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Penelope Lively

Corruption

THE JUDGE AND HIS WIFE, driving to Aldeburgh for the weekend, carried with them in the back of the car a Wine Society carton filled with pornographic magazines. The judge, closing the hatchback, stared for a moment through the window; he reopened the door and put a copy of *The Times* on top of the pile, extinguishing the garish covers. He then got into the driving seat and picked up the road atlas. "The usual route, dear?"

"The usual route, I think. Unless we spot anything enticing on the way."

'We have plenty of time to be enticed, if we feel so inclined."

The judge, Richard Braine, was sixty-two; his wife Marjorie, a magistrate, was two years younger. The weekend ahead was their annual and cherished early summer break at the Music Festival; the pornographic magazines were the impounded consignment of an importer currently under trial and formed the contents of the judge's weekend briefcase, so to speak. "Chores?" his wife had said, and he had replied "Chores, I'm afraid."

At lunch-time, they pulled off the main road into a carefully selected lane and found a gateway in which to park the car. They carried the rug and picnic basket into a nearby field and ate their lunch under the spacious East Anglian sky, in a state of almost flamboyant contentment. Both had noted how the satisfactions of life have a tendency to gain intensity with advancing years. "The world gets more beautiful", Marjorie had once said, "not less so. Fun is even more fun. Music is more musical, if you see what I mean. One hadn't reckoned with that." Now, consuming the thoughtfully constructed sandwiches and the coffee from the thermos, they glowed at one another amid the long thick grass that teemed with buttercup and clover; before them, the landscape retreated into blue distances satisfactorily broken here and there by a line of trees, the tower of a church or a rising contour. From time to time they exchanged remarks of pleasure or anticipation: about the surroundings, the weather, the meal they would eat tonight at the little restaurant along the coast road, tomorrow evening's concert. Richard Braine, who was a man normally responsive to the moment, took his wife's hand; they sat in the sun, shirt-sleeved, and agreed conspiratorially and without too much guilt that they were quite glad that the eldest married daughter who occasionally accompanied them on this trip had not this year been able to. The daughter was loved, but would just now have been superfluous.

When they arrived at the small hotel it was early evening. The judge carried their suitcase and the Wine Society carton in and set them down by the reception desk. The proprietor, bearing the carton, showed them to their usual room. As she was unpacking, Marjorie said, "I think you should have left that stuff in the car. Chambermaids, you know. . . ." The judge frowned. "That's a point." He tipped the contents of the box into the emptied suitcase and locked it. "I think I'll have a bath before we go out."

He lay in the steamy cubicle, a sponge resting upon his stomach. Marjorie, stripped to a pair of pants, came in to wash. "The dear old avocado suite again. One day we must have an avocado bathroom suite at home." The judge, contemplating the rise of his belly, nodded; he was making a resolution about reduction of the flesh, a resolution which he sadly knew would be broken. He was a man who enjoyed food. His wife's flesh, in the process now of being briskly soaped and scrubbed, was firmer and less copious, as he was fully prepared to concede. He turned his head to watch her and thought for a while in a vague and melancholy way about bodies, about how we inhabit them and are dragged to the grave by them and are conditioned by them. In the course of his professional life he had frequently had occasion to reflect upon the last point: it had seemed to him, observing the faces that passed before him in courtrooms, that confronted him from docks and witness boxes, that not many of us are able to rise above physical appearance. The life of an ugly woman is different from that of a beautiful one; you cannot infer character from appearance, but you can suspect a good deal about the circumstances to which it will have given rise. Abandoning this interesting but sombre theme, he observed his wife's breasts and muscular but not unshapely thighs and the folds of skin upon her neck and remembered the first time he had seen her with no clothes on. She turned to look at him; "If you're jeering at my knickers, they're a pair of Alison's I grabbed out of the laundry basket by mistake." Alison was their youngest, unmarried

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daughter. "I hadn't really noticed them", said the judge politely. "I was thinking about something quite different." He smiled. "And don't leer", said his wife, flicking him with her flannel. "It's unbecoming in a man of your age." "It's a tribute to your charms, my dear", said the judge. He sat up and began to wash his neck, thinking still about that first time; they had both been embarrassed. Embarrassment had been a part of the pleasure, he reflected. How odd, and interesting.

It was still daylight when they drove to the restaurant, a violet summer twilight in which birds sang with jungle stridency. Marjorie, getting out of the car, said, "That veal and mushroom in cream sauce thing for me, I think. A small salad for you, without dressing." "No way", said the judge.

"I admire your command of contemporary speech." She led the way into the restaurant, inspecting the room with bright, observant eyes. When they were sitting at the table she whispered, "There's that same woman we met last year. Remember? The classy type who kept putting you right about Britten."

The judge, cautiously, turned his head. "So it is. Keep a low profile." "Will do, squire", said Marjorie, applying herself to the menu. "Fifteen all?" she added. "Right?"

"Right", said her husband.

Their acquaintance, leaving before them, stopped to exchange greetings. The judge, mildly resenting the interruption to his meal, left the work to Marjorie. The woman, turning to go, said, "So nice to see you again. And have a lovely break from juries and things." She gleamed upon the judge.

He watched her retreating silk-clad back. "Rather a gushing creature. How the hell does she know what I do?"

"Chatting up the hotel people, I don't doubt. It gives you cachet, you note, your job. Me, on the other hand, she considers a drab little woman. I could see her wondering how I came by you."

"Shall we enlighten her? Sheer unbridled lust. . . ."

"Talking of which", said Marjorie, "just how unprincipled would it be to finish off with some of that cheesecake?"

Back at the hotel, they climbed into bed in a state of enjoyable repletion. The judge put on his spectacles and reached out for the suitcase. "You're not going to start going through that stuff *now* . . .", said Marjorie. "At least have one whole day off work."

"You're right", he said. "Tomorrow will do. I'll have that Barbara Pym novel instead."

THE JUDGE, WAKING EARLY the next morning, lay thinking about the current trial. He thought, in fact, not about obscenity or pornography but about the profit motive. He did not, he realised, understand it in the same way in which he did not understand what induced people to be cruel. He had never coveted the possessions of others or wished himself richer than he was. He held no stocks or shares; Marjorie, once, had been left a small capital sum by an aunt; neither he nor she had ever been able to take the slightest interest in the financial health of her investments. Indeed, both had now forgotten what exactly the money was in. All this, he realised, was the position of a man with a substantial earned income; were he not paid what he was he might well feel otherwise. But he had not, in fact, felt very much otherwise as an impecunious young barrister. And importers of pornography tend, he understood, to be in an upper income bracket. No—the obstacle, the barrier requiring that leap of the imagination, was this extra dimension of need in some men that sought to turn money into yet more money, that required wealth for wealth's sake, the spawning of figures. The judge himself enjoyed growing vegetables; he considered, now, the satisfaction he got from harvesting a good crop of french beans and tried to translate this into a manifestation of the profit motive. The analogy did not seem quite to work.

The profit motive in itself, of course, is innocuous enough. Indeed, without it societies would founder. This was not the point that was bothering the judge; he was interested in those gulfs of inclination that divide person from person. As a young man he had wondered if this restriction makes us incapable of passing judgment on our fellows, but had come to realise at last that it does not. He remembered being involved in an impassioned argument about apartheid with another law student, an Afrikaner; "You cannot make pronouncements on our policies", the man had said, "when you have never been to our country. You cannot understand the situation." Richard Braine had known, with the accuracy of a physical response, that the man was wrong. Not misguided; simply wrong. A murderer is doing wrong, whatever the circumstances that drive him to his crime.

The profit motive is not wrong; the circumstances of its application may well be. The judge—with a certain irritation—found himself recalling the features of the importer of pornography: a nondescript, bespectacled man memorable only for a pair of rather bushy eyebrows and a habit of pulling an ear-lobe when under cross-examination. He pushed the fellow from his mind, determinedly, and got out of bed. Outside the window, strands of neatly corrugated cloud coasted in a milky-blue sky; it looked as though it would be a nice day.

The Braines spent the morning at Minsmere bird sanctuary; in the afternoon they went for a walk. The evening found them, scoured by fresh air and slightly somnolent, listening to Mozart, Bartok and Mendelssohn. The judge, who had never played an instrument and regarded himself as relatively unmusical nevertheless responded to music with considerable intensity. It aroused him in various ways; in such different ways, indeed, that, being a thorough and methodical man, he often felt bemused, caught up by the onward rush of events before he had time to sort them out. Stop, he wanted to say to the surging orchestra, just

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let me have a think about that bit. . . . But already he would have been swept onwards, into other modes, other themes, other passions. Marjorie, who played the piano in an unspectacular but competent way, had often suggested that the problem might be solved at least in part if he learned to read music.

She was no doubt right, he thought, wrestling now with a tortuous passage. When I retire; just the thing for a man reduced to inactivity. The judge did not look forward to retirement. But a few moments of inattention had been fatal—now the music had got away from him entirely, as though he had turned over two pages of a book. Frowning, he concentrated on the conductor.

Standing at the bar in the interval, he found himself beside their acquaintance from the restaurant, also waiting to order a drink. Gallantry or even basic good manners required that he intervene. "Oh", she said, "how terribly sweet of you. A gin and tonic would be gorgeous." With resignation, he led her back to where Marjorie awaited him.

"Your husband was so sweet and insistent—I'm all on my own this evening, my sister had a splitting headache and decided not to come." She was a tall woman in her early fifties, too youthfully packaged in a flounced skirt and high-heeled boots, her manner towards the judge both sycophantic and faintly roguish. "I was reading about you in *The Times* last month, some case about people had up for embezzling, of course I didn't understand most of it, all terribly technical, but I said to Laura, I *know* him, we had a lovely talk about Britten at the Festival."

"Ah", said the judge, studying his programme: the Tippett next.

"I'm Moira Lukes, by the way—if you're anything like me names just *evaporate*, but of course I remembered yours from seeing it in the paper." She turned to Marjorie, "Aren't you loving the concert?"; patronage discreetly flowed, the patronage of a woman with a sexual history towards one who probably had not, of a lavishly clad woman towards a dowdy one. The judge's antennae slightly quivered, though he was not himself sure why. Marjorie blandly agreed that the concert was superb. "Excuse me", she said, "I'm going to make a dash to the loo while there's time."

The judge and Moira Lukes, left alone, made private adjustments to each other's company: the judge cleared his throat and commented on the architecture of the concert hall; Moira moved a fraction closer to him and altered the pitch of her voice, probably without being aware that she did either. "You must lead such a fascinating life", she said. "I mean, you must come across such extraordinary people. Dickensian types. I don't think I've ever set eyes on a criminal."

The judge thought again of the importer of pornography. "Most of them are rather mundane, when it comes to the point."

"But you must get to know so much about people." She was looking very directly at him, with large eyes; a handsome woman, the judge conceded, rather a knock-out as a girl, no doubt. He agreed that yes, one did get a few insights into the ways in which people carry on.

"Fascinating", said Moira Lukes again. "I expect you have the most marvellous stories to tell. I envy your wife no end." The large eyes creased humorously at the corners; a practised device, though the judge did not recognise this. "In fact I think she's a lucky woman—I still remember that interesting chat you and I had last year." And she laid on his arm a hand, which was almost instantly removed—come and gone as briefly as though a bird had alighted for a fleeting second. The judge, startled in several ways, tried to recall this chat: something about when *Peter Grimes* was first performed, or was it *The Turn of the Screw*? The interest of it, now, escaped him. He cast a quick glance across the foyer in search of Marjorie, who seemed to be taking an awfully long time. Moira Lukes was talking now about the area of Sussex in which she lived. Do, she was saying, look in and have lunch, both of you, if you're ever in that part of the world. The judge murmured that yes, of course if ever they were. . . . He noticed the rings on her hand and wondered vaguely what had become of Mr Lukes; somehow one knew that he was no longer around, one way or the other.

"The only time", she said, "I've ever personally had anything to do with the law was over my rather wretched divorce." The judge, guiltily, took a swig of his drink. "And then actually the lawyer was most awfully sweet, in fact he kept my head above water through it all." She sighed, a whiff of a sigh, almost imperceptible; thereby, she implied delicately, hung a tale. "So I've got rather a soft spot for legal people."

"Good", said the judge heartily. "I'm glad to hear you've been well treated by the profession."

"Oh, *very* well treated."

No sign of Marjorie, still. Actually, the judge was thinking, this Moira Whatshername wasn't perhaps quite so bad after all, behind that rather tiresome manner; appearances, inevitably, deceive. One got the impression, too, of someone who'd maybe had a bit of a rough time. "Well, it's a world that includes all sorts, like most. And it brings you up against life, I suppose, with all that that implies."

The respect with which these banalities were received made him feel a little cheap. In compensation, he told her an anecdote about a case in which he had once been involved; a *crime passionel* involving an apparently wronged husband who had turned out in fact to be the villain of the piece. "A mealy-mouthed fellow, and as plausible as you like, but apparently he'd been systematically persecuting her for years." Moira Lukes nodded sagely. "People absolutely are not what they seem to be."

"Well", said the judge, "yes and no. On the other hand, plenty of people give themselves away as soon as they open their mouths."

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"Oh, goodness", said Moira Lukes. "Now I'll feel I daren't utter a word ever again."

"I had in mind those I came across professionally rather than in private life."

"Ah, then you think I'm safe?"

"Now, whatever could you have to conceal?" said the judge amiably. A bell went. "I wonder where Marjorie's got to. I suppose we'd better start going back in."

Moira Lukes sighed. She turned those large eyes upon him and creased them once again at the corners. "Well, this has been so nice. I'm sure we'll run into each other again over the weekend. But do bear in mind that I'm in the East Sussex phone book. I remember that case I read about was in Brighton—if you're ever judging there again and want a few hours retreat on your own, do pop over and have a drink." She smiled once more, and walked quickly away into the crowd.

The judge stood for a moment, looking after her. He realised with surprise that he had been on the receiving end of what is generally known as a pass. He realised also that he was finding it difficult to sort out exactly what he felt about this; a rational response and his natural judgment of people (he didn't in fact all that much care for the woman) fought with more reprehensible feelings and a certain complacency (so one wasn't a total old buffer just yet). In this state of internal conflict he made his way back into the concert hall, where he found Marjorie already in her seat.

"What on earth happened to you?"

"Sorry", she said cheerfully. "There was an awful queue in the Ladies' and by the time I got out it wasn't worth coming to find you. How did you make out with our friend?"

The judge grunted, and applied himself to the programme. The lights went down, the conductor reappeared, the audience sank into silence. . . . But the music, somehow, had lost its compulsion; he was aware now of too much that was external—that he could achieve no satisfactory position for his legs, that he had slight indigestion, that the chap in front of him kept moving his head. Beside him, he could see Marjorie's face, rapt. The evening, somehow, had been corrupted.

THE NEXT MORNING was even more seraphic than the one before. "Today", said Marjorie, "we are going to sit on the beach and bask. We may even venture into the sea."

"That sounds a nice idea." The judge had thought during the night of the little episode with that woman and, in the process, a normal balance of mind had returned; he felt irritated—though more with himself than with her—that it had interfered with his enjoyment of the concert. It was with some annoyance, therefore, that he spotted her now across the hotel dining-room, with the sister, lifting her hand in a little finger-waggling wave of greeting.

"What's the matter?" said Marjorie, with marital insight. "Oh. . . . Her. Well, I'll leave you to hide behind the paper. I'm going upstairs to get sorted out for the beach."

He was half-way through the Home News page when he felt her standing over him. Alone. The sister, evidently, had been disposed of.

"Another heavenly day. Aren't we lucky! All on your own? I saw your wife bustling off. . . ." She continued to stand, her glance drifting now towards the coffee pot at the judge's elbow.

I am supposed, he thought, to say sit down and join me—have a cup of coffee. And he felt again that quiver of the antennae and knew now the reason. Marjorie does indeed bustle, her walk is rather inelegant, but it is not for you to say so, or to subtly denigrate a person I happen to love. He rattled, slightly, his newspaper. "We're off to the beach shortly."

"Oh, lovely. I daresay we'll go down there later. I wonder. . . . Goodness, I don't know if I ought to ask you this or not. . . ." She hesitated, prettily, seized it seemed with sudden diffidence. "Oh, I'll be brave. The thing is, I have this tiresome problem about a flat in London I'm buying, something to do with the leasehold that I simply do not follow, and I just do not have absolute faith in the man who's dealing with it for me—the solicitor, you know—*could* I pick your brains about it at some point?"

The judge, impassive, gazed up at her.

"I don't mean *now*—not in the middle of your holiday weekend. My sister was noticing your address in the hotel register and believe it or not my present flat is only a few minutes away. What would be lovely would be if you could spare an hour or so to look in for a drink on your way home one evening—and your wife too of course only it might be awfully boring for her if you're going to brief me. Is that the right word? Would it be an imposition? When you're on your own like I am you are so very much at the mercy of . . ."—she sighed—". . . people, the system, I don't know what. . . . Sometimes I get quite panic-stricken."

I doubt that, thought the judge. He put the newspaper down. "Mrs Lukes. . . ."

"Oh, Moira . . . please."

He cleared his throat. "Conveyancing, as it happens, is not my field. Anything I said might quite possibly be misleading. The only sensible advice I can give is to change your solicitor if you feel lack of confidence in him."

Her eyes flickered; that look of honest appeal dimmed, suddenly. "Oh . . . I see. Well, I daresay you're right. I must do that, then. I shouldn't have asked. But of course the invitation stands, whenever you're free."

"How kind", said the judge coolly. He picked up his paper again and looked at her over the top of it; their eyes met in understanding. And he flinched a little at her expression; it was one he had seen from time to time, over the years, across a courtroom, on the face in the dock.

"Have a *lovely* day", said Moira Lukes. Composure had returned; she gleamed, and wrinkled her eyes, and

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was gone. Well, thought the judge, there's no love lost there, now. But it had to be done, once and for all. He folded the paper and went in search of Marjorie.

She was packing a beach bag with costumes and towels. The judge, unlocking the suitcase, took out a stack of the pornographic magazines and pushed them into the bottom of the bag. "Oh, lor", said Marjorie, "I'd forgotten about them. Must you?"

"'Fraid so. The case resumes tomorrow. It's the usual business of going through them for degrees of obscenity. There are some books too."

"I'll help you", said Marjorie. "There—greater love hath no woman. . . ."

The beach was agreeably uncrowded. Family parties were dotted in clumps about the sand; children and dogs skittered in and out of the surf; gulls floated above the water and a party of small wading birds scurried back and forth before the advancing waves like blown leaves. The judge, who enjoyed a bit of unstrenuous bird-watching, sat observing them with affection. The weather, this particularly delectable manifestation of the physical world and the uncomplicated relish of the people and animals around him had induced a state of general benignity. Marjorie, organising the rug and wind-screen, said "All right?" "All right?" he replied. They smiled at each other, appreciating the under-statement.

Marjorie, after a while, resolutely swam. The judge, more craven, followed her to the water's edge and observed. As they walked back up the beach together he saw suddenly that Moira Lukes and her sister were encamped not far off. She glanced at him and then immediately away. Now, at mid-day, the beach was becoming more occupied, though not disturbingly so. A family had established itself close to the Braines' pitch: young parents with a baby in a pram and a couple of older children now deeply engaged in the initial stages of sandcastle construction. The judge, who had also made a sandcastle or two in his time, felt an absurd urge to lend a hand; the basic design, he could see, was awry and would give trouble before long. The mother, a fresh-faced young woman, came padding across the sand to ask Marjorie for the loan of a tin-opener. They chatted for a moment; the young woman carried the baby on her hip. "That sort of thing", said Marjorie, sitting down again, "can still make me broody, even at my time of life." She too watched the sandcastle-building; presently she rummaged in the picnic basket and withdrew a plastic beaker. "Turrets", she explained to the judge, a little guiltily. "You can never do a good job with a bucket. . . ." The children received her offering with rewarding glee; the parents gratefully smiled; the sand-castle rose, more stylish.

The judge sighed, and delved in the beach bag. "To work, I suppose", he said. Around them, the life of the beach had settled into a frieze, as though the day were eternal: little sprawled groups of people, the great arc of the horizon against which stood the grey shapes of two far-away ships, like cut-outs, the surface animation of running dogs and children and someone's straw hat, tossed hither and thither by the breeze that had sprung up.

The judge and his wife sat with a pile of magazines each. Marjorie said, "This is a pretty gruesome collection. Can I borrow your hankie, my glasses keep getting salted over."

The judge turned over pages, and occasionally made some notes. Nothing he saw surprised him; from time to time he found himself examining the faces that belonged to the bodies displayed, as though in search of explanations. But they seemed much like any other faces; so presumably were the bodies.

Marjorie said, "Cup of tea? Tell me, why are words capable of so much greater obscenity than pictures?" She was glancing through a book, or something that passed as such.

"That I imagine is why people have always gone in for burning them, though usually for quite other reasons."

