and Truman a provincial ward politician! Certainly this is an absurd anticlimax, ethically repugnant and scientifically almost frivolous. But the absurdity is in History, not in the analysis.

The Man from Marx hastily said goodbye.

DWIGHT MACDONALD

HOW'S THAT AGAIN?

Trieste, Italy, Sept. 21: Oscar Ferlan, president of the Communist controlled Anti-Fascist Union of Italians and Slovenes said that his group's aim was the annexation of Trieste by Yugoslavia. "There are no ethnical, traditional, cultural or economy reasons, as far as I'm concerned," he added. "There are only social reasons . . . I see Trieste as a focal point where two imperialisms meet—the imperialism of the West, represented by the capitalist democracies, and the imperialism of the East, represented by the social democracy of Russia. Nothing else matters."

—"N. Y. Times," Sept. 22.

WHAT LUCE PAPER D'YA READ?

(1)

Ignazio Silone, a writer of sublime insight, resembles in no respect the traditional, narrowminded party hack. And Alcide de Gasperi, the leader of the Christian Democrats, speaks a language quite removed from the bathos that had only too often represented Italy's old political Catholicism . . . Communism in Europe seems to have become an affliction of middle age . . . (it) has reached a state where it is still feared but no longer seriously discussed.

—Willi Schlamm in the October "Fortune."

(2)

The Socialists joined the Communists in a pact calling for "unity of action" . . . Even Socialist leader Ignazio Silone . . . went along. Explained Silone: "The greatest danger is not Communism. It is neo-Fascism." . . . The Socialists and Communists together are now the strongest group in Italy . . . DeGasperi may be forced to deal with the right, or else take a back seat to the Marxists.

—"Time," Nov. 11.

WHO'S LOONY NOW?

I am still losing my finest students to Sandstone Federal Prison. With one hand, the government sends us a great many returned service men desiring instruction, and with the other removes to prison a brilliant senior student greatly needed as an assistant in my department. (Letter to the C.O. Amnesty Committee from a teacher at William Penn College in Oskaloosa, Iowa)

Albon Man, secretary of the Amnesty Committee, was recently called up for a pre-induction physical. When the psychiatrist learned that he had served a three-year sentence as a CO, he asked: "Are you still an objector?" Man replied that he was. "Served three years in prison as CO and still objects to military service because he does not want to fight Russia," the psychiatrist wrote down on the examination form. Then, after pausing a moment, he jotted this down: "Subject gives vague and illogical answers to questions. Not good Army material." (Pacifica Views, Aug. 23)

Just in from England:

POLITICS AND ETHICS

by Grete Hermann

Chapter headings: A Moral Problem; Empirical Ethics; Christian Ethics; Ethical Realism; The Theory of Right; Politics as a Moral Task. (Published by International Publishing Co.)

84 pages, 60c a copy post-paid Order from "Politics"

Coming in the January issue:

Henry Wallace

**a profile by
Dwight Macdonald**

This will be the most complete study yet made of the No. 1 national leader of American progressives. It will bring together the significant facts on Wallace's strange career and personality, and draw some conclusions both as to Wallace and the "Left" he represents.

Also in this issue:

Mary McCarthy, our accredited correspondent to the United Nations, will describe what one or two sessions look and sound like.

A special section, "The German Scene," will present letters and travel-notes from Germany today.

Two coming features:

FRENCH POLITICAL WRITING

The postwar French literary movement is widely known over here, but the closely-related development of political writing has been ignored. An early issue will be entirely devoted to translations, reports and specially contributed articles from France. Details will be announced next month.

THE "POLITICS" READING LISTS

The February, 1947, issue will contain the first of a series of Basic Reading Lists in such fields as: Economics, Sociology, Psychology, Pacifism, The Soviet Union, War, Political Theory, and Popular Culture. The lists will try to select the books and articles which will give the general reader the most accurate and up-to-date information in each field. They will be drawn up on the basis of as wide a collaboration of competent persons as is practicable.

Do a favor to yourself, your friends—and us!

Give them Christmas gift subscriptions to "Politics" at the special low rate (good until January 15) of: **TWO OR MORE FULL-YEAR SUBSCRIPTIONS AT \$3 EACH, INSTEAD OF \$3.50, THE REGULAR RATE.** Your own renewal may be included, from whenever it expires.

YOU gain—50 cents a sub.

THEY gain—they won't want to miss such coming features as the Henry Wallace profile, the special French issue, and the "Politics" Reading Lists.

WE gain—we need 1,000 more subscribers to put the magazine on a firm financial footing.

politics, 45 Astor Place, New York 3, N. Y.

Enclosed is \$..... Please enter the following gift subs, to begin with the issue. Indicate if one of them is your renewal.

NAME

ADDRESS

CITY..... UNIT..... STATE.....

NAME

ADDRESS

CITY..... UNIT..... STATE.....

NAME

ADDRESS

CITY..... UNIT..... STATE.....

NAME

ADDRESS

CITY..... UNIT..... STATE.....

☐ Check here if you want us to send gift cards.

My name and address is:.....