IT WAS AS THE JUDGE was reaching out to take the mug of tea from her that the wind came. It came in a great wholesome gust, flinging itself along the beach with a cloud of blown sand and flying plastic bags. It sent newspapers into the air like great flapping birds and spun a spotted football along the water's edge as though it were a top. It lifted rugs and pushed over deckchairs. It snatched the magazines from the judge's lap and from Marjorie's and bore them away across the sand in a helter-skelter whirl of colourful pages, dropping them down only to grab them again and fling them here and there: at the feet of a stout lady snoozing in a deckchair, into the pram of the neighbouring family's baby, on to people's towels and Sunday newspapers.

Marjorie said "Oh, *lor*. . . ."

They got up. They began, separately, to tour the beach in pursuit of what the wind had taken. The judge found himself, absurdly, feeling foolish because he had left his jacket on his chair and was plodding along the sand in shirt-sleeves (no tie, either) and tweed trousers. The lady in the deckchair woke and put out a hand to quell the magazine that was wrapping itself around her leg. "Yours?" she said amiably, looking up at the judge, and as she handed him the thing it fell open and for a moment her eyes rested on the central spread, the *pièce de résistance*; her expression changed, rubbed out as it were by amazement, and she looked again at the judge for an instant, and became busy with the knitting on her lap.

Marjorie, stumping methodically along, picked up one magazine and then another, tucking them under her arm. She turned and saw that the children had observed the crisis, abandoned their sandcastle, and were scurrying here and there, collecting as though involved in a treasure hunt. The mother, too, had risen and was shaking the sand from a magazine that had come to rest against the wheels of the pram. As Marjorie reached her

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the little girl ran up with an armful. "Good girl, Sharon", said the mother, and the child—six, perhaps, or seven—virtuously beamed and held out to Marjorie the opened pages of the magazine she held. She looked at it and the mother looked at it and Marjorie looked and the child said, "Are those flowers?" "No, my dear", said Marjorie sadly. "They aren't flowers", and she turned away before she could meet the eyes of the young mother.

The judge collected a couple from a man who handed them over with a wink, and another from a boy who stared at him expressionless, and then he could not find any more. He walked back to their pitch. Marjorie was shoving things into the beach bag. "Shall we", she said, "go?", and the judge nodded.

It was as they were folding the rug that Moira Lukes came up. She wore neatly-creased cotton trousers and walked with a spring. "Yours, apparently", she said; she held the magazine out between a finger and thumb, as though with tongs, and dropped it on to the sand. She looked straight at the judge; "How awfully true", she said, "that people are not what they seem to be." Satisfaction flowed from her; she glanced for an instant, at Marjorie, as though checking that she had heard, and walked away.

The Braines, in silence, completed the assembly of their possessions. Marjorie carried the rug and the picnic basket and the judge bore the beach bag and the windscreen. They trudged the long expanse of the beach, watched, now, with furtive interest by various eyes.

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Bertrand Russell

A Portrait from Memory



THERE ARE SOME individuals of whom it would not be unjust or even unkind to say that they had outlived themselves. They do not have to be historical personages. We all know men and women who have become so transformed by age and experience that they no longer exhibit those distinctive traits of thought, feeling and character that have defined their personality in our recollection of them. Their physical presence blurs the memory of what they used to be. I am not referring to any pathological changes associated with premature senility. The individual is as rational and coherent as ever but the pattern of judgment and behaviour is so different from what we have been accustomed to that we could easily imagine we are hearing or observing another person.

Bertrand Russell used to say that Socrates was the luckiest of men. He died at the right time and in the right way for a noble cause. And had Russell died at about the same age as Socrates there would have been no puzzle to decipher about his subsequent judgments and behaviour. No one who knew him during the first 80 years of his life would have thought it conceivable that before he died Russell would hail the régime of the ruthless Communist dictator Ho Chi Minh as the hope of progressive mankind, or lavish fawning compliments on Nikita Khrushchev, who crushed the Hungarian Revolution, as a token of his high regard during the Cuban missile crisis which Khrushchev precipitated by introducing nuclear weapons into Cuba.

I have already written a critique in my *Philosophy and Public Policy* (1980) of this sad chapter in Russell's life and shall not discuss his final years except peripherally. The Bertrand Russell who meant so much to me has little in common with the shrill and querulous anti-American who was quite prepared (or so he said) to accept the horrors and terror of universal Communist domination should the Kremlin refuse reasonable measures of disarmament. The image of the Bertrand Russell I shall write about still lives in me (and only the personal and philosophical influence of John Dewey was greater).

I HAVE NEVER BEEN a hero-worshipper, not even when young. Of all the persons I have known, the one I have come closest to hero-worshipping has been Bertrand Russell. This was not because of his moral traits but purely because of his intellectual virtues among which his matchless courage, expounding and defending unorthodoxies in theory and practice, was the most inspiring. My ardour and boundless admiration were all the more remarkable because, except for a brief interlude towards the end of my undergraduate studies, when I was attracted by the earlier vintage of his Platonic realism, I have never shared Russell's philosophical views.

My first encounter with Bertrand Russell was in his role as a publicist. As a student in a New York City high school, embattled with all my heart and soul against United States participation in World War I, I stumbled upon Russell's *Justice in War Time*. Atrocity-mongering against the Germans was at its height, and Russell's cool demolition of the myths about Teutonic frightfulness against Belgian children and other horror stories confirmed my scepticism of wartime propaganda. His passionate lucidity and dedication to the truth sustained me in the difficult years immediately after the Armistice when it was extremely hazardous to life and limb in the United States publicly to espouse the socialist cause, which was automatically equated with being "pro-German" and "anti-American", and then with "Bolshevism."

My first glimpse of Bertrand Russell in the flesh came from the gallery of Carnegie Hall in 1924 when he debated with Scott Nearing on the desirability of a Communist revolution in the West. Nearing's simplistic mind failed to grasp the force and logic of Russell's argument. So much so that, fortified by the applause of a partisan audience consisting mostly of Communist sympathisers (the hard-core members were just

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emerging from the underground to form the then Worker's Party). Nearing imagined that he had carried off the honours. He remained simple-minded to the end of his days.

My second glimpse of Russell was at the dinner in honour of my teacher, Morris R. Cohen, in the fall of 1927—a dinner arranged to protect Cohen from anticipated administrative reprisals at the hands of the President of the College of the City of New York (CCNY), Frederick B. Robinson. The issue was Cohen's intellectual independence and support of the agitation of his son, Felix, a student leader, against compulsory military training (ROTC). In a burst of political and collegial solidarity with Cohen all the speakers and celebrants exaggerated Cohen's philosophical stature and pedagogical gifts.[1]

Russell, who was in New York that fall, was approached to serve as one of the speakers. He had never heard of Morris R. Cohen (Harold Laski to the contrary notwithstanding) and wanted to know why he should speak at a dinner in Cohen's honour. He was not impressed by the report of Cohen's intense intellectual admiration of him or of the academic political atmosphere at CCNY. But when he was told that he would receive a fee of $50 for some brief remarks, he promptly accepted with the observation: "Those are fifty good reasons!" Some of Cohen's philosophical reprints were left with him and at the dinner he made a clever little speech saying that he had discovered that he had something in common with Cohen, that they were both members of one of the smallest minorities in the world, viz, those interested in symbolic logic. (Cohen's interest in the subject at that time was actually quite peripheral.) Cohen himself was deeply moved by Russell's presence. I shall never forget, however, the look of unfeigned astonishment on Russell's face when Cohen in his reply turned to Russell and said: "If any man has been my philosophical Allah, it has been Bertrand Russell." Those of us who had studied with Cohen knew that his tribute was quite genuine. Although Cohen was neither a disciple nor a devotee of any of Russell's doctrines, whether in mathematics or epistemology, his homage to Russell as a thinker was unqualified. Those of his students who had not, like myself, already acquired this admiration on their own, absorbed it from Cohen, so to speak, by classroom osmosis.

MY FIRST FACE-TO-FACE MEETING with Russell took place in the spring of 1930—I am not sure of the exact date—at the home of V. F. Calverton whose daughter, Joy, was a student at Russell's school in England. Because of my own inhibitions at the time, the meeting was a shattering experience. Calverton, a literary entrepreneurial talent, knew and cultivated everybody of importance in those days. Aware of how I felt about Russell—he had gone out of his way to arrange the meeting—he may have been trying to impress me with the degree of his familiarity with Russell.

I arrived before Russell did. He appeared a few minutes later. No sooner had we been introduced than Calverton turned to him and said: "Well, you old s.o.b. What have you been up to? I was in the 'john' with Joy the other day. Do you know what she told me after she watched me peeing? 'Daddy, Uncle Bertie's wee-wee is larger than yours.'"

"Bless her little heart", Russell responded without turning a hair, "for her generous commendation."

"Well", grumbled Calverton with a kind of mock indignation, "I hope she's learning more than this kind of physiology."

The rest of the details of this bantering colloquy were lost on me. Russell complained about the financial cost of the school and the difficulties of recruiting new children. I made several efforts to change the conversation, but they were turned aside. Calverton, who regarded me as somewhat of a prude because I had expressed disdain for his sexological excursions—in this area he was 30 years ahead of his time—seemed to enjoy my discomfiture. Russell puffed away on his pipe until the time came for him to leave for another appointment. Calverton promised to arrange another meeting for philosophical conversation, but it never came off. My guess at the time was that Russell hadn't even heard my name and I was therefore somewhat surprised, when my *Towards the Understanding of Marx* was published in London a few years later, to learn from Calverton that Russell had written to him about its reception.

I GOT TO KNOW Russell rather well on the occasion of the disgraceful incident of the cancellation of his teaching post at CCNY in 1940. The Committee for Cultural Freedom, of whose Executive Committee I was co-chairman, called a public meeting on Russell's behalf and organised a large protest movement that resulted in many letters to the press and wide editorial support for him. It was of no avail because of Mayor Fiorello La Guardia's defection from the liberal principles he had previously mouthed. After Russell lost his post at CCNY, John Dewey arranged for him to give lectures at the Barnes Institute of Fine Arts at Merion (Pennsylvania). I have described elsewhere[2] the incidents that led to Albert C. Barnes' animosity towards Patricia, Russell's third wife, and then towards Russell himself who in the circumstances had to stand by his wife. It ended in Russell's peremptory dismissal and a period of acute financial distress for him. By this time, having arranged for some lectures for Russell at the social-democratic Rand School where I acted as a kind of educational advisor, I learned from Russell himself the details of the rift. I was wholeheartedly on the side of Russell, having met Barnes and been repelled by his ruffianly treatment of anyone who took issue with him. I advised Russell, who in these matters was an innocent, on how to behave in order to have a watertight legal case against Barnes. (Having served on the Council of the American Association of University Professors a few years earlier, I had learned a great deal about procedure.)

I arranged weekly lectures for Russell at the Rand School, met him when he came in from Pennsylvania, spent the day with him, and dined with him before the lecture. Russell loved parties, and after his lecture we would go to the homes of

[1] Cohen, by the way, believed every word that was said of him that night. The rest of his life was bathed in the afterglow of its euphoria. Incisively critical of all large claims, sceptical with a devastating humour of all rhetorical exaggeration by or about others, Cohen took the holiday tributes rendered him as literally true.

[2] *Commentary* (New York), September and November 1952.

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Greenwich Village friends; Russell, drinking freely, would hold forth on topics I fed to him out of my insatiable curiosity concerning his past life and thought. Russell enjoyed every minute of it although years later he complained that I made him talk philosophical shop, which on similar social occasions in England was taboo. I often arranged, at considerable inconvenience to some of my friends—Herbert Solow, Houston Peterson, and others who were infected by my protective enthusiasm for Russell—for Russell to spend the night in New York. I once took him home to Brooklyn, but the trip was tiring for him. As Chairman of the "Conference on Methods in Science and Philosophy", I built a programme around him where he could confront Reinhold Niebuhr in a discussion of naturalism. Niebuhr took evasive action by writing his paper on "The Naturalism of F. J. E. Woodbridge", whose views were unfamiliar to Russell. But the discussion was sharp and exciting, although Russell complained that the basic terms like "faith" and "naturalism" were not precisely defined.

It was at this Conference that I unwittingly overheard some strong words between him and Patricia, who seemed to be concerned about his overtaxing himself. Russell was excessively sensitive about any behaviour towards him that seemed to take considerate notice of his age. He would sometimes react to a point of rudeness towards anyone who out of ordinary, conventional kindness treated him as an "oldster." The only time he lost his temper with me was when I tried to carry his Gladstone bag the six blocks from the subway station in Brooklyn to my home. Since I was 30 years younger and sported only a portfolio, it seemed natural for me to carry it. "Don't treat me like an old man", he growled, elbowing me vigorously away from his bag. Judging by his flirtatious behaviour towards any comely woman around who was impressed by his reputation or conversation, he certainly didn't act like an old man.

FOR ALMOST A YEAR I saw more of him than of anyone else among my friends; we talked mostly philosophy and some politics, and I drew him out (long before he wrote about them) on the philosophers of the past whom he had known, questioning him on details of articles he had written (of which I was an avid reader) and about which his memory was surprisingly fresh and accurate. During all this time, I never heard him repeat himself on any matter of substance, although subsequently he wrote about the persons and incidents he discussed in almost the same words he used when talking about them with me. His spontaneous conversation had the same coherent structure, incisiveness, wit, and brilliant finish as his published prose. (The only thing I found disconcerting was that he laughed uproariously at his own jokes.)

It was intellectually the most exciting year I had ever experienced, although I confess it was not give-and-take, but mostly take, on my part. Russell seized every opportunity I provided to hold forth to admiring audiences. He once said to me: "I have never been made a fuss over before—I must say, it's rather pleasant." His remark at the time seemed odd to me. I assumed that as the greatest mind in England, he had always been lionised. Looking back, it now appears to me that he was enjoying some emotional recompense for the bitter experience of the First World War years, for his alienation from friends like Alfred North Whitehead (his co-author of the great *Principia Mathematica* of 1910) which grieved him deeply, and especially for the searing experience of the débâcle at CCNY and the injustice suffered at the hands of Albert Barnes which brought to fever heat his latent anti-American prejudices. Otherwise it would be difficult to explain why a man so painfully and meticulously truthful about himself should, in reporting events in America, deliberately and maliciously invent and exaggerate incidents that even surpassed the political libels of the Communists in the darkest days of the Cold War. (I shall cite examples below.)

PERHAPS WHAT GAVE RUSSELL the greatest intellectual pleasure and satisfaction was the celebration I arranged for his 70th birthday at the Hotel Brevoort at the bottom of Fifth Avenue. He had never had a *Festschrift* (the Schilp volume had not yet appeared), and his 60th and 65th birthdays had gone unheralded and unremarked. It was a comparatively small and cosy affair. Patricia, his lustrous redhaired wife, was among the few wives present—very much *Lady* Russell, chain-smoking cigarettes out of a miniature pipe. I had invited about 25 philosophers from the metropolitan region, all of whom greatly admired Russell regardless of their technical disagreements. (Because John Dewey had sided with Barnes, I knew he would not attend even if he were invited.) After coffee and liqueurs had been served, we went around the long table twice, each philosopher putting a question to Russell about problems and difficulties in his views. I had briefed the participants on the procedure, and each one came well prepared.

How I regret that no record was kept! Russell was at the top of his form. The wine and the atmosphere gave him an exhilaration that intensified his normal effervescence. My recollection of



Alfred North Whitehead

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the philosophical upshot of that evening was that it consisted of a kind of repudiation of all varieties of platonism and positivism, of epistemological dualism, of pacifism and utilitarianism, and a wry disavowal of the rhetoric of the "Free Man's Worship." The one or two political questions elicited Russell's unqualified opposition and fear of Communism despite the growing popularity of the Soviet Union as a wartime ally in the war against Hitler. He glossed over the fact that he had been in favour of the Munich settlement. Although a sceptical empiricist, there was no intimation that Russell would subscribe to the ontological assumptions subsequently developed in his book on *Human Knowledge* (1948).

The party broke up late. Everybody had enjoyed it, Russell most of all. Patricia, who had always held me at arm's length as a grubby little commoner, was particularly gracious. She had antagonised most of those present by explaining that she was anxious to get back to England as soon as possible because she feared that Conrad, her son by Russell, on whom Russell doted as his Benjamin (he once sadly told me that his children by Dora, his second wife, had turned out disappointingly), would acquire "that atrocious American accent." Most outraged of all at this remark was William Pepperil Montague, an unreconstructed Platonic realist, and an indigenous American who happened to speak English with an impeccable Oxford accent.

After the dinner, Russell invited my wife and me to his apartment at the Brevoort to have a nightcap. Russell was in a most mellow mood. He had enjoyed the evening immensely. But he soon turned dour, and then angry. I had casually remarked that some of the evening's discourse reminded me of Plato's *Symposium*, and the conversation turned to the nature of love. Patricia asserted with more than her usual vehemence that all love, and especially romantic love, was based on pity. My wife and I demurred at this arbitrary view, and so did Russell with a few gruff words. He then lapsed into a moody silence, his jaws clamped on the stem of his pipe, as Patricia kept insisting in a rising voice on her viewpoint and denying that she had confused, as I suggested, compassion with love. The atmosphere became tense and painful, and we took leave as quickly as we could, fearing that our innocent observation would provoke a conjugal quarrel. It was not so much the absurdity of the sentiment Patricia voiced that angered Russell but what it revealed about her feeling for him which clashed with the image of himself as an irresistible gallant.

As soon as he could, Russell (invoking his status as a member of the House of Lords) returned to England and to a succession of triumphs that meant more to him than any honours the United States could bestow. Having surrendered his near-pacifism, he had caught up with the Establishment.

Russell had a profound love of England and especially of the English countryside. When I asked him why he was so eager to return to England he told me that he wanted to be buried there. He talked about the English past, speaking with less than his customary harshness of its social abuses and social inequality. I recall him once defending, to my amazement, the institution of monarchy as a symbol unifying the country in a common loyalty beyond the strife of party faction. He had words of praise for Winston Churchill and his Elizabethan prose, which surprised me in view of some of his previous pronouncements on Churchill's "warmongering."

After he returned to England, I met Russell on three other occasions. Once he came to Columbia to deliver some lectures on "The Impact of Science on the Modern World." At a dinner tendered to him, he had asked Irwin Edman, then Chairman of the Philosophy Department, to invite me because his time was short in the US and we otherwise would not have met. I had heard his lecture which contained the same stale version of his attack on pragmatism that he had published almost 40 years earlier, and took issue with him on the ground that he was quite unfair to the actual texts of Peirce, James, and Dewey. I had been tempted to challenge Russell's remarks about pragmatism from the floor of the crowded lecture theatre; but knowing that we were to meet for dinner and fearing that my language would be too hard and indignant, I foolishly and uncharacteristically remained silent as did the rest of my colleagues at Columbia. Russell, who didn't want to talk about philosophy at dinner, claimed that William James and John Dewey were no clearer in their replies to his criticism than in their original papers. He spoke about how busy his life had become in England, welcomed as he was everywhere and in continual demand for speeches and articles. He also spoke glowingly about his son, Conrad, and indicated (with a frankness that had always made me uncomfortable when he discussed intimate details of his mother's and father's and his own sex life) that he was having some difficulties with Patricia. I was too embarrassed to press him but I gathered that there was another man on the scene.[3]

The second meeting with Russell was in Amsterdam at the XIth International Congress for Philosophy in 1948. I presented a paper and read one by John Dewey as his proxy. I hadn't expected Russell to appear and when we met I was surprised at the change in him. He seemed extremely nervous and irritable, and spoke with greater rapidity than usual. For the first time he grasped my arm as we spoke, and was obviously under tension. He said almost in passing that Patricia had gone off to Italy with someone, taking Conrad with her. We spent most of the Congress days together. It was as if he could not be alone. Although lionised by the participants, he seemed to be unacquainted with any of them. I was surprised to discover that Gilbert Ryle had never met Russell. When I introduced them I noticed Russell eyeing him with a kind of appraising glance, as if he were taking his intellectual measure. During the course of the sessions Russell and I sat side by side. We were intrigued by the presence of a huge figure with a Mosaic beard that swept down to his waist. He seemed to personify the presence of philosophical wisdom as he nodded or shook his head at the speakers' remarks. The only time I saw Russell smile at that Congress was when Professor Beth, one of the Congress organisers, informed us in reply to our inquiry

[3] Subsequently I was to learn on good authority that this was because Russell himself, despite his advanced age, was pursuing anything in skirts that crossed his path, and that he was carrying on flagrantly even with the servant girls, not behind Patricia's back but before her eyes and those of his house guests.

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that the bearded Socrates happened to enjoy a reputation as the leading abortionist in Amsterdam.

Whether it was because of his personal mood or intense political conviction, Russell let fly at the only official Communist spokesman present—a certain Kolman, originally Czech but nurtured in Stalinist Russia, who was purveying the Zhdanov line about "bourgeois philosophy in the service of imperialism", and who made some passing reference to Russell's view urging the US to atom-bomb the Soviet Union if it refused to accept the Acheson-Lillenthal proposals for international control and inspection of all sources of atomic energy. Commenting on Kolman's paper, Russell said: "Go back and tell your masters in the Kremlin that they must send more competent servants to carry out their programmes of propaganda and deceit. . . ." So vitriolic was Russell's rejoinder that it won some sympathy for Kolman not only among certain fellow-travellers but even among politically opportunistic Americans who always tried to keep in delicate balance their appreciation of both totalitarianism and democracy.

RUSSELL apparently recovered his psychological poise after his return to England. Patricia returned to him; he was awarded the Nobel Prize and received many other accolades of fame. For a few years after, our relations continued to be friendly. I induced him to accept the first Honorary Chairmanship of the Congress for Cultural Freedom, organised in 1950 in West Berlin. When Hugh Trevor-Roper wrote his flagrantly unfair account of the Berlin Congress, picturing it as a meeting of manic anti-Communists who allegedly wanted to treat Communists in the same way as Communists were treating non-Communists, Russell accepted my version of what had occurred and declined to resign.

THE THIRD AND LAST TIME I met Russell was in London in the fall of 1953. By this time Patricia had finally left him, and refused to let him see Conrad. After the divorce Russell married his fourth wife, an American woman who, I suspect (together with his daughter, who had married a clergyman and lived near Washington), was the source of some of his bizarre views about what was occurring in the United States. Russell had begun to take an increasingly critical attitude towards America and published articles implying that "reaction" was in the saddle. I wrote once or twice protesting against his exaggerations. For this and other reasons, and partly out of fear of presuming, I did not even let him know I was in England. Much to my surprise, the Third Programme of the BBC got in touch with me and proposed a debate or discussion on "American Democracy and Freedom." There were some difficulties about timing, but we finally met. Russell was quite general in his remarks about the danger of mass democracy to freedom. I took the line of my pamphlet entitled *Heresy, Yes—Conspiracy, No.* Tapes of the exchange exist.

After the BBC programme was over, Russell invited my wife and me to a late lunch at Hatchetts where we gradually warmed to each other until the level of "the old days" was reached and we gossiped away merrily, with Russell, as usual, doing most of the talking. He did indicate that he was not altogether satisfied with what he said during our exchange, but he pursued the matter no further. We talked about local British politics, his trip to Stockholm, and other matters. He made no mention, for once, of Patricia.

What was memorable about the occasion was to see Russell in his element. Already at the BBC studio, people had bowed and scraped when he appeared. Their tone of voice changed when they addressed him. When the taxi rolled to a stop at Hatchetts, the doorman ushered him out with a "Yes, m'Lord", and "The usual, m'Lord?" came in rapid fire from the head waiter, the waiter, the wine waiter, and others who clustered about us. Russell was quite well known at Hatchetts. The meal was too sumptuous for our appetites. Russell insisted on liqueurs and cigars—for once forgoing his pipe. I could not help reflecting on the contrast between the present and the lean years a decade ago. Not long before, Russell had received one of England's most coveted awards, the Order of Merit. He entertained us with an account of his visit with the King, and he mimicked the King's stuttering comment warning him in a friendly fashion about the dangers of living an adventurous and unconventional life. "It was on the tip of my tongue", Russell recalled, "to say to him: 'Your Majesty is quite right—as your Majesty's brother learned some years ago'. . . ."

I twitted him about his new-found respectability, unsought as it had been. "How the world moves! I never expected that you would end up dying in the odour of sanctity." He laughed, and replied: "Don't fear, Hook. In a few days I shall lose my respectability once more. . . . Hook, do you know how abominably cruel the English laws are on homosexuality? I'm planning to come out and blast them." And he went off on a long disquisition concerning how oppressive they were. He must have been aware of the character of these laws for many years, and he himself had made some disparaging remarks about homosexuals in the past without deploring their lot or protesting the cruel laws against them. I couldn't help feeling that he was looking for another cause to preserve his role as a perpetual dissenter now that he was no longer an outsider. Before Russell managed to make a public statement on the issue, a few English bishops came out for the repeal or modification of the laws and took the headlines. Lost causes in Great Britain were getting scarce. A few years later, I believe, the Wolfenden Report was published and, in due course, the obnoxious laws were repealed.

After lunch we took a taxi to Richmond Park where we walked in the October sunshine as Russell pointed out the house in which he had spent his early childhood. His mood was quite nostalgic, and he spoke about his grandmother and especially his brother (of whom on other occasions he was wont to speak with bitterness) with some gentleness. Towards twilight, we walked to his flat where he prepared tea for us, complaining about the undrinkable tea he had been served in the United States. We were aware that there was someone else in the flat who seemed to help set out with invisible hands the materials. When we arrived at his flat, Russell had murmured something about his wife being indisposed, and we supposed it was she who was hovering in the background.

It was obvious that Russell had not anticipated having lunch or tea with us when he came to the broadcast. That had been

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arranged through third parties carrying messages between us as if we were principals in a championship boxing event. After our meeting, however, as I made polite inquiries about his writing plans, some sentimental recollection of our past meetings, or perhaps the presence of my wife whom he seemed to like (and who had never shared my awe of him and was given to pert and uninhibited comments on his stories), must have thawed his initial and rather distant reserve. He soon lapsed into the old pattern of gossipy, infectious gaiety with less than the usual irreverence and sting. We parted once more on the friendliest of terms, but I was acutely aware of the emergence of sharp political differences between us concerning what was happening in the United States. On the few occasions during the afternoon when I tried to tell him that someone was misinforming him about the cultural climate, and that there was much less "intellectual repression" in the United States than when he visited, he turned aside what I said with the observation that I was judging the whole country by what was happening in relatively enlightened places like Eastern universities. He, however, it seemed to me, was judging the whole of the United States either by some isolated incident sensationalised by the press (like the demand of a senile old lady in the mid-West that the tales of Robin Hood "who robbed the rich to pay the poor" be removed from the local library, on the ground that he was a Communist) or by some scare stories of McCarthyism. Although Russell granted that most of the Americans he had met were liberal, he was convinced that the overwhelming majority were either active supporters of Senator McCarthy, whom he tended to equate with Hitler and Stalin, or had been completely cowed by him. It was clear to me that in the back of his mind Russell was debiting the episodes at CCNY and the Barnes Institute to the cultural account of the United States as a whole.

In the *Manchester Guardian* (30 October, 1951) Russell asserted that the United States was just as much a "police-state" as Germany under Hitler and Russia under Stalin. He explicitly declared that in the United States "nobody ventures to pass a political remark without first looking behind the door to make sure no one [is] listening. If by some misfortune you were to quote with approval some remark by Jefferson you would probably lose your job and find yourself behind bars. . . ." Russell was even willing to stake money on his fantasies about the United States. He bet Malcolm Muggeridge five pounds that Joe McCarthy would become President of the United States, but when he paid it off after McCarthy died in disgrace, he didn't alter his views. If anything he became more vitriolic.



Even after McCarthy had been utterly repudiated by Congress, the law courts, and the people—he had always been defied by the universities—Russell continued to believe that the United States was in the fierce grip of a reign of terror exercised through the FBI. Although he did not explicitly always say that the United States was an outright Fascist country, his descriptions suggested it. In 1956, shortly before the FBI arrested and jailed Kaspar, a racist rabble-rouser, for encouraging violation of a Federal court order, Russell wrote in the preface to the English edition of Corliss Lamont's *Freedom Is as Freedom Does*: "Anybody who goes so far as to support equal rights for coloured people, or to say a good word for the UN is liable to a visit by officers of the FBI and threatened with blacklisting and consequent inability to earn a living." This brought a sharp criticism from Norman Thomas, the socialist leader who had led the fight for civil liberties in the US, protesting that Russell's exaggerations were hardly distinguishable from outright falsehoods (*New Leader*, 7 January 1957). Russell remained unmoved.

Within a few years, with the development of nuclear weapons, he returned once more to his old pacifist position, although, to do him justice, he had never been an absolute pacifist. Fearful that the Kremlin would never accept reasonable proposals of inspection to ensure multilateral disarmament, he publicly proclaimed that if the Communists refused to accept reasonable proposals, the West should disarm unilaterally "even if this meant the universal triumph of Communism and all its evils." Considering just how evil Russell had believed Communism to be this was quite a turnabout. It was at this point that I ventured publicly to criticise his position, and our debate on this and allied issues continued for some years in the pages of the *New Leader*, at the time an organ of democratic Socialism under the editorship of Sol Levitas. I exchanged a few letters with him before that. In his replies he found my criticism of his fantastic accounts of the American scene "unsatisfactory." As time wore on, he became more and more rabidly anti-American, accusing the United States of planning deliberate genocide, and going as far as to say that he was prepared to believe the old Communist canard that the United States had waged "germ warfare" in Korea. Towards the end he accepted, as gospel truth, atrocity stories about the US military compared to which the stories of German atrocities in Belgium, that had once caused him to blaze with indignation, were very mild indeed.

AT THIS POINT I return to the period when I first became acquainted with Russell, i.e., when the Committee for Cultural Freedom rushed to his defence against the efforts of the Catholic and Protestant hierarchy, who were

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using as a cat's-paw Mrs Kay, a Jewish housewife in Queens, to deprive Russell of his post at the CCNY. Mrs Kay, as a taxpayer, applied to the courts for an injunction to prevent Russell from teaching, on the grounds that the morals of her daughter (who was a student at Queens College) might be impaired if Russell were permitted to teach symbolic logic to the undergraduate students at CCNY, twenty or more miles distant. Her evidence consisted of certain passages cited out of context from Russell's *Marriage and Morals* (1929).

The inside story of the Russell appointment was told to me by Morris R. Cohen who together with Harry Allen Overstreet had retired from CCNY, leaving it without any distinguished philosophical figure. The remaining senior man who held the rank of an associate professor feared that the appointment of an able outsider to a full professorship—one of the senior professorial lines or "slots" had been dropped—would stand in the way of his own promotion to that post. Whereupon, aware of the fact that Russell was crowding 68, and that retirement at CCNY was mandatory at 70, the associate professor who was Acting Chairman extended an invitation to Russell to join the Department with the rank of full Professor. His colleagues, who had nothing to lose and were aware of the distinction that Bertrand Russell's name gave their truncated department, endorsed the invitation. By the time Russell would have retired, the associate professor, who had published little or nothing of value, hoped to have in the works a book he was editing (consisting of contributions by other well-known philosophers) which would justify his own promotion. Cohen told me that despite his great admiration for Russell, he himself, when apprised of the contemplated appointment, had advised against it on the grounds that the students at the College were hardly prepared to profit from Russell's high-powered lectures, and that Russell himself would not feel at home among them. I confess I was taken aback by Cohen's judgment and disagreed with it. It seemed to me that whatever the students got out of Russell's lectures—and they certainly would have had to reach for them—Russell's presence by itself would shake up the department and certainly enliven the local philosophical scene.[4]

At the time, Russell was teaching at the University of California at Los Angeles. As he subsequently told me, he was more than content there, enjoying himself in the company not only of easy-going sun-worshipping students but of Aldous Huxley and his circle, who treated him with veneration as an intellectual guru, and also of culturally aspiring Hollywood starlets. He was earning $6,000 a year; CCNY offered him $7,000. When I asked him, after listening to his dithyrambic account of his life at UCLA, why in the world he gave it all up for "a lousy $1000", he replied that Patricia was extravagant and spent more money than he earned. None the less, he admitted that just as soon as he got wind of the opposition to his appointment at CCNY, he tried to withdraw his resignation from UCLA. But, according to his story, the administration at UCLA had suddenly been alerted to his radical proclivities in politics and other areas, and refused to accommodate him despite the intervention of his colleagues. Russell had no alternative but to accept the offer from CCNY—never expecting, however, that it would culminate in such a disastrous dénouement.

Despite his personal disapproval of Russell's appointment, Morris R. Cohen fought manfully alongside John Dewey, then Chairman of the Committee for Cultural Freedom, and the rest of us on Russell's behalf. We had no difficulty in winning the literate and articulate organs of public opinion to Russell's side. *The New York Times* gave editorial support. We succeeded in arousing educators and administrators of other institutions of higher education to the dangers to academic freedom and integrity posed by the effort to bar Russell from teaching. I was able to induce the conservative Chancellor of New York University, Harry Woodburn Chase, to come out in strong condemnation of the action against Russell, but after some hesitation he vetoed my recommendation that New York University invite Russell to join the staff of the Graduate School of Philosophy. "It would seem like a provocation to Bishop Manning and to the Catholic Church", he lamely explained to me.

The action against Russell was sustained in the lowest New York court by an illiterate Tammany politician who had received his judgeship as a political reward and whose opinion in the case makes hilarious reading. Informed legal judgment was unanimous that when the Corporation Counsel of New York City appealed against the decision of Judge McGeehan to the court of higher instance, the case against Bertrand Russell would be thrown out. Everyone was surprised to discover that the Corporation Counsel did not appeal against the verdict. We subsequently learned on the best of authority that the Corporation Counsel had been ordered by the Mayor not to lodge an appeal. The Mayor at the time was none other than "the little flower", Fiorella La Guardia (who as Fusion candidate had defeated Tammany Hall in 1937 and who was running for re-election in 1941). Afraid that he might lose the Catholic vote if Russell was reinstated, he betrayed a liberal tradition much more important to the lives and minds of free men than any of his famous municipal reforms.

RUSSELL WAS MORE THAN A LITTLE PUZZLED by my zeal in his behalf, especially after the quarrel with Albert C. Barnes developed. He was aware that my philosophical allegiance was publicly pledged, so to speak, to John Dewey, and that Dewey and I were personally quite close. He also learned that in consequence of Barnes's enmity toward me, which flared up when Barnes discovered that I was openly helping and advising Russell, a temporary rift had arisen between Dewey and me. Barnes had written me that the issue between him and Russell involved belief in "democracy as a way of life." Barnes tried to convince Dewey that I had betrayed both democracy as a way of life and Dewey himself in my lectures on contemporary philosophy at the New School. He had sent one of his secretaries to take notes at some of the sessions, an edited version of which he sent Dewey. Although

[4] Professor Philip Wiener, to whom I have related Cohen's version of why Russell was invited (and who was then in the Department of Philosophy) denies it. Professor Lewis Feuer, who at that time was in the Department, also questions the validity of Cohen's account to me. Since Cohen was not present during the deliberations of the Department, his view was based on his reading of the events.

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Dewey professed to be amused by Barnes's "shenanigans", especially his misreading of the report of his philosophically illiterate secretary, I myself felt that Dewey was much too indulgent towards Barnes. The notion of Barnes as a protagonist of "the democratic way of life" was fantastic to anyone who was aware of his brutal and feudal arrogance towards anyone who disagreed with him. Dewey used to bail him out of some of the worst scrapes he got into as a result of abusing and insulting people, by getting Barnes to make amends.[5]

With respect to Russell, Dewey admitted that Barnes had no legal case but insisted that he had a moral one because Russell had violated the terms of an oral contract not to lecture elsewhere. What Barnes had omitted to tell Dewey was that Russell had specifically exempted the acceptance of invitations from professional philosophical associations; and Barnes had agreed. Anyone who knew the two men could hardly be in doubt as to who was telling the truth. Although Russell was capable of the wildest exaggerations and untruths when writing about a people or a nation for political purposes, he was much too proud ever to lie where he himself was concerned. If anything, he was on the contrary much too uninhibited in revealing truths about himself. One could say of him what he himself once said of G. E. Moore: "The only lie Moore ever uttered was in reply to a question I once put to him, 'Moore, do you always tell the truth?' To which he answered, 'No.' "

Russell's puzzlement about my championship of his cause grew to a point that led him once to ask me outright why I had embroiled myself to the extent I had. For once too shy to tell him what his courage during the First World War had meant to me in my most impressionable years, I played up my resentment of Barnes's bullying. But the fun and intellectual excitement of the association with Russell undoubtedly were influences just as strong. I was gripped by an intense intellectual curiosity about the stages of his philosophical development and the occasions and causes of his dramatic shifts from one position to another. His conversation, even when largely a monologue, was absolutely brilliant. His discourse (which covered almost all fields of knowledge, high and low) was a sheer delight, full of arresting insights, striking phrases and unexpected observations. He had a prodigious memory, an inexhaustible stock of stories and anecdotes, unfailingly relevant to some point he was making, and an ability to recite not only extensive passages from the great poets of the past but also the most obscene limericks which he attributed to Dante Gabriel Rossetti and his circle but some of which, I was convinced, were original with him.[6] He would tell me things I never knew before about John Stuart Mill, his godfather, and about T. S. Eliot whom he had known in the dark days of Eliot's despair before his conversion to Christianity.

Russell had often been befriended in the past when in need. But he had developed, probably on the basis of some unhappy experiences, an ill-concealed hostility against being put under obligation to anyone. Sooner or later, he implied, those who had helped him, especially if they were women, expected something of him in return. He found this quite annoying even if all they wanted was praise or compliments, for Russell had always been extremely chary of lavishing praise on anyone or anything unless he felt it was deserved. After a while, he seemed convinced that my help, whatever it was worth, was really disinterested. On several occasions, one of the few times he did repeat himself to me, he would say, after a hearty laugh at one of his own quips or a witty *bon mot* I had provoked by dredging up some person or incident from his past for him to comment upon: "Do you know, Hook, what I like about you? You don't expect anything of me!" This was perfectly true. The only thing I ever asked of him was to autograph a portrait picture of himself taken by Sylvia Solow, the photographer. He did this cheerfully, obviously most relieved that he was not being asked to inscribe it with anything more than his signature.

The fact that Russell realised that I had no expectations made it easier for me to ask him questions about anything, to challenge positions he had taken in the past, or his judgments on men and events, and even to criticise, sometimes sharply, some things that he did or failed to do during the period that I knew him. He never seemed to resent any of my questions, which were limited only by my own inhibitions. He, on the other hand, was completely and embarrassingly uninhibited. He volunteered confessions about his sexual powers, and



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New York Times

[5] That was how he explained to me his relationship with Barnes—as if Barnes were an overgrown shaggy grizzly bear who really meant no harm when he embraced people. The real Barnes to Dewey was the man of aesthetic genius and remarkable sensibility from whom he had learned most of what he knew about European art and painting.

[6] I recall one of them which he recited with glee:

There was a young girl from Aberystwyth
Who took sacks to the mill to fetch grist with,
But the miller's son, Jack,
Laid her flat on her back,
And united the things that they pissed with.

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related matters about which I would no more have inquired of him than I would of my own father. He seemed always on the prowl when attractive and vivacious young women were around and he assumed that my interest in extracurricular matrimonial activity was as keen as his own. On occasions I was rendered speechless by his unsolicited advice on how to "make" a girl and what to do after one made her. "Hook", he once advised, "if you ever take a girl to an hotel and the reception clerk seems suspicious, when he gives you the price of the room have her complain loudly, 'It's *much* too expensive!' He's sure to assume she is your wife. . . ." At another time when I commented on his remarkable memory, he mildly demurred and observed that it was not what it used to be. Seconds later, as if to illustrate his point, he turned to me and asked: "Hook, what's been the most embarrassing moment of your life?" Without waiting for a reply from me, he went on, "Mine was the failure to remember at breakfast the name of an attractive woman to whom I had made ardent love the night before. I really knew it, of course, but it came to mind too late!" Like George Bernard Shaw, Russell apparently was an eloquent vocaliser in his love-making ecstasies.

One thing I found I could not do was to argue with Russell about basic philosophical issues. I was more interested in drawing him out. Whenever he did develop a philosophical position in answer to some difficulty I raised, he was so fluent, subtle, and detailed that my rejoinders seemed little more than stuttering comments. I have never been at a loss for words with anyone else and no one else ever affected me this way, not even Morris Raphael Cohen, who was a merciless polemicist and with whom I often crossed swords. It was only when we talked philosophy that I felt tongue-tied with Russell. Until we engaged in written debate, I would not have been surprised if, in his heart of hearts, Russell had regarded me as an amiable person with a tenth-rate mind consumed by an insatiable curiosity about his past which he was perfectly willing to supply. At any rate, it must have appeared to him a fair exchange for the fuss-and-feathers made over him and especially the parties he so much enjoyed. To be sure, he was sometimes put out to find his *tête-à-tête* with some luscious girl interrupted by a query about whether he still believed in the theory of types, or what he thought of Henri Poincaré or Couturat or Gödel, or why he felt so strong an animus against Lenin or G. B. Shaw, or whether there was any truth in the rumour that Cyril Joad, one of his minor philosophical critics, was his natural son—a flattering rumour which Russell attributed to Joad himself. But although sometimes surprised, Russell was never really annoyed or at a loss for an answer that more often than not provoked some merriment in himself and others. George Santayana somewhere says that Russell laughed like an hyena, but although I have never heard an hyena laugh, I doubt it, for Russell's laugh was infectious if one understood what he was laughing about.[7]

Because Russell was perfectly himself with me, I saw sides of him that I would in retrospect have preferred not to have seen, although they have no bearing upon the quality of his mind and the magnificence of his achievements. There is hardly a philosophical doctrine of Russell's which he himself had not abandoned or which critics, armed with methodological tools that he originally forged, have not rendered questionable. Yet his life-work as a whole exemplifies that perpetual quest for knowledge and self-understanding that one associates with the great philosophical tradition. Intellectually, there are many Bertrand Russells—testifying to his venturesomeness, originality in outlook, and ingenuity in the execution of detail. He could restate stale and familiar positions on the perennial problems of philosophy in a way that made them seem fresh and challenging. He was not a "hedgehog" who saw only one great thing, but a "super-fox" who could turn himself inside out to glimpse different visions in a pluralistic world.

Russell was a great mind, and a great man if greatness of mind is enough to ensure greatness in a human being. But it is not enough. Hobbes was a great mind but not a great man; Spinoza was a great mind and a great man. Had I known Russell only by his writings, I would have unhesitatingly classified him with Spinoza and other great minds who were great human beings. Knowing him in other ways, there were three things about him that prevented me from doing so.

The first was Russell's vanity. He once told me that whenever he met a man of outstanding intellectual reputation, his first unuttered reaction was: "Can I take him, or can he take me?" He was most fearful of John Maynard Keynes, but he got over it. He greatly respected Whitehead's intellectual powers and was aware of canniness or shrewdness behind the foxy-grandpa benignity of manner that made him a "dear old soul" to adoring Americans. He felt that Whitehead's thought had been derailed by his cosmic and social piety. He was fond of G. E. Moore, and admired the purity of his character, but exclaimed with some asperity after reading Moore's criticism of his theory of descriptions that he had always suspected that Moore had missed his calling: "He should have been a classics scholar!" Moore had used thousands of words—almost fifty printed pages—to correct the defects in Russell's analysis of "Scott was the author of *Waverley*." His chief criticism was that Russell was wrong in saying that if Scott was the author of *Waverley* this meant that Scott must have written *Waverley*. For Scott could have *dictated it*! This was not only minute philosophy; it was trivial. Russell was irritated and frustrated by Moore's unconcealed dislike of him, but was not deeply hurt by it.

He was caustic about John M'Taggart primarily for political reasons, and regarded C. D. Broad, despite his immense abilities, with distaste. He once referred to him as an "intellectual bully" with "the malice of his kind", and agreed with the appraisal by Susan Stebbing, made in a conversation with me during the 1930s, that Broad was "absolutely the first second-rate mind in contemporary philosophy." There was hostility in the glance with which Russell sized up Gilbert Ryle when I introduced them, which he subsequently gleefully indulged in when Ryle unfortunately announced to the world

[7] Incidentally, Russell's stories about Santayana left little doubt that even in his younger days Santayana had been a suppressed prissy queen and a prig. He gave Santayana full credit, however, for convincing him of the untenability of his Platonic theory of value but he lacked appreciation of the great wisdom of Santayana's masterpiece, *The Life of Reason*.

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that he would not permit Ernest Gellner's first book to be reviewed in *Mind* because of its offensive personal tone towards the ordinary-language analysts for ignoring the genuineness of some great philosophical problems.

While at Barnes's Institute, Russell had begun writing his *History of Western Philosophy* which in some ways tells more about Russell than many of the figures he discusses. When he talked about the progress of the book (which was not seldom) I got the impression that, somewhat like Hegel, he was rating his predecessors with respect to how close they had come to anticipating Russellian truths. He had an unalloyed admiration for Albert Einstein as a physicist but did not take his philosophical excursions seriously, nor, at least in the period I knew him, Einstein's post-War appeasement politics. He made no secret of his intellectual contempt for all politicians.

Although Russell suffered unpopularity in some quarters for his role as a political dissenter, he enjoyed that role immensely. There was more than a touch of exhibitionism in the riskless sit-downs of his last years when he made well-publicised gestures to "Ban the Bomb" that were as futile as they were ill-advised. I once wondered aloud to him whether his temperamental bias towards nonconformity and dissent was an expression not so much of intellectual courage as of the aristocrat's disdain of the commoner and his desire to *épater le bourgeois*. He replied with a disarming frankness: "Hook, I think you have got something there. . . ."

Despite occasions when he employed the rhetoric of modesty, I never sensed the presence of any genuine intellectual humility in Russell. He knew he was first-rate, and assumed you knew it too. That is why he was also free of any tincture of intellectual arrogance. He never behaved like Morris R. Cohen who would *tell* you how extraordinary he was or how brilliant others (like Einstein) thought he was, and then cover up his shocking display of conceit by proclaiming: "Blessed are those who are not modest, for they shall not have to devise measures to call attention to their modesty. . . ."

Russell's vanity about other than intellectual matters was more quaint than offensive. When I once told him that I refused to accept Max Eastman's challenge to a public debate on the meaning of Marx, to be chaired by John Dewey, unless I had a guarantee that not more than half of the audience would be made up of women, he murmured with a sly grin: "You surprise me. Eastman doesn't seem so formidable. I'd take him on at any time for any woman's favour." Russell was then close to seventy. (My guess is that even in Russell's prime this would have been a vain boast were Max Eastman on the scene, except perhaps with some blue-stockings.) One day in a rare, depressed mood, he suddenly turned to me and observed without any preliminaries, "Hook, don't let anybody ever tell you about the consolations of old age and the serenity that comes from the release from desire." I mentioned something about Tolstoy and Gandhi. "Hypocrites both!", he snorted. This was the only negative judgment he ever made of Tolstoy. Concerning Gandhi he was always mordantly critical. I never could determine whether Russell's hypertrophic sexual activity was more a matter of aspiration than of power. The memories of his passions seemed to feed his desires. Oddly enough, Russell's final rift with Patricia, his third wife, when he was approaching eighty was (according to her letter to Freda Utley) a direct result of his refusal to make a pledge of mutual marital fidelity which she proposed. That was the last straw for Patricia who had suffered humiliation enough because of Russell's roving eye and affections. To do him justice, Russell had tried to live up to his own conception of ideal marriage—"monogamy with romantic episodes." But he had underestimated the strength of the jealousy of women in love. And when the shoe was on the other foot, he admitted he had underestimated the strength of his own jealousy.

THE SECOND TRAIT that I found hard to take in Russell was his greed. I was shocked to find what Russell was prepared to do for a little money, and often do unnecessarily, for with a little effort he could have raised the funds in other, less objectionable ways. He always seemed strapped for money and tended to blame it on Patricia's extravagance which seemed hardly plausible to me. He left UCLA for CCNY for a measly sum he could easily have earned by giving a few extra lectures. The real source of his quarrel with Albert Barnes was his wife's detestation of Barnes, her stiff-arming of him, and her foolish (because uninformed) running-down both of Barnes's private art collection and his judgment about modern painting. Barnes first tried to bar her from Russell's lectures on the ground that her knitting was distracting the class. Russell naturally tended to stand by his wife and got the class to vote that Patricia's knitting was unobjectionable, which only intensified Barnes's fury. He then used as a means for for further harassment Russell's desire to earn a little more money through commercial lectures. Russell's salary at the Barnes Institute was the same as at UCLA. Barnes offered Russell an extra $2,000, provided Russell did not lecture elsewhere for money. Russell agreed, but made an oral exception for academic appearances. Barnes untruthfully denied he had consented to the oral exception.

Although Russell was perfectly within his rights and his behaviour could not be legally or morally faulted, he showed poor judgment. His position at the Institute was a sinecure, created especially for him at John Dewey's personal request. He could have easily earned by writing what he did by lecturing. When he became aware of Barnes's search for a pretext to get rid of him, evident in Barnes's objection to his lecturing elsewhere, he could have forsworn commercial lecturing while at the Barnes Institute without exacting a compensating emolument. But the lure of quick, ready cash was hard to resist. There were other occasions when this was apparent.

At the height of the controversy at CCNY, I chanced across an article headlined on the cover of an issue of *Glamour* magazine, entitled "What to Do If You Fall in Love with a Married Man—by Bertrand Russell." I expostulated with him on the grounds that this was not the place and time for him to be writing on these themes when his case was still undecided in the courts, and when we were attempting to counteract the Church-inspired campaign against him—as a sex-obsessed and prurient old man—by stressing his international eminence as a scientific scholar and profound philosopher.

"Why did you do it?", I asked.

"I did it for $50", he replied.

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"We could have given you the money ourselves", I retorted, speaking for the Committee, "if you needed it that badly."

Russell bridled and reddened. "I'm tired of hearing people talk that way but who do nothing. Meanwhile my obligations continue to be heavy. Whatever assets I have are tied up in England because of the War." When he cooled off he promised not to write pieces like that again. I assured him I could easily get serious books for him to review that would earn much more than $50.

The article itself contained quite sensible advice on what a young woman should do if she fell in love with a married man. (It advised that she move away!) But to me the real shocker about the article was Russell's avowal, a few days later, that he had not written the article at all. He had only signed it—Patricia had written it! Some time later I expressed surprise to him at finding a book, by an author of whom Russell had spoken rather disparagingly, advertised "with an introduction by Bertrand Russell." Russell had not altered his judgment of the author's competence. "Why, then, did you write the introduction?" I inquired. "For fifty dollars", he replied.

He would not agree that it was unfair to readers, who would naturally assume that Russell approved of the book and its author. "When they read the book they will see that it contains no praise", he countered. "But they will have already bought the book by then", I objected, "probably on the strength of your introduction." I cannot recall the words of his laughing rejoinder, but my distinct impression is that he felt that the experience would enhance their discretion or caution in the future.

There were occasions on which his attitude towards money seemed out of keeping with his principled moral positions. He once told my wife and me that a relative had become an Orthodox Jew, or rather had undergone the ritual of conversion, in order to inherit some money from her Orthodox Jewish father-in-law—although, Russell assured us, she was as secular-minded as he was himself. When we expressed doubt about the moral propriety of such action, Russell stoutly defended her right to act as she did and made us feel as if we were rather simple-minded members of the Rationalist Society.

There was another incident that involved his friend and publisher, W. W. Norton, whom Russell would occasionally visit and of whom he had spoken warmly several times as someone who had befriended him in the past. After he had conceived of making a book of his lectures on "The History of Western Philosophy", Russell wrote to Norton asking for a contract and a substantial advance. Norton was willing to publish the book but was doubtful whether it would sell (in the light of Will Durant's phenomenal success, this was a bizarre judgment), but sent an advance of $500, "for friendship's sake." Russell then sent off a letter of inquiry to Simon & Schuster, whom he had referred to as "vulgar publishers" because of the character of some of their advertisements. The return mail brought a cheque for $2,000 as an advance even before the contract was drawn up. He then returned the cheque of $500 to Norton, breaking off all personal relations with him on the grounds that he didn't want an advance "for friendship's sake." Russell related the story with gusto as if he had scored a triumph. Although I knew from personal experience that "friendship" with publishers was a rather tenuous sort of thing, I could not help feeling that Russell had treated Norton rather shabbily.

FINALLY, ANOTHER TRAIT of Russell's gradually came to light. I reluctantly came to the conclusion that Russell's religion of truth overlaid a strong streak of cruelty. There are some truths which, when they are gratuitously told, are not expressions of a desire for knowledge or justice but an expression of cruelty. Russell was not unaware of this in others. It was Shaw's cruelty that aroused Russell's intense moral indignation even more than his cynical apologias for Mussolini, Hitler, and Stalin. But Russell himself would often and needlessly deliver himself of the most devastating things about some individuals, and enjoy it.

"Whatever happened to W.C.?", I once asked him. "He was discovered molesting little girls and disappeared from England", he replied, going off into a gale of laughter. The man in question had been of great help to Russell when Russell had been threatened with jail. At another time, out of the blue: "Hook, did you ever read William Temple's article in *Mind* on Plato's theory of ideas? No? Well, he traces it back, with all the flourishes of scholarship, to the Greek practice of pederasty. Now wasn't that a peculiar article for the future Archbishop of Canterbury to write? . . ." The implication was plain. I looked up the article; Russell was right as usual.

I must admit that I enjoyed Russell's sallies at other people's expense even when I felt somewhat uncomfortable. But in retrospect I wondered what moved him. His short stories are macabre in their monotonous exposure of human cruelty and



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hypocrisy but they are told with relish rather than compassion. He seemed convinced that any man who passed as a good man was really a fraud. Sensitive readers of Russell's *Autobiography* will have been revolted by the cruelty of some of its pages, not only his account of his treatment of the infatuated young woman who followed him to England but particularly by the reproduction of a letter from a harmless German savant who after making some contributions to the philosophy of mathematics had become insane. Publication of that letter was like jeering at a cripple.

What seemed worse to me was Russell's insensitiveness to his own unwitting cruelty when it was called to his attention. Usually chary of ever praising a book or manuscript on solicitation, Russell had made an exception and had written to Oxford University Press lauding Alfred Tarski's outstanding contributions to the foundations of logic and mathematics. The publishers used a few sentences from Russell's letter as a jacket blurb. Few people take blurbs seriously or literally. But as soon as Russell saw the blurb and became aware that Tarski was teaching at Harvard that year, he wrote a letter to C. I. Lewis (then Chairman of the Department) and requested that he call a meeting of the entire department and read a declaration from Russell to the effect that his remarks about Tarski's contributions were not to be taken literally or as derogating in any way from A. N. Whitehead's superior achievements. Tarski was present and felt completely humiliated. I learned about the incident from Ernest Nagel, to whom Tarski had bitterly complained. When I related the incident to Russell and described Tarski's hurt, Russell was altogether unmoved. "My withers are completely unwrung", he said (or words to that effect). "The blurb was unjust to Whitehead." It is quite true that Russell had a special regard for Whitehead and felt that ever since Whitehead had lost his son in the First World War, he had kept him at arm's length despite genial references to him in public.[8] Whatever the reason, it did not justify Russell's letter publicly downgrading Tarski—at that time a Jewish-Polish refugee smarting from lack of adequate recognition. A simple note to Whitehead would have sufficed to clear up matters, in the unlikely event that Whitehead had seen the blurb and in the unlikelier happenstance that he had taken umbrage at it. There was no need for Russell to make a federal case of it. Nor did it suggest itself to C.I. Lewis that he was not under the slightest obligation to carry out Russell's request. It is testimony to the professional respect and awe in which Russell was held by American philosophers, despite all the McGeehans and Barneses, that no one ever thought of not complying with his request.

THERE IS ONE LAST bite of toothless malice on Russell's part that I record with sorrow. Our published exchange over the "Better Red than Dead" line of post-War appeasement he advocated had been sharp but not vindictive. After he organised the Viet Nam War Trial of the United States in which the verdict was announced before the "trial", I wrote a critical analysis of his position in the *New Leader*, to which he had often contributed and in which our several exchanges had previously appeared. Russell made no rejoinder but in the third volume of his *Autobiography* he refers to my article as having appeared in a periodical that had been charged (falsely, let it be said) with having once accepted a subvention from the Chinese Nationalist régime years ago. Whatever the imputation was for contributors to the *New Leader*, and I see no relevant one, it extended to all contributors including Russell himself (who, in contradistinction to most other contributors at the time he wrote, used to receive $50 for his pieces even when they were reprinted from elsewhere). Years earlier he had referred to his "pleasant connection with the *New Leader* extending over many years." There is no doubt, unfortunately, that in Russell's own mind there was an intent to smear me rather than make a reasoned reply to my criticisms. Although towards the end of his life there is some evidence that he did not write all the things that appeared under his name,[9] I do not believe that this malicious footnote appeared without his knowledge and approval.

THERE ARE MANY OTHER THINGS I could say of Bertrand Russell the man. And yet they seem so irrelevant to Russell the philosopher, and (except for the last years of his life when he welcomed the victory of Communist North Viet Nam) to Russell the fighter for human freedom. It is as a philosopher that he should be and will be remembered.

It is not the greatest tribute one can pay to a philosopher to say that he is never dull. For there have been great philosophers who often are dull, like Aristotle and Kant. Nor is it a sufficient sign of great philosophy to be clear and lucid. Russell's prose has been compared by T. S. Eliot to that of David Hume's. I would rank it higher, for it had more colour, juice, and humour. But to be lucid, exciting and profound in the main body of one's work is a combination of virtues given to few philosophers. Bertrand Russell has achieved immortality by his philosophical writings. Everything else about him is of little consequence, except for its passing human interest.

[8] On the basis of advice received from friends at Cambridge, I volunteered information to Russell that, judging by what was actually said at the informal get-together with students and colleagues at the Whiteheads, it was Mrs Whitehead who was the source of the coolness to Russell, not Whitehead himself. Russell insisted, however, that he knew better.

[9] In his *Bertrand Russell and the World* (1981), Ronald Clark records an incident involving the "editorial" activities of Russell's personal secretary, Ralph Schoenman (p.110):

> "Russell intervened in the Cuban crisis which threatened to bring America and Russia to the brink of nuclear war. As an American blockade of the island appeared imminent a statement was issued to the press from Plas Penrhyn. As typed it began, 'Mankind is faced tonight with a grave crisis.' This was altered in Schoenman's hand to: 'It seems likely that within a week you will all be dead to please American madmen.' On Russell's suggestion, 'a week' was altered to 'a week or two', but otherwise the statement was issued as Schoenman had altered it."

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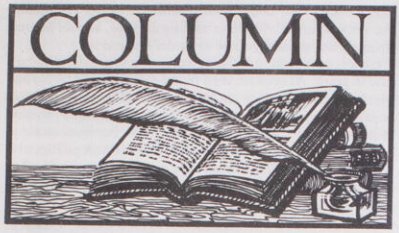
COLUMN



THE SQUIRRELS ARE REMARKABLY tame this year. Hold a handful of peanuts at ground level, and two small wet paws will soon land on your palm. A nose will forage rapidly, and the nuts all disappear into fat furry cheeks. The squirrel darts away, then sits with his back to you, nibbling. Off again, to a patch of loose earth, to bury the remainder. Will he remember them, smell them out when the snows come? Who knows?—but he certainly has a fine sense of possession. Those nuts are his.

You see the same thing in the subway, the London Underground, or the Paris *métro*. At weekends especially, fathers of families cradle large packages from Macy's, Harrods, or the BHV. They have an air of triumphant booty. Later, the wrappings discarded, the spoils will shrink into more household gadgets, toys, or fugitive garments—next year's obsolescent junk. Where on earth do we put it all? Out-of-reach cupboards, overflowing chests-of-drawers, crowded shelves, boxes under the spare bed, dustbins, incinerators, car cemeteries, slag-heaps, the municipal tip? Detritus accumulates endlessly: much of man's life is spent transforming rubbish into possessions, and then into rubbish again. The destruction sometimes stirs us. Crowds watch breathless when a wrecking gang demolishes a chimney. In the cinema, disasters are a draw. Burn a cassette tape, or melt an old record in a bonfire, and you may feel a sense of sacrilege. Human creation is being nullified: it's a kind of assassination. Possessions are being squandered: it's acquiescence in death.

Ownership, in other words, is a numinous notion, too much taken for granted in simple-seeming possessive pronouns like "my", "your", or "his." Ludwig Wittgenstein used to have fun with it. His friend Norman Malcolm, Professor of Philosophy at Cornell, described how "On one walk he 'gave' me each tree that we passed, with the reservation that I was not to cut it down or do anything to it, or prevent the previous owners from doing anything to it: with those reservations it was henceforth *mine*." Did Professor Malcolm afterwards feel an occult affinity with Midsummer Common, Cambridge? Probably not; but he gave his readers food for thought about what possession might mean. C. S. Lewis, likewise, stirred sleeping ideas. In *The Screwtape Letters*, he assumed the character of a functionary from Hell, "His Abysmal Sublimity Under Secretary Screwtape", advising his nephew Wormwood how to capture a human soul:

> "The sense of ownership in general is always to be encouraged. The humans are always putting up claims to ownership which sound equally funny in Heaven and in Hell and we must keep them doing so. . . . It is as if a royal child whom his father has placed, for love's sake, in titular command of some great province, under the real rule of wise counsellors, should come to fancy he really owns the cities, the forests, and the corn, in the same way as he owns the bricks on the nursery floor.
>
> We produce this sense of ownership not only by pride but by confusion. We teach them not to notice the different senses of the possessive pronoun—the finely graded differences that run from 'my boots' through 'my dog', 'my servant', 'my wife', 'my father', 'my master' and 'my country', to 'my God'. They can be taught to reduce all these senses to that of 'my boots'. . . . Even in the nursery a child can be taught to mean by 'my Teddy-bear' *not* the old imagined recipient of affection to whom it stands in a special relation (for that is what the Enemy will teach them to mean if we are not careful) but 'the bear I can pull to pieces if I like'."

So the Christian apologist makes the same point as the author of the *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*. Ownership and possession—distinct in law as in language—are complex concepts which in their fullest sense involve the right of disposal, but which short of that imply reciprocal powers and obligations. They mesh into a social system without which they're virtually meaningless.

THAT ISN'T TO SAY that politicians don't abuse them. Voters have long since recognised that when a speaker says "*we*" he usually means "*you*", as in "We must tighten our belts." Only slightly less obvious is the fraud involved in translating "public ownership" as "You all now own the railways" (or the coalmines, or the roads). Even shareholders, unless aggressively organised, may feel that they don't in any operative sense "own" the company whose stock they hold; and the citizen's grasp on nationalised industries or utilities is flimsier still.

Here, you may notice, I've pulled a semantic trick. By using "citizen" in the singular, I've atomised society. As regards public ownership, that seems legitimate: whatever our constitutional rights, you or I stand little chance of deflecting some nationalised juggernaut. But when it comes to "my country" as distinct from "my Inland Revenue", aren't matters somehow different? Doesn't the singular imply a plural? Am I not really saying "*our* country"—acknowledging kinship and community, solidarity and shared concerns?

Again, the answer is complex. "My country" does have affective resonance: but the intensity varies. In time of war, and in moments of victory, citizens identify with each other, with "their" country and with "their" leaders. For the Soviet Union, World War II was significantly "the Great Patriotic War." In British politics, "the Falklands Factor" was powerful if temporary political cement. In other contexts, the reflex of solidarity falters: "alienation" sets in. Possessive pronouns may then seem inappropriate or ironical. How sincerely can the average British citizen talk about "our" (still less "my") Falkland Islands, "our" Gibraltar, "our" Ulster, or "our" Hong Kong?

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At the time of the Falklands war, British solidarity with the islanders was reinforced by the thought that they were "our" people—speaking "our" language, enjoying "our" liberties, using "our" goods. It was even claimed that they were sharing "our" way of life—an exaggeration, surely, for all but sub-Arctic sheep-farmers. In that war, solidarity was deepened by spilled blood. It would be too facile, therefore, to dismiss the Falklanders as a costly anachronism, a tiny recalcitrant minority asking too much of a distant "mother country." Logic is not the last word in human relations: emotion often is.

In the 19th century, imperial emotion vastly extended the scope of the word "our." Even in the 1930s, British school-children gained some satisfaction from reflecting that large tracts of land coloured red on the political globe were "theirs." Editorialists on the London *Times* seem sometimes to share such feelings. But sober analysts conclude, often sadly, that "our" needs to be backed by power. The tendency in current map-making is towards tidiness. Territorial powers are eager, as it were, to "collect the set." Bits of other people's erstwhile "possessions" adjacent to their frontiers drive them to a fury: they pick at them like neurotics scratching a scab. Lofty semantic commentators may see such behaviour as no less irrational than that of the other parties to such disputes. History, sociology, linguistics, political philosophy—all are regularly ransacked to justify territorial imperatives of a quite primitive sort. And behind the diplomacy and the rhetoric there always lurks the threat of force.

What then can lofty semantic commentators offer—beyond a kind of toffee-nosed coolness or pseudo-academic scorn? The answer, I suggest, is an effort to lower the temperature and to analyse more helpfully the crude interpretations of words like "ownership", "sovereignty", and "unity" which so often lead to bloodshed.

LET'S TAKE THE FOUR trouble-spots in turn: the Falklands (or Las Malvinas), Gibraltar, Ulster, and Hong Kong. In none of them, I suspect, can simplistic hardline positions be defended for ever—by either side.

Fortress Falklands can be no more than a passing phase. Pinpricks, threats, a worsening of the currently hopeful diplomatic climate: all these are likely unless serious negotiations are followed through. But having lost British soldiers' lives for "our" people against an illegal invader, the British Government can't and won't cede full "ownership" or "sovereignty" to whatever régime in Buenos Aires. "Ownership" must be circumscribed, "sovereignty" qualified, by enforceable rights and guarantees for the islanders. On C. S. Lewis's Teddy-bear analogy, they must be certain they won't be pulled to pieces. Extremist Argentines may retort that "sovereignty" thus limited would be as worthless as Wittgenstein's "gift" of a tree. The proper reply is an English proverb: half a loaf is better than no bread.

Its Spanish translation may also be needed in Gibraltar. Here again the problem is people, not "possessions"—and people, in this case, perhaps less distinctly "ours." Where does the shoe really pinch the Spaniards? Surely in the sense of Gibraltar's being British. How if it were virtually independent, like Andorra? Or under joint suzerainty? Is "all or nothing" the only solution? Within a uniting Europe, should internal frontiers not gradually come to matter less and less?

Ulster, or Northern Ireland, may in the very long term be a case in point. At present, it's a blood-soaked paradox. No one who knows the province can forget the bleak feeling of resigned hopelessness in those grim little breeze-blocked houses, Protestant and Catholic alike. When the bombers came to London, they presumably hoped to infect British politics with angry weariness. The British were certainly angry, as well as somewhat weary: but their deep reaction was stubbornness—determination *not* to give the Provisional IRA what it says it wants.

I put it that way on purpose. The Provisionals' short-term goal is to get rid of the British. Their longer-term objective is less clear. They seem to say that they want "a united Ireland"; but some voices speak of "attaining power", and others of establishing a Marxist state. Both the latter aims look like pipe-dreams. But—and here the paradox appears—the "objective" consequence of recent Provisional activities, notably in Ireland itself, seems to be a *rapprochement* between London and Dublin. This may not outlast Garret Fitzgerald. It by no means implies either Anglo-Irish or pan-Irish "unity." Yet in a longer perspective and in the context of the European Community, a closer relationship between London and Dublin could eventually mean a joint approach to security, reciprocal voting rights, and mutual constitutional adjustments making national distinctions gradually less important than they now seem. "Sovereignty" and "unity", like "ownership", are in this respect counterproductive words. What can be said with certainty, even now, is that no party to the present Irish dispute—the Irish tragedy—will ever fully attain its baldly stated aims.

Hong Kong, so far, has not attained the status of tragedy. Long may its people be spared. Talk of "rescuing" them when the lease of the New Territories comes to an end may be brave, even heart-warming; but it's easier to be generous in print than in practice. The rich will no doubt slip away, with most of their portable riches; but the "lackeys of capitalism" will almost certainly be left to fend for themselves. Will China try to maintain a capitalist "window on the world"—an inverted counterpart to West Berlin? If so, how much capitalist "freedom" will it enjoy? The likely answers are unpromising; and Britain has precious few cards to play. What then is a practicable goal? At best, some special régime within the Chinese Republic, run by Communist Chinese—not too harsh, to begin with at least, for fear of terrifying Taiwan. After that? Who knows? The least implausible hope may be that gradually, in devious unpredictable ways, Chinese society may become more "corrupt" or more "liberal", warily courting the West as a counterweight to the USSR. But, as my wise predecessor *R* once wrote in this column, "the China card" is a perilous joker.

WE'VE COME A LONG WAY from the squirrels clutching "their" nuts. But so, we must surely hope, has humanity. "Ownership" in the modern world, like "sovereignty", can never be as absolute as it may have seemed to our ancestors. Indeed, it's doubly relative: it depends on circumstances, and it involves

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relationships. We say "my body": but isn't that "me"? And isn't even "my" body partly the property of other people, if only morally so? Even in countries where suicide is legal, oughtn't I to think for a moment before saddling others with grief—or the expense and nuisance of clearing my corpse away? Yes: we're members of one another—and so are nations. A hundred years ago, every country regarded its customs tariff as purely its own affair. Today, it has to negotiate on tariffs with its trading partners. Increasingly, we're interlinked—by technology, telecommunications, economics, and finance. Feelings and effective institutions follow more slowly: mentally, we're still tempted to isolation, "ownership", and all that they dangerously imply. The trick, in our border disputes, is to understand how primitive our gut reactions still are, and to make our interdependence explicit in rules and institutions we can share. Even squirrels, after all, do their best to provide for the future.

M

John Latham

Wire Tap

On the first day of his vigil, the ear-trumpet
blared in the sunlight each time he moved its mouth
across the wires. The smell of creosote blended
with his pipe. He watched frost fading from old leaves
in the ditch below, like the dawning of a blush.
He could hear his wife, and Mountford, but their words
were mixed with others; and he couldn't tell.

It snowed on the third day, and the Colonel
used his horsewhip, and a running bowline,
to lash his body to the pole. As snowflakes settled
in the trumpet, the sounds grew muffled, sad,
like his regimental songs, under water, in the bath.
He heard their voices, often, but the horn was too wide
to pick out single conversations—except at 4 a.m.,
when Miss St John Carter 'phoned the speaking clock,
simpered two more pages from her adolescent diaries,
shouted "bugger" twice, giggled, and hung up.

On the seventh day, when it made no response
to his clearly worded ultimatum, he discharged
his pistol at the raven, preening on the wires,
making them crackle and hum, like midnight skies
over camp-fires in the Punjab, scrambling voices
just as his wife got through to Mountford.
It swung, upside down, ice-clamped to the wire.
He could hear its slow drips reddening the snow.

On the thirteenth day he turned the trumpet round,
so that the earpiece could scan a single wire.
By constant sucking on his cheekbones, he squirmed
his head into the horn; and by squinting
with a cleverly curved smile, he could focus
on the raven's foot. He heard the drums of Mafeking,
the bursting of seeds carried too high by the winds.

On the last day of his vigil he shot off his moustaches
with his two remaining bullets, and naked
to his monocle, wriggled through the ice floes, inched
across the Steppes, until he was totally confined.
The snow grew warmer, and as breezes rocked
the trumpet like a cradle, and he sucked thin fluid
through the raven's supple foot, the only sound
was the seeping of water through the grains.

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Felicity Napier

Tet

Oh yes, I went there, when the war was at its height,
in my miniskirt, with a sketchbook under my arm.
Ours was the first plane in after Tet, when the VC
used the New Year Festival to hide their ammunition
in the flower carts. The Year of the Monkey is never
auspicious. At the Marché des Fleurs we bought gardenias,
cream and fragrant, and stared at red and orange lilies,
papery orchids and the palm leaves, glossy as the bodies
of the French at the Cercle Sportif. At Tet the Vietnamese
give flowers, recall the past, prepare for the future.

Downtown the streets were spacious, lined with plane trees,
like in Paris, and above them ticked the helicopters—
Saigon's thousand heartbeats. And always movement,
every day a carnival day. . . . Silk ao-dai pennants fluttered
from the overcrowded bicycles and Hondas honked their way
to Cholon—Chinatown. The Cathedral was dark and cool,
as comforting as Gloucester. On the menu at chez Nicole
were frogs' legs, snails and hamburgers. Hotel lobbies
clogged with the combat fatigues of brown and green, and
drunken journalists forgot their copy in the Greco Bar.

In the market by the Mekong that had wound through Burma,
Laos and Thailand to the Delta, we found basketed rabbits,
blue crabs, Dalat strawberries and bright pink dragon fruit.
Street corners smelt of urine; rats cut patterns in the dust.
In Tudo Street, the old Rue Catinat, there was tortoiseshell
and ivory for sale, as well as frilly peepshow knickers
and the dark sad beauties who lolled in doorways and bars.
At the sight of boyish policemen, holding hands, eyeing girls,
the pavement picnics of black-market goods were bundled up.
Black guns hung from their slim young hips like toys.

And me . . . under the white arches of the hotel verandah,
sketching an old man with a wispy beard like Ho Chi Minh
who played his bamboo guitar, or the urchin peanut-sellers
that clawed at my legs, brown fingers probing every pocket.
The afternoons punctuated by the rumble of tanks or screams
of jeeps in search of AWOL's like demented ice-cream vans.
I'll never forget how the G.I.s stared—their eyes
either spaced out, far away in the defoliated zones
where villages blazed, or ravenous for white skin, blonde hair,
the taste of their pony-tailed, soap-smelling girl back home.

And me . . . a visitor from England, scooping up the sugar
from my *citrons pressés* with a long spoon, or gathering
in the stairwell for the night's bombardment, alert
to the soft whirr of rockets. With the sudden darkness
curfew fell, like a thick velvet skirt. In our cabaret
from the roof were searchlights, restless as mosquitoes,
orange flares and the distant rumble of bombs from B 52s.
And no idea, no idea at all of what a war was—a civil war.
To me it meant Roundheads and Cavaliers, creaking leather
and the smell of gunpowder leaking from my history books.

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Viet Nam was travel, excitement; another place to say
I'd visited. My only worry was how to tell a VC
from the rest, the foe from the friend. They all
looked alike to me. A.F.N. Saigon gave instructions
as to children: "Don't be a piastre disaster" or
"Take care of your feet and they will take care of you;
change your socks every day", and mournful late night music:
"Blue, blue my heart is blue/Blue is the colour of my love"....
In the English paper there were columns of loneliness—
Miss Van Tuyet requires "real good friendship relation."

After the carpet factory we went to the *Maison de Broderies*.
Madame, her mouth as rich as her fourteen-carat chains,
unfurled embroidered tablecloths like sheets; the open work
was fine as Brussels lace, the stitches tiny as the ones
Elizabethan daughters sewed into their samplers. I chose
a cloth with pansies and daisies. They'll look better
at home I thought than scarlet lilies and Chinese characters
I didn't understand. Yet now, as I spread the cloth—
still white as Buddhist mourning clothes—and smooth
the little English flowers, I find no comfort in their smiles.

Alistair Elliot

Straightening out Virgil

. . . caeruleos implexae crinibus anguis
Eumenides

Georgics IV. 482–3

As Orpheus sang, the very halls of Hell
And inmost sculleries yielded to the spell;
And the Eumenides stood stock-still there,
*Those dark blue snakes tight-*knotted in *their hair.*

The Saxons were destroying Roman Britain
As our best manuscript of this was written:
In rustic capitals IMPLEXAE *twined*
Coils among tresses for the reader's mind.
One day an ancient hand, perhaps the paw
Of Apronianus (consul 494,
The owner), in a brainwave made it better
Than Virgil had, by taking out one letter—
IMPEXAE: Furies that you mesmerise
Must get their *uncombed* serpents in their eyes.

Another (Rustic is as Rustic does)
Conceived it was the same—INNEXAE—as
In *Aeneid* VI: "Great! The Eumenides,
In hair*nets* made of sea-green vipers, freeze."
And all the learned men of Charlemagne
Nod, "Yes—except, AMPLEXAE: they *contain*
Their hypnotising wig of snakes with . . . hair."

Ixion's wheel stops in the windless air,
Cerberus' muzzles gape and gape and gape;
And going back he's *managed to escape*
With his Eurydice returned again,
When . . . .

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NOTES & TOPICS

Coping with Irish Terror

Darkness unto Death

By Edward Pearce



THE BODY ON THE PAVEMENT, draped in a sheet with a briefcase standing beside it, looked cruelly and incongruously like one of L. S. Lowry's problem pictures, where he shows himself lying on a wall accompanied by an attaché-case. The body was actually that of Edgar Graham, a 28-year-old law lecturer who belonged to the Northern Ireland Assembly created with good intentions by James Prior. Mr Graham was also conspicuously the most able and the most conciliatory young man to enter Ulster politics for a long time. He was precisely the sort of Unionist, without an animus towards Roman Catholics, from whom dialogue, bridge-building, reconciliation—all the flat but honourable terms of political civility—were earnestly expected.

Noel Lane and Jane Arbuthnot, who were killed outright, and Stephen Dodd who died more than a week later, were serving police officers deliberately summoned to an IRA bomb intended to kill policemen, about which bomb the spokesmen of the IRA proceeded to lie after their habitual custom.

The elders of the Pentecostal Mission Church were welcoming worshippers at the porch when they were shot. Notice was somehow given to the congregation upon whom the gunmen then opened fire. A Lebanese class of massacre was avoided only by the astonishing incompetence of the gunmen. At these killings even Cardinal O'Fee of Armagh—a Republican of an old-fashioned sort—was shaken into rage, bidding the executioners not to see themselves as Catholics . . . though why the sacrilegious nature of that shooting should make matters worse in a province cursed by religious conviction is strange. A killing in church is only a passing incident in a spasmal terror which has its old communal origins. Before the Roman Catholic hierarchy, which to my knowledge has not excommunicated any IRA/Sinn Fein members, deplores killings in church, it might like to reflect long and hard on the teaching of its own pastors in Catholic schools. Nationalism, Irish "reunification" (of a country never previously united), hatred of the English, and a soapy stew of perpetually rewarmed antique grievance have been the diet for generations past. So what is an extra church shooting between armed friends?

Indignation comes late from the Church at any murder. It is like the rose being rebuked by its manure. Religion is the misfortune of Ireland in much the way that Ireland is the misfortune of the United Kingdom. The bigotry of the Protestants remains, and finds expression in the election of the biggest pulpit-drummer outside the American South, Ian Paisley, to every electable forum in sight—the dummy assembly in Belfast, the other dummy assembly in Strasbourg, and whatever we care to call the place at Westminster. But in fairness to Mr Paisley, however fraudulent his message and cynical his operations, no one has called him a murderer—which is precisely what Merlyn Rees, Labour's former Northern Ireland Secretary, speaking with deliberate authority, has called Gerry Adams, the head of Sinn Fein. And the Catholic population of West Belfast had signified its inclinations by electing Adams.

The best and most creative thing which could happen in this poor battlefield of civilisation would be a decline in the Christian belief which has been the principal inspiration for death. Alternatively, we might hope for more of that attenuated, slightly trendy, slightly wet but altogether more civilised form of observance which is exemplified just across the sea in Monsignor Warlock's Cathedral of Liverpool. The nearer any religion can get to ceremonial disbelief the more likely people are to stay alive. The age of faith, for which crypto-fascist spirits like Hilaire Belloc yearned, evokes a shudder in me. God in all his denominations has a great deal to answer for, from baroque art to General Franco.

But religion is having a busy time of it in the world right now. Just as we were hoping that sensible spirits, conforming mildly to (say) Anglicanism, urban Sunni Islam, and the Liberal synagogue, might be happy ingredients in a thin ecumenical consommé doing nobody much good but no harm either, suddenly we find the 14th century fighting back. The Irish, the Ayatollah, and various Shia groupings (to say nothing of the followers in Israel of Gush Emunim, and all those other beaters of the path back to the *shtetl*) astonish the 1980s with the rank flavour of zeal. For the wider world, neglecting tolerance and a decent scepticism for the transports of religious hysteria, there is no room here. We British have Ireland and its confessional wars, which in all conscience are enough. The Irish are cured of excessive devotion if they live long enough in England. The climate of rational apathy, the delights of sexual liberation, pop music, those very things which have Colonels in Upper Slaughter writhing, all actually play a soothing and civilising role.

UNFORTUNATELY, BACK IN THAT SOMBRE, grim, hateful but alas not godforsaken island, belief and killing continue their happy course. We do not know what to do next, which is why James Prior set up his Assembly. Activity of an urgent kind is a sure sign of despair in a politician. Mr Prior, a nicer man than most of the Tory wets, is in an exile to which anything including the House of Lords would with hindsight have been preferable. He is cursed by incompetence in a subordinate, which led to the escape of a clutch of IRA murderers from the Maze prison. The

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Assembly exists to no clear purpose, having no powers and no expectation of achieving them.

The one good thing which has emerged recently is a certain stabilisation in the authority of the Official Unionist Party, the sane end of Ulster Protestantism, under the competent and decent leadership of James Molyneaux. Previous Official Unionists tried too hard to please the British, and lost their own voters to Paisley. Molyneaux and his gifted deputy McCusker (who since Mr Graham's death must now fear assassination the most), and their Staffordshire friend Enoch Powell, who in the context of Ireland is a moderate, all treat foolish initiatives with a cold disbelief. They rightly excoriate the British Foreign Office, whose itch for betrayal has been playing up again. In the process they have consolidated while Paisley's shoddy star has passed its zenith.

It may almost be accounted good news that we are getting nowhere. Boredom is a much underrated political asset. The risks are always greatest when some new, leaked and trumpeted undertaking tells one side to take hope and the other to fear a sell-out. For politicians in Britain believe in solutions rather as the Irish believe in God. And much good it does them! The Darlington talks, the Sunningdale talks, Power-sharing, the imposition of Direct Rule, direct contacts with the Government in Dublin and, quite unforgivably, talks with the IRA—all these follies derived from an uncomprehending, meddlesome, departmental belief in solutions.

There are no solutions. The distinction was never drawn between two conditions, the acute and the chronic. Chronic it is and Northern Ireland is one long condition. We can take something for it, but political surgery is as futile as it is likely to aggravate.

The British Army, which is professionally superb, could of course win a straight shooting war against the IRA if it was ever ordered to fight one. It would be something of a satisfaction to get at the killers of Mr Graham, Inspector Dodd, and those church elders. But it is rejected as a solution, partly because Britain is a civilised country with civilian and legalistic reflexes, partly out of inertia, and finally because of an apprehension that in the wake of a shoot-in the Irish would roll themselves another generation of yet murkier bomb-planters and, though no one says this, make war on Westminster, Whitehall, and Buckingham Palace. Rightly or wrongly, we desist from the search-and-destroy operation which the British citizen would applaud.

We must also avoid attempts at a *political* solution, for reasons which are far less tenuous. The Republic of Ireland is a small state without the means to catch three rogues in a wood. The humiliation of Prime Minister Fitzgerald's less than ept police and soldiers in County Leitrim when, to the best of their strained abilities, they endeavoured to capture the Mission Church killers who had been surrounded in woodland, was comprehensive. It is ludicrous for the Republic to talk of ultimate union or even of "an Irish dimension." To do so is to feed rhetoric at the old trough in the full knowledge that the Irish state, such as it is, cannot begin to cope with modern, American-armed, Soviet-influenced terrorism which feels for the Dublin régime a hatred that outruns anything urged against us. The outcome of any serious moves toward British abandonment of Northern Ireland would be the panicking and beseeching request of Dublin that we should not do so.

The Republic cannot cope with Northern Ireland, the British loathe and despise place and people without distinction of denomination. It would be agreeable to have the Province drafted into the state of New York at the doorstep of the local Irish and Italian politicians who succour NORAID and give us the benefit of their offensive bombast. We would wish them joy of it. Few things have been more poisonous than the conduct of certain lobbies and politicians in America on this issue. Men five generations away from Ireland (or Sicily) mouth and parade and buy guns. Our soldiers and policemen get killed. Why we have not created real and furious protest is beyond comprehension. For although the US government does not condone such activities, its exertions against them have been less than single-minded.

And some of the enmity against Britain has been highly placed. The words of Robert Kennedy, as we fell over ourselves to redress real or imaginary grievances in the 1960s, linger on. "The damned British", he called us, reaching for a vote or an ancient itch. The damned British were in fact to show so much deference to world opinion, and specifically American opinion, that they rushed to disband the B-Specials (an auxiliary police force of hard illiberal men who kept order), and then to do away with Ulster's institutions centred upon the Stormont parliament.

BY MEDDLING WE INDICATED TO the IRA a common pattern with our decolonisation elsewhere. Beyond question, such ideas held high favour with Whitehall. Why else would poor luckless, can-collecting Willy Whitelaw have been told to meet the IRA? We sought to please, and convinced everyone that—given one or two more pushes, a few more soldiers buried, citizens bombed, holy deeds for the ould sod—we would turn away sorrowing, British-style. The absence of clarity in policy can have mortal consequences. People died because Mr Callaghan in the early days interfered, because Mr Heath interfered more grossly and then played chums with the terrorists.

Very slowly, perhaps, we are now establishing in the skulls of the enemy the fact that we are *not* going, that Northern Ireland is not Rhodesia, that the loyalist majority are precisely that; that Ireland will not be united for the signal good reason that her peoples hate each other, and that order can be kept by the British Army and no one else! When that idea, inexcusably delayed by our own weakest politicians, finally seeps down the jurassic of Republican understanding, we shall have got somewhere. Northern Ireland needs continuity, clarity, the absence of experiment; all the plodding necessary tedium. We have to stand fast.

For that reason the news may not be too bad, after all. Mr Prior's Assembly remains a mistake, but compared to the earlier mistakes it is a bagatelle. In his way (it is a way marked by the absence of flash and the presence of character), Jim Molyneaux has done wonders for the loyalist leadership, giving the Protestants a stand which is as hard as it is unhysterical. The drive on prosecutions through the "super-grasses" is as eminently successful as the outcry against it from the British

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Left indicates. The reaction to the December Harrods bombing in London was a determination to concede nothing to those who seek their credibility in the killing of a 21-year-old girl. Post-Falklands we are just that useful bit more military-minded and resolute than we were. Some, not all, of the juddering flab has gone from the governing belly of politics.

But, above all, the idea has been grasped in Britain (and I suspect even in the US) that the IRA are not a bunch of homicidal ethnocratic bog-fascists on a nostalgia kick, but neo-communists anxious to set up a North Atlantic Cuba. To anybody less dangerous to ourselves we would, I suspect, have sold out long ago. But, not to put too fine a point on it, Northern Ireland in the wrong hands (and could any hands be wronger than those of Gerry Adams?) would make a wonderful airstrip. This is one more reason for the British not to have been silly about Grenada, whose significance was strategic. And it is one hell of a reason for Americans, especially Conservative Irish Americans, not to be silly about Northern Ireland. "Guard your back" is an old maxim; we shall not disregard it.

The killing isn't over yet. Other horrors will be produced and we shall see other funerals. The egregious Chairman of the Greater London Council will pursue his private policy of advocating surrender and thus persuading the IRA that the one-more-push policy is viable. But it isn't; and they know it isn't. This is our Sicily, and we are going to live with it. In the nicest, most British sort of way we are even going to win.

Laski, Labour & Moscow

By John Hunt



BROWSING THROUGH an old bookshop in South London recently I came upon one of those forgotten political volumes with a tattered red dust-jacket so redolent of the 1930s and 1940s. Befitting his contemporary importance the author's name was printed in massive type completely overshadowing the title: LASKI—*The danger of being a gentleman.*[1]

Nostalgia for an era of political innocence welled up as I flicked through the pages. From 1930 until his death in 1950 Harold J. Laski was the personification of the intellectual Left in Britain. Professor of Political Science at the London School of Economics and an influential member of the Labour Party National Executive, he was guru to the radical youth of his generation long before that term was in use.

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Intrigued by a chapter headed "Law and Justice in the Soviet Union" I gambled 50p on the book and read on with growing fascination. Here was the authentic voice of the broad or far Left in the 1930s, intolerant of doubt and confident in the essential benevolence of the Soviet régime. Readers of ENCOUNTER are already familiar with the stream of naive Westerners who made the pilgrimage to Moscow before World War II and returned convinced that they had seen the promised land.[2] But Laski seems to have outdone all of them in his gullibility.

It is ironic that the essay was the result of a lecture tour which he made in the Soviet Union in 1934, the year when Kirov's assassination in Leningrad was used by Stalin as an excuse to sweep away the last traces of legality. In his famous "secret" de-Stalinisation speech Khrushchev dated the beginning of the full-scale terror to that year although it had steadily been building up with a succession of Moscow trials since 1930. Yet it was still seen fit in London to publish the essay in 1935 and reprint it in book form in 1939 and 1940.

Choosing to ignore these terrible events Laski could write:

> "I found no fear of the executive power and there was no sense, so far as I could see, that appointments to the higher posts [in the judiciary] had any of the political connotations it has with ourselves.
>
> The police were employed to obtain information which the accused indicated was likely to bear out his claim of innocence. There is nothing like the technicalities or rigour of our law of evidence."

During his tour Laski met Andrei Vishinsky and was deeply impressed by him. From his enthusiastic description it is difficult to recognise the bullying prosecutor who had already been busily at work for Stalin and was still to conduct the massive "Show Trials" which destroyed the Bolshevik old guard in the late 1930s. Instead Laski chose to see this Soviet Judge Jeffreys as an amiable legal reformer, the Russian equivalent of his other admired intimate, Mr Justice Felix Frankfurter of the US Supreme Court.

> "No experience I had in Russia was more impressive than a discussion with Mr Vishinsky [he tells us]. His part in the trial of the Metro-Vickers engineers in 1933 had, not unnaturally, predisposed me to think of him essentially in his capacity as a prosecutor.
>
> I found a man whose passion was law reform. No one I met was more open about the weaknesses of the system nor was more clear about the steps he wanted to take for their improvement.
>
> He combined in himself not merely the efficiency of an able administrator but the vision of the statesman. He was doing what an ideal Minister of Justice would do if we had such a person in Great Britain, forcing his colleagues to consider what is meant by actual experience of the law in action. He brought to the study of law in operation an energy

[1] Harold Laski, *The Danger of Being a Gentleman* (Allen & Unwin, 1939, 2nd impression 1940).

[2] See Paul Hollander, "Pilgrims on the Run" (I & II), ENCOUNTER, October & November 1981; Herbert R. Lottman, "André Gide's Return", ENCOUNTER, January 1982.

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which we have not seen in this country since the days of Jeremy Bentham."

It is revealing to compare the real Vishinsky, as portrayed in the official transcript of the Moscow show trials,[3] with the gentle idealist depicted in the English professor's highly subjective account.

In August 1936 the trial took place of sixteen old Bolsheviks accused of plotting the murder of Kirov and Stalin. Zinoviev, Kamenev, and fourteen others, broken by torture, were dragged before the court to confess their guilt before being shot. Here is Vishinsky in action.

VISHINSKY: "Wasn't it your centre that organised the assassination of Comrade Kirov?"
ZINOVIEV: "Yes, by our centre."
VISHINSKY: "In that centre there were you, Kamenev, Smirnov etc.?"
ZINOVIEV: "Yes."
VISHINSKY: "So you all assassinated Comrade Kirov?"
ZINOVIEV: "Yes."
VISHINSKY: "Sit down!"

He is again in fine form in 1938 when we see him browbeating Nikolai Bukharin at another of the great trials.

"You are hiding in a stream of words, in pettifoggery, sidetracking into politics, philosophy and theory. You should forget about these things once and for all. You are accused of espionage and are obviously according to all the data of the investigation a spy for a foreign intelligence agency. So stop the pettifoggery."

It could be pleaded on Laski's behalf that the big trials were still in the future when he made his trip in 1934. Yet in 1930 Vishinsky had already presided at the trial and imprisonment of the so-called Toiling Peasant Party of alleged "underground groups", former Kulaks and Social Revolutionaries. Later that year came the trial of the Industrial Party with eight defendants accused of wrecking, espionage, subversion, and sabotage. They were sentenced to be shot, but this was commuted to imprisonment, and most of the defendants were never seen again.

The members of the dreaded OGPU are depicted by Harold Laski as amiable fellows not much different from a London bobby, a friendly Dixon of Dock Green. Laski gives us a description of the OGPU penal settlement of Bolshevo where life seems rather similar to a British holiday camp. As always he is eager to point out that the "bourgeois" penal system in Britain lags far behind its Soviet counterpart. He tells us that Soviet prisoners did normal industrial work for wages, they had vacations, received unlimited visitors, and could write and receive uncensored letters. They could even leave prison unescorted to take educational courses for personal improvements. "No one who has ever seen a Russian prison and compared that experience with a visit to one in England can doubt that the advantage is all on the Russian side."[4]

AGAIN IT IS INTERESTING to compare myth with reality. M. P. Iakubovich, a survivor of the Menshevik trial of 1931, has described how the OGPU were determined to make confessions conform with their preconceived scheme of evidence. He writes in a memoir: "Then came the extraction of confessions. Some yielded to the promise of future benefits. Others who tried to resist were made to 'see reason' by physical methods. They were beaten on the face and head and on the sexual organs. They were thrown to the floor and kicked, choked until the blood flowed to the face. . . ." Laski assures us, however, that the unimportance of wealth in the USSR meant that defence attorneys could bring the law "more substantially into relation with justice" than in Britain.

"I both saw in the courts and heard from lawyers themselves that they did not feel inhibited in the defence of persons accused of counter-revolutionary activity."

Although he puts on a bold front, a close reading of Laski's prose suggests that he found it difficult to stifle his doubts. He makes the fundamental admission that Russian lawyers are handicapped because "most investigators already start out with their conclusions implicit in their premises."

Having raised this doubt he then sweeps it aside by quoting with apparent approval Lenin's maxim that "law is a political measure, law is politics." He agrees that this concept has permeated the whole fabric of Soviet justice but argues that this is little different to the principles underlying Western law.

In tortured prose he declares, "In all this there is nothing I think at which an English student of law should be surprised. The Soviet system of law does what the English system does; it puts the supreme coercive power of the state behind the fundamental premise of the region of which it is the expression."

Today it seems remarkable that Harold Laski, a highly intelligent and cultivated academic, could be led to such misleading conclusions. It is perhaps significant that at that time he was at the height of his flirtation with Marxism and we can only conclude that he believed what he chose to believe. He was always hazy about how far Marxism could be reconciled with the British parliamentary tradition, and when pressed

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[3] See *Report of Court Proceedings: The Case of the Trotskyite-Zinovievite Terrorist Centre* (People's Commissariat of Justice of the USSR, Moscow, 1936); *Report of the Court Proceedings in the Case of the Anti-Soviet Bloc of Rights and Trotskyists* (Moscow, 1938). See also the Dewey Commission's *The Case of Leon Trotsky* (1937) and its final report, *Not Guilty* (1938).

[4] The combination of gullibility and abject apologetics was nowhere so extreme as in the Webbs. In the third, one-volume, edition of *Soviet Communism: A New Civilization* (1944), they wrote of the Soviet Secret Police that ". . . there is now, we think, little or no sign of general disapproval among the four-fifths of the people who are manual workers in industry or agriculture, either of its continued existence or of its vigorous activities." . . .

Then the Webbs go on to quote a real, authentic, absolutely trustworthy first-hand authority:

" '. . . In all fairness', writes the one who has put into a book the most personal knowledge of the GPU, 'I must add that, wherever the GPU strikes, it is usually with reason. Perhaps the accusation is trumped up or exaggerated; perhaps the particular incident leading to the arrest is but a pretext. Yet behind these possibly flimsy excuses, the GPU is practically dead certain the accused was engaged in activities against the state. When they do strike, they strike sure and hard. Their case is practically watertight.' " (p. 483)

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would take refuge in ambiguous phrases about "revolution by consent." He was blessed—or cursed—with such verbal dexterity that he never found any difficulty in apparently reconciling two opposing ideas. This attribute was remarked on by his former pupils, many of whom now occupy positions of power in the Third World. His influence was particularly strong in India where he was held in great reverence. Former students recall that his sentences were so long that they often wondered how he could possibly complete them grammatically. He tended to indulge in these verbal acrobatics for their own sake, and undoubtedly this ability encouraged him in his gadfly approach to ideas.

His erratic behaviour was also apparent in domestic politics. In 1937 he signed the Popular Front "unity manifesto" of the Independent Labour Party, the Communist Party, and the Socialist League, pledging to join the Communists in the fight against "Fascism, reaction and war." The following year he was equally enthusiastically writing a Labour Party pamphlet which warned against the embrace of the British Communist Party. In words which could well apply to today's *Militant Tendency*, he wrote: "Communist policy is devoid of any certainty. They are committed rather to manoeuvre than to principle. They would be capable of stabbing us in the back at any time or involving us in joint responsibility for their political indiscretions. . . ."

Laski was a master of platform oratory, that most ephemeral of arts. I heard him speak during the 1945 general election which resulted in a landslide Labour victory. At that time he was depicted as the *éminence grise* of the Labour Party and was fighting his celebrated but unsuccessful libel action against the *Newark Advertiser*. He had been reported as saying that if Labour could not obtain what it needed by general consent then "we shall have to use violence even if it means revolution."

It was therefore with great interest that we awaited the arrival of this demoniacal figure. Our first reaction was one of intense disappointment. An unprepossessing, rather puny individual wearing a dark, pin-stripe suit entered the hall. He had a huge, domed forehead and was wearing his usual steel-rimmed spectacles. Within a few minutes, however, he had established a complete rapport with the audience. There was a scathing analysis of the failures of pre-War Conservative Governments followed by a glowing testimonial to the achievements of "our Socialist comrades" in Eastern Europe. The peroration was a tirade of old-fashioned Wellsian utopianism. As he sat down his listeners rose to their feet spontaneously, cheering wildly.

Despite this kind of popularity with the rank-and-file, not dissimilar to Tony Benn's today, he was regarded with distaste and suspicion by many socialists. George Orwell had no time for him, and in his famous essay on politics and the English language singled out one of Laski's more opaque passages for savage criticism. In 1947 Orwell received a letter from a Ukrainian refugee who had printed a Ukrainian translation of *Animal Farm* in the US-occupied zone of West Germany. He wanted to know if Orwell could get hold of some of Laski's work for similar printing.

In a letter to Arthur Koestler, Orwell said that he had told the refugee to have nothing to do with Laski—and "by no means let a person of that type know that illicit printing in Soviet languages is going on in the Allied zones."

Exemplary

London

PRISONS *in China and the Soviet Union provide outstanding examples which the West would do well to study, Mr Warren Burger, Chief Justice of the United States, said in London last night.*

Chief Justice Burger, opening the University of Notre Dame's London Law Centre, told law students at the Middle Temple Hall:

"On my visit to the Soviet Union, I was compelled to conclude that the one correctional institution I was invited to see—a juvenile institution—had training programmes in advance over anything I had seen in other countries. The prisons in China literally are factories with fences around them, and the prisoners are trained in marketable skills by producing goods to help pay for their incarceration. That surely makes them more likely to become useful citizens."

THE TIMES

IN 1946 LASKI MADE A SECOND VISIT to Moscow, this time as part of a Labour Party delegation. Although he had been increasingly disillusioned with Russia since the Hitler-Stalin pact of 1939 he still cherished hopes of improved Anglo-Soviet friendship and cooperation. The group had a two-hour meeting with Stalin who was still depicted as the benevolent "Uncle Joe." The official Labour Party version tells us that his "merry smile and twinkling eyes welcomed us before he had uttered a word. . . ."

In the exchange of platitudes which followed, Stalin assured his visitors that he hoped to reduce the size of the Soviet armed forces but hastily added that this could only be done when there was no further danger of aggression.

Laski returned from Russia somewhat more disillusioned than before and Morgan Phillips, General Secretary of the Labour Party, observed that in Moscow the professor had experienced one of the great disappointments of his life. Later that year *Pravda* was denouncing Laski as "one of the most active participants in the field of anti-Soviet propaganda who specialises mainly in proving the advantages of bourgeois democracy over Soviet democracy." In the face of this hostility Laski still clung touchingly to the belief that relations would improve if only Russia could be persuaded of the genuine good will of Britain and the other Western democracies.

In the light of history it is easy to sneer at Harold Laski's infatuation with Soviet Communism. But we should remember that the Far Left and, to a lesser extent, the Left-liberal establishment continue to display a high degree of credulity today, despite the lessons of the post-War years. The craving for Soviet approval and the hopeful belief in Russia's good intentions have been amply demonstrated by the nuclear disarmament movement in Western Europe in the past two years. We should also ask ourselves whether the dogged pursuit of *détente* in the face of Russian intransigence and bad faith is so different from Laski's obstinate belief that an "accommodation" with Russia was possible if only we could

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make the "breakthrough."

Perhaps, while drawing the correct lessons from Laski's experience, it would be kinder to remember him for a noble passage on individual freedom which appeared in an early book, *A Grammar of Politics*, published in 1925.

> "For after all the state is not itself an end but merely the means to an end which is realised only in the enrichment of human lives. Its power and the allegiance it can win depend always upon what it achieves for that enrichment. We are entitled to suspect the state, save as we see under its aegis the unfettered growth of human personality. Ultimately the minds of men can give service to no end less than the realisation of what is best in themselves."

A Common Grave

By Boris Ford



IT WAS IN 1914 THAT MY MOTHER left Russia and travelled to England to meet her future in-laws (she speaking no English and they no Russian), and then travelled on to India to marry my father and live the life of an Indian Army memsahib. Later she always spoke as if she had been driven out of her home country by the Bolsheviks and as if her relations who remained had mostly been slaughtered. My father, who had met her first in 1912 in Moscow where he had been sent to learn the language, would demur in his gentle way: "But, Katushka, the Revolution wasn't till 1917. And most of your few relations are still very much alive."

My mother's father, who had pressed an ikon into her hands as she was boarding the train in Moscow, had died a year or two later. But her mother ran a soup-kitchen during the Revolution and was rewarded with a flat and state pension for the rest of her long life. My mother never saw her again, though they wrote to each other every week. And my mother's uncle and aunt owned a paint factory and flourished in a modest way until, around 1928, life became hard and uncertain and they decided to leave.

They arrived with their Nansen passports in Berlin, without money but she with her suitcase of jewellery and he with a trunk largely filled with Czarist boiled shirts. When my mother and I visited them in 1936, the year of the Berlin Olympics, they were running a small paint-shop in the centre of Berlin and living not unhappily, and certainly unslaughtered, in a couple of rooms at the back. I remember little of this fortnight except reading *Ulysses* and hearing a new, virtually unknown soprano, Tiana Lemnitz, singing in *Eugene Onegin* in limpid tones of heart-rending purity. When we said our farewells to the Russian uncle and aunt, he asked me to accept one of his precious boiled shirts, with frilly cuffs and front, as a token of our undying friendship.

I never saw the old couple again, but my mother continued visiting them and their married daughter every year until the War. They had now saved enough from their paints to buy themselves a little *dacha* on the lakes to the east of Berlin, and they used to spend weekends there. As the war became grimmer and the bombing increased, they took to living at the *dacha* most of the time while Lisa, their adopted German daughter, looked after the shop. They corresponded with my mother via some distant relation in Buenos Aires, and so she knew of their hardships which towards the end of the War had become severe indeed.

And, then, on a day in 1945, the old lady died, not at the *dacha* but in the back room of the paint-shop in the heart of devastated Berlin. With the Red Army approaching from the east, the city was in a state of exhausted panic and widespread devastation. Lisa struggled in vain to induce my great-uncle to move to the west, but he wouldn't hear of it. How could he leave his dear wife without a fitting burial? Indeed, he announced, with a mixture of piety and grandeur, they must bury her at their home near the lakes in the east: Lisa must find them transport. Despairingly she went off and eventually returned with a two-wheeled handcart. They laid the old lady on her mattress on the cart and uncle, now changed into some smarter if ancient clothes, covered her with a Czarist flag which he had hidden away across the years. So they set off, the old gentleman in his mid-seventies and no longer in his best mind, and his frail middle-aged Lisa pushing the handcart with its precious burden eastwards, many miles eastwards towards the lakes.

The city was smoking and largely destroyed as they pushed on through the chaos. All around them people were gathering up belongings and, for want even of a handcart, were sitting hopelessly amid their possessions. And then there came a moment, after they had struggled on for more than an hour, when the old gentleman and Lisa entered a deserted, battered street from the west as an advance troop of the Red Army entered it from the east. Lisa, as she subsequently recounted it to my mother and father, was seized with terror, for what indignities and even atrocities would the Russian soldiers not perpetrate on this old man pushing a handcart draped with the Czarist flag?

Yet how little, after all these many years, did she know the Russians. This small batch of Russian troops, who had fought their way across Eastern Europe, suddenly found themselves confronted by an ancient Russian gentleman, pushing his old Russian wife to her burial, war or no war. They fell upon each other's necks with tears in their eyes, and at once the soldiers lifted the handcart and the old man and Lisa on to their platoon truck, and sent it off, with four of their number as guards, to the *dacha* in the east. And there the Red Army soldiers dug a grave and gave the old lady a Russian military funeral.

In the weeks and months that followed, my great-uncle and his devoted Lisa lived in their *dacha* in the midst of an encampment of the Red Army. Apparently the old man was adopted by the surrounding troops as some kind of symbol of the

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Russian motherland, and they brought him food regularly and tended his wife's grave.

It was at this time, immediately after the War, that my mother and father arrived in Berlin as Russian interpreters with the Four Power Commandatura, and of course, living in a well-supplied mess, they were able to help provide for the old man and his faithful Lisa and ensure their comfort. Relations between the four Powers, at least on the Commandatura itself, were very cordial at that period. Indeed, my father, who went out as senior interpreter in Russian for the English and Americans, was invited after a few months by Marshal Zhukov to act as the Russians' interpreter in English: he explained that Russian diplomatic protocol required him to retain a Russian interpreter of his own, though he ensured that this was a very junior person, usually a PhD student who sat silent except very occasionally offering an alternative technical word or phrase. This arrangement worked well and considerably eased tensions, since it enabled my father, who was an officer of some seniority as well as a person of considerable charm and diplomacy, to act as intermediary as much as interpreter. But after about six months, General Marshall took my father aside and asked, in some embarrassment, if he would mind if the Americans imported their own Russian interpreter because, alas, the Americans found they frequently didn't understand my father's English—an inconvenience which charm and diplomacy could not resolve.

BY NOW THE OLD UNCLE had aged considerably and the surrounding Russian troops, the original detachment having long since departed, had lost their enthusiasm for their Czarist neighbour. So my parents managed to arrange for him and Lisa to move across into the Western zone, to Frankfurt-am-Main, where the old man's married daughter had her home. And here he remained, happily enough, until he died about three years later. He had little enough to leave to his relations: some Russian heirlooms, a boiled shirt or two, and a letter in which he wrote that his one wish was to be buried and reunited with his dear wife. This unexpected request greatly bewildered Lisa and his family, because his dear wife was lying in her military grave a great distance away, and anyway there was now a formidable frontier dividing West from East Berlin. The problem, though they examined it from every direction, defied solution and so the family were able to delay no longer and their father had to be interred on his own in Frankfurt-am-Main. But it was a sad burial and Lisa in particular felt that she had failed her father in his last and most heartfelt request.

I could only remember Lisa dimly from my visit to Berlin before the War as a pale, very thin, sweet woman. My Russian Orthodox mother described her as a saint, and my agnostic father agreed. But what no one knew, till later, was that Lisa also had a saint's formidable tenacity and strength of purpose. For weeks she fretted over her betrayal, as she saw it. Eventually she informed her relations that she had decided to go with a friend to visit some of her German relations in the Eastern zone. She obtained a pass and the two elderly ladies travelled off to the East. They visited the relations briefly, and then they returned to Berlin, to the lakes on the eastern side of the city. The Russian troops had moved away and the area was now much as it had been in the days when Lisa and her parents had come out at weekends to their country *dacha* from their paint-shop in the city. Lisa and her friend found the *dacha* again. That night they visited the grave and with the light of a torch they dug up the old lady's remains and, putting them in a suitcase, they journeyed back, two harmless old ladies themselves, through the frontier to the West, to Frankfurt-am-Main. And there Lisa kept her faith with her Russian father. If she hadn't found it possible to bury him with his dear wife in the East, she managed at least to reunite the two of them in his grave in the West.

Opinion on Opinion Polls

Answering an Editor's Ambivalent Questions

By Robert M. Worcester



JUST AFTER the British General Election in June, I was telephoned by an American television journalist based in London. "What's the British public's view about the deployment of Cruise?", he asked. "It depends", I replied. An unusual television journalist, he wanted to know "depends . . . on what" and "why." We spent nearly an hour later that day answering these questions.

My distinguished predecessor as president of WAPOR, the World Association for Public Opinion Research, Professor Elisabeth Noelle-Neumann, writes a detailed analysis[1] of the German public's attitudes towards the deployment of Cruise and Pershing missiles, NATO, and disarmament, and finds that, depending on the question asked, the responses differ. No practising psephologist or pollster would expect anything different.

Yet M. J. L., in his comment accompanying the article, instead of seeing that by using alternative wording a much clearer and deeper understanding of the public's views of issues involved can be obtained, avows, "It is well known that indisputable truths can be cast into doubt simply by rephrasing the original enquiry." He concludes, "It is a puzzlement, and the confusions and contradictions of West German public opinion are indeed unprecedented. The message is, according to the pollsters, bad news; can it be that at least in this case the messengers are at fault?"

The Editor has kindly invited me to speak to this question,

[1] "The Art of Putting Ambivalent Questions" (ENCOUNTER, December 1983).

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and others inherent in the conduct and reporting of public opinion; the answer to his question is "*No.*" Let me return to the discussion I had with the American television journalist when I showed him the results from our MORI poll for Yorkshire Television's *First Tuesday* programme immediately before the 9 June election—see box below.

The results show that the "dual-key" (32% net positive support for Cruise) compared with the stark "blank-cheque" statement (14% net negative) causes a 23% "swing" in British public opinion. A careful reading of these findings will show that the majority of the British public have a view on these issues and seem, in the aggregate, to express them in a consistent way. By the way, over 80% of the British public are aware of Cruise, Trident and Polaris missiles, but less than half are aware of the *SS-20* or Pershing.

These dramatically contrasting findings from a single survey are but one way pollsters try to understand the shading of meanings of public opinion. As Professor Noelle-Neumann stated:

> "When it comes to controversial topics we must simply take care to draw proper conclusions from given survey-research results, and constantly pose a variety of questions from different points of view, rather than base reports on just one or two questions and hence on one perspective only."

Another way is by use of "split-ballot" tests, asking half a sample a certain question wording and the other half a similar question but worded slightly differently. In this way we have learned that adding the words "American-controlled" to the now standard "Cruise support" question adds about 10% opposition to the answers, no doubt reminding people of the "dual-key" issue and drawing out the current lack of confidence in American foreign policy and world leadership.

Yet another way is to examine how different sectors of the population view these issues. Men currently favour the siting of Cruise missiles in Britain by a narrow margin, women oppose it by a wider margin; middle classes support siting, working-classes oppose it; Tories are in favour by three to one, Labour supporters are three to one against.

Elisabeth Noelle-Neumann reported in her article in answer to the question, "*If the Soviet Union tried to take over West Germany, do you think that the Americans would help us, or would they not risk a war for our sake?*",

> "In 1958, 61% said, 'Would help us'; the corresponding figure in 1983 is 62%. 'Would not risk a war for our sake' was the opinion of 19% 25 years ago, and this remains unchanged today."

This illustrates that the most valuable way to assess public opinion, which will tend to convince the most sceptical (if open-minded) cynic, is to examine trend-data over time, using an identical question asked of an accurately sampled population using trained interviewers, and linking the changes to things that are happening.

Public opinion research is a simple business, really. All you have to do is (*1*) ask the right question, (*2*) of the right sample, and (*3*) add up the figures correctly. Yet poll results seem to provoke claim and counter-claim, cause much confusion, and are too often contentious. I sorrow to see one side of an argument snatch up a poll finding as a drunk uses a lamp-post, for support rather than illumination. No one should wish to manage by opinion poll; neither should anyone try to manage the great issues of our time in the absence of objectively assessed knowledge of the state of public attitudes.

Q. "I'm going to read out to you a number of policies that some people would like the next government to adopt. For each one, I would like you to tell me whether you support or oppose that policy."

	SUPPORT %	OPPOSE %	DON'T KNOW %
"Only allow Americans to base Cruise missiles in Britain if Britain has a veto over whether or not they are used"	58	26	16
"Get rid of Britain's existing Polaris missiles if Russians agree to remove corresponding number of their nuclear missiles"	50	33	17
"Allow Americans to base Cruise missiles in Britain by end of year if disarmament talks with the Russians are unsuccessful"	46	39	15
"Cancel the decision to buy Trident nuclear missile system"	41	42	17
"Allow the Americans to base Cruise missiles in Britain"	36	50	14
"Get rid of Britain's existing Polaris nuclear weapons	26	59	15

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Boring, Sweaty & Daemonic?

On German Literature—By MICHAEL HULSE



IN THE SEPTEMBER 1963 ENCOUNTER Hans Magnus Enzensberger, in the course of his thoughtful essay "In Search of the Lost Language", tried to assess the associations the word "Teutonic" brings to the British mind:

> "They range from the primeval forest to the study of Dr. Faustus, from bearskins to Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit*. Castles and fortresses are Teutonic, but so are abstract terminologies. Wagner's operas and long complex sentences are Teutonic. Leather shorts, bull-necks, and exaggerated studiousness are Teutonic. The Teutons are boring, have sweaty feet, and moreover are most unfairly 'daemonic'!"

If we are fair we must grant the Briton the same right to have a caricature image of the Teuton as we grant the Teuton, whose image of the Briton is all too often that he only takes his bowler off to drink tea. Still, once we are alerted to that oafish word "Teutonic" it is difficult not to find it everywhere: in the space of a week I read it in a poem by Peter Porter, a review by Blake Morrison, introducing an umlautless German in William Boyd's *A Good Man in Africa*, and taking its place among the abundant distasteful disfigurements in Clive James's postcard from Munich, published in *The Observer* some twelve months ago. And James's piece, of course, was a reminder that the image of the boring, sweaty and daemonic Teuton has its black side in our times.

German literature is very much off the map for the British reader. It is not merely that the older stereotype of the metaphysical buffoon with a streak of Prussian militarism has been superseded by two equally off-putting modern figures, the idiot in *Lederhosen* and the rabid Nazi. It is rather that the British reader seems alarmingly content to proceed just so far, and then stop. Of course *The Tin Drum* was a bestseller, and we've all read Böll and Christa Wolf, and Kafka, Rilke, Mann and Brecht. But consider those long decades between (say) Heine's death and the turn of the century. We can buy Fontane's *Effi Briest* in Penguin Classics, but where are Stifter, Keller, Droste-Hülshoff, Meyer, Storm? We've seen Büchner and Schnitzler, but where are Hebbel or Hauptmann? Is anyone reading Herwegh's poems, or Liliencron's? Above all, if the gaps are so apparent, why is nothing being done to plug them? The answer to the last question, at least, seems easy: Penguin reports that translations from French, Russian, Spanish, almost *any* other language are easier to sell than translations from the German. So the conspicuous absence has perfectly reasonable commercial causes. And yet: I remember my feelings of shock and shame when Tom Stoppard, interviewed by *The Observer* at the time of the première of his adaptation *On the Razzle*, admitted without a trace of embarrassment that he'd never before even heard of Nestroy. I tried hard to imagine a German dramatist of Stoppard's eminence confessing as blithely to ignorance of (say) Sheridan. The scorn would finish him.

A similar sense of dispirited outrage is present in Michael Hamburger's introductory remarks to his new book of essays, *A Proliferation of Prophets*.[1] Hamburger pays homage to the prejudice problem by quoting an observation by D. J. Enright —"Research indicates that the commonest or most commonly voiced English objection to German literature has it that this literature is wordy, philosophical, humourless, highly abstract, and crammed with details. In brief, heavy-handed." But what stirs me more is Hamburger's own complaint that

> "criticism proper is apt to be defeated not only by this need [i.e. to generalise from specific cases], but by the perpetual need to 'introduce' individual German writers as though they had just landed from Mars, to summarize the plots of all the works discussed and to translate any passage quoted or analysed."

Michael Hamburger has invested many years of dedication and loving effort in his attempts to bring German writing to British readers, and while he must surely be aware that his labours have been far from vain, yet his disaffected tone is readily understandable. Frustration breeds bitterness.

It would be impertinent, I suppose, to say that the essays in this collection suffer from those very shortcomings Hamburger complains of. It would be particularly impertinent because beside the wide range of Hamburger's learning and sympathies the observation would in fact become pointless: even among the commonplaces perforce included for the newcomer, Ham-

[1] *A Proliferation of Prophets. Essays in Modern German Literature, Vol. I.* By MICHAEL HAMBURGER. Carcanet Press, £14.95.

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burger strews insights with the prodigality of a man who knows his field with the thoroughness of love.

The essays here span the period from Nietzsche to the Second World War and take in the Expressionist poets, Thomas Mann, Hugo von Hofmannsthal, Rilke, Trakl, Benn, Musil, Robert Walser, Kafka, and the Jewish writers of the Nazi years. On Mann, Hamburger is wilful but thought-provoking.

> "Contrary to what most of his interpreters imply [he writes], Thomas Mann's main weakness lies in his thinking, or more precisely in the excessive importance he attributed to his vague antitheses—vague, because he felt their power, but lacked the delicacy needed to confine them to their true 'objective correlative'."

And over the page: "the less we know about Mann's motives and intentions, the better for him and for us." Michael Hamburger suggests that this second statement is the more iconoclastic novelty, though in fact it is the first that more thoroughly doubts received wisdom about Mann.

I find it easier to agree with Hamburger on Hofmannsthal; this essay, originally three and therefore somewhat repetitive, presents the most sensible single sentence I have yet read on Hofmannsthal: "Hofmannsthal's ethic, in fact, is the ethic of integration: the integration of body and spirit, feeling and intellect, contemplation and action, the individual and the social man." This is simply and clearly put; to have defined Hofmannsthal's complexity in these terms is laudable.

Other essays—particularly those on the second-decade Rilke (between the *New Poems* and the *Duino Elegies*), Trakl, and Benn—are rather too full of those introductory statements Hamburger so regrets needing to make, and the Trakl piece in particular seems to me too unquestioning of its subject: there is a tedious monotony in Trakl's imagery which Hamburger is not willing enough to recognise as a weakness. Still, the essays in *A Proliferation of Prophets* add up to a thorough and highly readable account of a crucial epoch in German writing, and in fact develop considerable unity both of theme and of sensibility.

THE SAME CANNOT BE SAID for *The Pursuit of the Kingfisher*,[2] an ostentatious bundle of thoughts and ideas by the writer whose labours are most often coupled with Hamburger's—Christopher Middleton. A third of these prose splinters (essays can hardly be the word for them) deal with German literature, and Middleton is astute on the problems of translating Goethe, proposing "transcreations" as the most useful term for flexible versions that preserve the moods of originals. Another third look at French and other literatures, and the remainder offer Middleton's guide to contemporary aesthetics.

He can be difficult to digest on German literature: an inchoate, fractured piece on Hölderlin begins its last section, "What I am finally after is the sense of the poem's vibrance between abstruseness and directness, elasticity and straightness, 'style' and rectitude, a vibrance corresponding to its geographical, emotional, and otherwise semantic liminality." (Why could he not allow his point to emerge from his argument instead of giving up with a shrug and telling his readers what they should have seen?) But when he offers his more general thoughts, he is impossible.

> "Asynchronicity is the key, I am guessing, to any significant renewal, as act or event, personal or social: asynchronicity in cultural and cross-cultural stratifications, as in those that give shape to any developed individual person. Is asynchronicity a time-model corresponding to the space-model of molecularity in current theory of the social dialectic? If the two models do correspond, from their practical articulation new methods might be derived, for the undoing of misfortunes inflicted by the polyp of totalitarian thinking, by the engines that enforce conformity. But it is altogether enigmatic, how the rare bird called 'new' can escape before being crushed, when the strata, enormous fluxions of time constantly solidifying into blocks, crash and grind against one another."

It is possible to tease the meaning out of this last section of "Seventeen Hiccups on the Question of Novelty" (a typically attention-getting title), but is the banality of the thought finally worth the effort? Michael Hamburger's plain-talking devotion to the furtherance of understanding is more endearing and more readable.

[2] *The Pursuit of the Kingfisher*. By CHRISTOPHER MIDDLETON. Carcanet Press, £14.95.

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ONE OF THE PROBLEMS Hamburger addresses himself to is the phenomenon of German writers being "discovered." He is heavily sarcastic at the expense of Martin Greenberg, Kleist's first (American) translator, who declared he had "discovered" Kleist via Kafka's diaries. "When", demands Hamburger, "will the Germans get around to discovering that extraordinary new writer Sir Walter Scott? Didn't James Joyce mention him somewhere?" In recent years in Britain we have seen Büchner and Schnitzler "discovered", but it is indeed Kleist who has replaced Hölderlin, it seems, as the *en vogue* articulator of alienated extremis. This is of course true of Germany too, where Christa Wolf's *Kein Ort. Nirgends* (translated as *No Place on Earth*) and Karin Reschke's *Verfolgte des Glücks* are only the tip of a massive iceberg of Kleistian imaginative writing.

For the English-speaking market a translation of Joachim Maass' standard biography of Kleist[3] has now been published, not before time (the first edition was published in 1957, the revision in 1977). This is most welcome, as it is the first biography of Kleist to be available in English, and furthermore is unpretentious and informative. Maass wastes no time on speculation: six pages into the text Kleist's childhood is done with, and we enter the chronicled history of his proposal to Wilhelmine von Zenge, his bizarre flight from her, his restless European wanderings and diligent illnesses, his exultant ambitions on the one hand and his annihilated disappointments on the other, such as when *The Broken Jug* flopped on the Weimar stage. With all respect for his subject's accomplishment, Maass can be delightfully tongue-in-cheek: "But was he happy?" he demands at one point—"Not at all!" Or, deflating both Kleist's flights into illness and the curious end of his Penthesilea at one stroke: "Though all artists seem to indulge in such flights now and then, none has ever shown greater talent for it than this dramatist, whose most impressive heroine dies an utterly unexpected and purely psychogenic death—a conception unprecedented in world literature."

Quoting Goethe's stricture that "it takes a great spirit of contradiction to generalise on a single instance with such consistent and radical hypochondria", Maass enquires:

> "But is it not precisely the function of literary symbols to 'generalise', that is, to give universal validity to single instances of this kind? And would it not be a regrettable restriction on art to forbid it to deal with such 'terrifying' cases? And ought we not to wish that Kleist's 'spirit of contradiction' and 'hypochondria', in other words, his fanatical and unswerving passion for justice [i.e. in *Michael Kohlhaas*], were far more widespread than they are?"

In asking these questions Maass is of course a child of his century: before Kafka or Robert Walser such meditations would have seemed very odd indeed, but now it is the sovereignty and confidence of a Goethe which we have learnt to distrust. Instability, contradiction, insecurity and terror are staples of our imaginative diet; this being so, we revalue writers like Kleist, who appear to have anticipated our dilemmas, and often devalue those contemporaries we'd previously thought greater. *The Times* even declared that "Kleist is bound to emerge from Goethe's fading shadow as the greatest German writer." In rereading writers for our own times we should guard against impulsive over-compensation.

The art of the literary biography has rarely produced fine accomplishments in Germany, so Maass' success with Kleist is doubly pleasing. A failure such as J. F. Hendry's life of Rilke[4] is perhaps doubly disappointing since it originates in a literary culture which has a fine record in such writing. I have written on Hendry's book elsewhere,[5] but it will bear repeating here that at no point does the author give us the sense that he has felt what it was like to *be* Rilke. The best of Rilke's English language critics, such as Belmore, Wood and Mason, betray a deep sensitivity even at their most academic, but Hendry's comments generally read like a Sunday newspaper review written as a routine chore: "These are verses dealing with love, dreams and death, refined and romanticised, full of Pre-Raphaelitish emotion, yet conveying a real sense of landscape and nature." And so on. It is difficult to avoid the suspicion that Hendry is not finally in sympathy with Rilke. Possibly such sympathy may not be a prerequisite of successful biography, but undoubtedly it helps.

RONALD HAYMAN'S METICULOUS and intelligent *Brecht*[6] is as complete a contrast as we could wish to find, and I rather think it may be rated the best general study of Brecht in English, to be read alongside Klaus Völker's 1976 volume. Brecht too, of course, was another British "discovery", when the Berliner Ensemble visited London for a season in 1956. Before then Brecht had been slightly known in the USA and hardly at all beyond professional Germanists in Britain; then, in the year of his death, all that changed, and Martin Esslin at the BBC, Kenneth Tynan at the Old Vic, and John Willett at *The Times Literary Supplement* saw to it that the Brecht wave was not allowed to subside too soon. Esslin's *Brecht: A Choice of Evils* and Willett's *The Theatre of Bertolt Brecht* both appeared in 1959, and the cult of Brecht continued to flourish in the 1960s, encouraged by a second Ensemble visit in 1965. Indeed, Brecht may be the only German dramatist to have had a palpable influence on British writers for the theatre: Arden, Bolt, Whiting and Osborne all betray signs of their indebtedness, and Nichols, Saunders, and Friel have written plays which, without Brecht's example, would never have been designed as they were. Looking back, in fact, the sceptic may well detect an element of hype on the part of the pushers and a certain abjectness on the part of the consumers; I'd not agree with this, but it seems a view that is fairly widespread today among theatre intellectuals, who like to affect a dismissive superiority when speaking of Brecht.

Ronald Hayman's biography is neither abject nor superior. He successfully avoids the tones of neurotic tub-thumping and didactic unfairness which so often mar the reception of Brecht. He does not endorse Esslin's propagandist hostility toward

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[3] *Kleist*. By JOACHIM MAASS. Translated by RALPH MANHEIM. Secker & Warburg, £12.95.

[4] *The Sacred Threshold: A Life of Rainer Maria Rilke*. By J. F. HENDRY. Carcanet Press, £9.95.

[5] See *The Spectator*, 13 August 1983.

[6] *Brecht*. By RONALD HAYMAN. Weidenfeld & Nicolson, £18.50, paper £8.95.

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Brecht's Marxist ideas, nor does he accuse Brecht of failing to understand his own intentions and work, as Jan Needle and Peter Thomson notoriously did. Instead we are given an open-minded account which draws upon the most recent material and is matter-of-fact about both the strengths and weaknesses of Brecht's character. Hayman's research is lightly worn, and his narrative reads so smoothly that at times it reads like a novel; even his occasional ironic disapproval has a fictive ring, as in this sentence—"He tried to think how to extricate himself from Marianne, but then he was sidetracked into calculating how many thousands of marks his screenplays and *Trommeln in der Nacht* were going to make." Hendry's Rilke is boring and daemonic and possibly sweaty too; Hayman's Brecht is none of these things, and for once I put down a British critic's study of a German writer wondering whether the subject was a Teuton at all.

Eco's Great Mystery

Secrets of an Old Library—By ANTHONY HARTLEY



TAKE a thriving society, content with its own spiritual and material achievements, proud of the skills of its craftsmen and the beauty created by its artists, confident that it represents the summit of civilisation and the very centre of sacred and profane power. Take that world and shatter it, reduce it to nothing by the development of the forces of disintegration—the secret lusts, the spiritual wickedness in high places—which it contains within itself. For the unveiling of such forces and the acknowledgement of their existence which follows also fortify their perversity and prolong their effects, while, at the same time, the foundation of self-confidence on which society rests is weakened. What is a society without its protective hypocrisies (its "life-lies", Ibsen would have said)? A mass of jostling atoms.

This process of dissolution appears to me to be the subject (if not the intention) of Umberto Eco's remarkable novel *The Name of the Rose*.[1] No wonder then that it should impress us with its power. No wonder too that its outward form should be that of a detective story, albeit set in an Italian monastery in the early 14th century. For it is precisely the business of a detective to discover, by the exercise of his reason, the evils hidden beneath the social surface. As any reader of detective fiction knows, it is a convention of the genre that, after such an investigation, there should be no secrets left and that the small world of the suspects should never be the same again. For the detective—in this case Brother William of Baskerville, a visiting Franciscan scholar—is the voice of questioning reason. Behind him he leaves a society stripped of its concealments and hypocrisies, but perhaps also—and this seems to be the case here—unable to survive without them, devoted to change or destruction.

The society which Brother William has to investigate is a closed one. A 14th-century Benedictine abbey, perceived against a background of conflict between the Avignon Pope John XXII and the Emperor Louis of Bavaria, is a world removed from the experience of the modern reader, but, for that very reason, apt to assume the symbolic character of any world known to him. References to events in contemporary Europe are not lacking in *The Name of the Rose*. In the description of the bands of exalted visionaries who find a strange sense of freedom in their obsession with the coming of Anti-Christ and the need to make all things new, even though the instruments of renovation be blood and fire, it is easy to find echoes of the Red Brigades and the Baader-Meinhof gang. But the reference does not need to be so particular. The vagrant fanatics stand for all those who "call fire, and sword, and desolation, a godly, thorough Reformation", and who see in the expectation of a millennium the justification for their rejection of the constraints of accepted morality. Fra Dolcino and his followers are recurrent types in human history and not simply the representatives of an obscure medieval heresy.

Yet Signor Eco's book is solidly rooted in the history of the later Middle Ages—the moment when the beliefs and social structures of the culminating medieval civilisation of the 12th and 13th centuries were beginning to disintegrate. On one level the novel is an account of this disintegration which leaves the reader thoroughly immersed in the history, thought, and habits of the early 14th century. Italian political and social conflicts, the attack on Papal power in the name of the secular state, the dispute between the Papacy and the Franciscan order over poverty, the composition of a monastic library, the routine of a monastery, the symbolic qualities of precious stones, scholastic controversies—all these and more aspects of the age help to compose background and plot. Indeed, the amount of historical information conveyed to the reader would be crushing were it not so closely woven into the substance of the book.[2] The novel is a vivid interpretation of a period of

[1] *The Name of the Rose*. By UMBERTO ECO. Translated by WILLIAM WEAVER. Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, $15.95; Secker & Warburg, £8.95.

[2] One demonstration of the uncompromisingly intellectual quality of *The Name of the Rose* is the number of Latin phrases—sometimes quite long ones. In the English translation these are, I believe, rather less numerous than in the Italian original, but there are no notes to give their meaning. I telephoned the publishers and asked why this was.→

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history, but it is not only that.

Since this is a detective story which moves gradually towards the traditional dénouement of the discovery of a criminal, a reviewer is morally bound not to give anything away. Still, something must be said about the plot. Briefly, therefore, Brother William of Baskerville comes to the monastery as an observer for the Emperor at a meeting which is to take place between the Pope's representatives and the leaders of the Franciscan order to discuss their differences, in particular the vexed question of evangelical poverty. He is accompanied by a Benedictine novice, Adso, who in old age narrates the events that follow. On arrival Brother William is asked by the Abbot to investigate the mysterious death of a monk. Other deaths occur, and Brother William becomes convinced that the solution to the mystery is be found in the library—a library only accessible to the librarian and his assistant, where everything is arranged to baffle and repel the curious intruder. The meeting between the Franciscans and the Papal representatives takes place, and one of the latter, the inquisitor Bernard Gui, succeeds in sabotaging the negotiations by bringing to light witchcraft and heresy within the Abbey. Now the Abbot no longer wishes the investigation of the murders to continue, but Brother William and Adso are not discouraged and at last succeed in entering "*finis Africae*" where the secret lies. But, after the discovery (in the words of the chapter heading) ". . . the ecpyrosis takes place, and because of excess of virtue the forces of hell prevail." The abbey is destroyed.

THUS THE STORY is one of the collapse of a world, whose self-assurance cannot survive the rational investigation of its secrets. It is William of Baskerville who represents this rational challenge, and his confidence in human reason, his conviction that two and two make four, is a comforting example of humanity and common sense when set against the hidden vices of the monks, the cruel superstition of the inquisitor, or the delirium of the Abbey's final catastrophe. As a disciple of Roger Bacon and William of Ockham he can confront the heated, deadly quarrels of the day with the cool scepticism of the Oxford schools. Even Adso's admission of sin committed with a female intruder into the monastery—another monastic secret—does not cause him to depart from his reasonable gentleness. Yet he is implacable in the pursuit of truth, unwilling to abandon the search for the source of the malign influence that permeates the Abbey once he has begun it. In his final dialogue with that influence he confronts madness and fanaticism in the name, not of God, but of humanity.

On the face of it this is a book that exalts the purifying power of reason which brings light into dark places and destroys the brood of monstrous unrealities that lurk there. A French reviewer has compared *The Name of the Rose* with Voltaire's philosophical tales; and it is easy to see why. Yet the theme of this novel is more complex than that; and if Signor Eco reminds us of Voltaire, it is rather the Voltaire who, after the Lisbon earthquake, was unable to believe in the goodness of the universe. There is no optimistic conclusion or celebration of the power of triumphant reason. Brother William's reasoning leads him to the perpetrator of the crime, but his carefully built chain of cause and effect is made of sand. There is despair in his final judgment of his own actions:

> "I have never doubted the truth of signs, Adso; they are the only things man has with which to orient himself in the world. What I did not understand was the relation among signs . . . . Where is all my wisdom, then? I behaved stubbornly, pursuing a semblance of order, when I should have known well that there is no order in the universe."

Adso himself, at the end of his life and having completed his manuscript, only desires to "fall into the silent and uninhabited divinity where there is no work and no image." He too echoes Brother William's judgment on the pre-eminence of signs and the contingency of the relationships between them: "*stat rosa pristina nomine, nomina nuda tenemus*." His God is no longer the "God of glory" of the Benedictine order, the God of man in society, but rather the deity described by a German mystic (Meister Eckhart): "God is a pure nothing, neither Now nor Here can move him."

But if *The Name of the Rose* is a powerful demonstration of the uncertainties attending the constructions of the human mind, it also conveys an intuition of the destructive quality of what might be called "the detective reason." Ultimately, Brother William's investigation, inspired by the best of motives and directed against hidden evil, results in the devastation of the monastery—a devastation which that society has certainly brought upon itself by its obscurantism and hypocrisies, but which nevertheless implies the loss of something that could claim to be a civilisation. The rationality of the Franciscan detective dissolves the closed world into which it is imported, and the end of its attempt to create an order of its own is the ruin of the existing order which, admittedly, would not have collapsed had it not been near its end. And we are left asking, as William and Adso seem to ask themselves: "Was it worth it?" It is the whole concept of helping history through the "detective reason" that is questioned.

A RELATED THEME which runs through the novel is that of the ambivalence of knowledge. The Abbey library itself, arranged in the form of a labyrinth and full of devices to scare off the profane, is a powerful symbol of the dangerous potentialities of knowledge, and one which plays the role of a leading character as the plot unfolds. This is a library which, in Jorge Luis Borges's phrase, is a universe and which, like the terrestrial universe viewed in the eschatological perspective of Christianity, exists under the signs of a coming Apocalypse. Throughout the exchanges between Brother

I was told that it was expected that readers would be able to understand that much Latin. While appreciating this generous (not to say unexpected) confidence on the part of the publishing trade in the level of culture of the average reader of fiction, this seems to me a quite exaggerated expectation. In any case, it is a pity that the last sentence of the novel (from which the title is taken) could not be translated, since it contains a key to the book's meaning which must remain unused by anyone who cannot interpret it: *stat rosa pristina nomine, nomina nuda tenemus* (the rose of former times stands only as a name, we hold mere names).

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William and Adso runs an underlying discussion of the nature of knowledge. What is the meaning and use of the contents of the medieval encyclopaedias which are so richly displayed before us with their endless catalogues of the legendary properties of beasts, herbs, and precious stones? When will this accumulation of facts (or fables) be replaced by the new "natural magic" proposed by Roger Bacon? If a fabulous beast like the unicorn does not exist, can its image serve, as William says, to lead us first to an idea and then to a body?

Just as the great library dominates the monastery, so the idea of a world of learning dominates Brother William's mind. He is certain that the key to the Abbey's mysteries lies in the library and, at the end, the search for a murderer becomes identified with that for a missing book. It is the final irony of a novel filled with ironies that, in his anxiety to rescue the lost manuscript (which, meanwhile, has itself become an instrument of death), William unwittingly brings about catastrophe for "the greatest library in Christendom." At that moment the very precautions taken to guard the library turn against it, and its end signifies that of the world whose heart it is. The desire of knowledge presents itself as a temptation both to the rational Brother William and to those who have made of the library a place hermetically set apart, where science is confined rather than communicated. After the disaster the Franciscan recognises his error: ". . . it is not necessary for somebody one day to find that manuscript again. The only truths that are useful are instruments to be thrown away."

IT IS APPROPRIATE, I think, to analyse *The Name of the Rose* in this way, since its power as a work of art stems from these different layers of meaning which converge and blend in the same imagery. The destruction of a world (the monastery) is expressed most forcibly in the ruin of the library which itself symbolises the death of a cultural era, of the High Middle Ages, or, indeed, of any period of culture including that of the late 20th century. For the destruction is also accompanied by a loss of confidence in the processes of reason and in the significance of knowledge.

It is this, more perhaps than the death of the Abbey itself, which conveys Signor Eco's pessimism. For if the human reason is powerless to read an order into the universe, but is nevertheless all that remains to us, then the creation of a new world to replace the vanished old one, the assembling of a new library to replenish the stocks of knowledge, is an uncertain enterprise indeed. The courage and the limitations of reason have rarely been more powerfully demonstrated. In the fate of monastery and library the 20th-century reader may see reflected his own apprehensions as to the future of his world and his culture, and, in the failure of Brother William's chain of reasoning, his own inability to order history. The dread of the coming of Anti-Christ, which plays so large a part in the emotional background of *The Name of the Rose*, is not confined to the 14th century. Every day in the newspapers we can read inspired prophecies of the terrors of the year 2000 (once calculated as 1984).

Yet, despite its bleak view of human existence, this is not a depressing or a dreary novel: Signor Eco's recreation of the

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medieval world is heartening and vigorous: the greatness of a civilisation is brought home to us even at the moment of its destruction. Its visionary beauty and its monstrous terrors manifest themselves in set-pieces such as Adso's marvellous description or vision (for it is both) of the carvings of the Last Judgment on the tympanum of the west portal of the Abbey church, or the appalling sermon on the Apocalypse preached by a blind monk. The works of art, the reliquaries, and the illuminated manuscripts are lingered over lovingly—as lovingly as the worldly abbot caresses the jewels of his ring.

The grossly sensual world of the *fabliaux* is there too. To it belongs the peasant monk Salvatore, who has found a refuge in the Abbey after a vagrant life where heretical enthusiasm alternated with massacre and pillage. In the end he is destroyed (and destroys others) by the lechery which tempts him into witchcraft. Adso's dream of a medieval anti-masque—the *Coena Cypriani*—recalls the surrealism of Breughel or Bosch.

THE BOOK PRESENTS a pageant of medieval life with a vividness which seems borrowed from the bright clarity of 14th-century painting: it fascinates and attracts. It is just because of that fascination which attaches us to the Abbey and its treasures, that the final catastrophe is so powerful in its effect. Signor Eco has so planted this society in our imagination that, for all its cruelties and hypocrisies, its loss has the power to afflict us with a sense of the passing of beauty and splendour. "There fell a great star from heaven. . . ."

The Name of the Rose is not in any sense a novel of character, though the actors on the monastery stage are sufficiently realised to play their parts. But they exist as silhouettes from the grotesque Salvatore to the ambivalent Ubertino of Casale, from the blind fanatic Jorge of Burgos to the ex-heretic Remigio of Varagine, whose tragedy is a by-product of the strife between Pope and Emperor. The only character fully and subtly described is William of Baskerville himself, though we learn something too of the narrator Adso, whose part, however, is to reflect William's ideas. For the drama of the plot consists in the confrontation between Brother William and the library—the library and the power behind it. Gradually he unravels the secrets of the labyrinth, while the library takes on an almost human quality of recalcitrance in its refusal to impart the knowledge he needs. Thus the development of the story, as we follow it through the eyes of Adso, is itself a process of learning, carried on until Brother William is master of his subject.

The formal, symbolic character of the book is increased by the language in which it is written, informed by memories of ecclesiastical Latin and stuffed with references to the Vulgate, the Fathers, and scholastic philosophy. In his preface Signor Eco gives the story of his "discovery" of Adso's manuscript—fiction, of course, but one suspects that more lies behind it than simple mystification—and remarks that "Adso thinks and writes like a monk who has remained impervious to the revolution of the vernacular. . . ." By adopting this style, he achieves the purpose of distancing the events he recounts, of generalising them, so that despite his denials we read them, oddly enough, with no sense of strangeness, but rather with an uneasy recognition of intellectual and emotional experience. Adso's encounter "with a maiden, beautiful and terrible as an army arrayed for battle" is told in phrases from the *Song of Songs*—a technique which does not seem stilted or affected, but preserves the ironic dignity of the episode without depriving it of its sensual passion or beauty. In so far as it is possible to judge from even an excellent translation, the novel is a triumph of style. The crucial scenes of the drama are presented with great power until, at the end, the vision of evil is suffocating. Few modern novelists have visualised "the forces of hell" so concretely and with such conviction. Reading these pages, it is not so much Voltaire that comes to mind as the names of Dostoevsky and Bernanos: one can feel the same fiery breath on the back of the neck, the same shudder of the spirit.

IT IS NOTORIOUSLY MORE DIFFICULT to praise a book convincingly than to dismiss it. It is not easy to give a just impression of the excellence of *The Name of the Rose*. I believe it to be a book of lasting value—only one contemporary novel has had a similar effect on me: Julien Gracq's *Le Rivage des Syrtes*—but it is necessary to enter into this world to appreciate its dimensions and its depth. Perhaps it is unnecessary to convey this message to the public. The book is a best-seller in Western Europe and the United States—a book that recounts a complex and subtle intellectual drama, that is set in a forgotten era of history and in a milieu totally unfamiliar to most modern readers, that makes no concessions to those in search of "a good read" or "human interest." Shock! Horror! Can it be that Signor Eco has let us all—publishers too, if they are courageous!—out of the bondage of the airport paperback? Is there really an audience for an historical novel that is a difficult and powerful work of art? This breach in the habitual criteria of best-sellerdom is a serious matter.

Whatever this may say about the taste of the reading public—and it surely can only be cheering to see a book of quality so widely read—the fact is there. Signor Eco has succeeded in the recreation of a world whose moral uncertainties and intellectual apprehensions find an echo in the late 20th century, appealing as they do to the similar mixture of enthusiasm and trepidation with which our contemporaries view a future where the existence of Roger Bacon's flying machines (whose creation was willed by God, according to Brother William) can only be considered a mixed blessing. No doubt, ours is an "age of anxiety", but no age is more anxious than that which lives under the shadow of a second coming. We are joined to the men of the 14th century by our fears and our aspirations. Would that we could be joined to Brother William of Baskerville in his brave devotion to a minimum of human reason, even if it only has signs for its sustenance. The individual reader must interpret Signor Eco's meaning (but is there a "meaning"?) for himself; and I imagine that often enough he will differ from what I have written here. But let him not doubt that it is abundantly worthwhile to make the intellectual effort this book requires: to take part in an inquiry where the object of detection is the destiny of man and his capacity to reason.

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Enjoying the Oyster

On F. E. Smith—By PAUL JOHNSON



THE FIRST and most important thing to grasp about F. E. Smith is that he was a lawyer. The law was in his blood, it shaped his intellect, it determined his social morality, and at all stages it profoundly influenced his political life. F. E. will always be associated with his famous, or notorious, "glittering prizes" speech, in which he encouraged the youth of the 1920s to go out and win them—perfectly proper advice, in my opinion. He himself sought the prizes through the law, and this was a sensible decision to make in the 1890s. The law in England has been the basis of many first-generation fortunes, at least since the 14th century, and the pickings are still good today: at the Chancery Bar, I believe, there are more than 30 men making between £100,000 and £300,000 a year.

But the great age of the self-made barrister was the 18th and 19th centuries, an age which really came to an end, along with Smith's own heyday, in 1914. In the 1920s lawyers still made a lot of money but they were no longer lords of creation. In the 1880s and 1890s, leading silks were among the most famous people in the empire, their faces, peculiarities, *obiter dicta*, snubs and rejoinders known to even the common people, and the sizes of their briefs a matter of intense public discussion, like the incomes of pop-singers today. Their cross-examinations and pleas to court were, in many cases, reported verbatim, and they were seen as great national actors on the stages of the Law Courts and the Old Bailey.

The law, then, at the end of the Victorian age was a profession offering great rewards. It was intensely and openly competitive, and the prizes were fought for, at every stage of a career from briefless barrister to Lord Chancellor, with utter ruthlessness, though always within the traditional courtesies of the calling. F. E. tended to be a bit more open in his eagerness to get on and triumph, and he certainly boasted about his successes, whether a big brief or another "step in the peerage", more than most of his colleagues; but I suspect he did no more than put into words what they all felt in their hearts.

Successful English lawyers, in recounting their professional rise, have tended to exaggerate in one or two directions. For instance, Lord Campbell, in his *Lives of the Chief Justices*, recounting the life of Lord Mansfield—the most successful of all the 18th-century lawyers—tells us that "an indifferent author", who wished to write Mansfield's life, applied to him for materials and receiving the snubbing reply:

> "My success in life is not very remarkable; my father was a man of rank and fashion; early in life I was introduced into the best company, and my circumstances enabled me to support the character of a man of fortune. To these advantages I chiefly owe *my* success; and therefore my life cannot be very interesting. But, if you wish to employ your abilities in writing the life of a truly great and wonderful man in our profession, take the life of Lord Hardwicke for your subject . . . he became Chief Justice of England, and Chancellor, from his own abilities and virtues, for he was the son of a peasant."

This disingenuous letter is revealing on two counts, for Mansfield was the son of a penniless Scotch peer, and if he did not exactly come to London barefoot, he had to make his own way in life wholly through his outstanding ability. He chose, instead, to invent for himself a background of aristocratic wealth and influence and to present his rise as the natural course of events. By contrast Lord Hardwicke, described as the son of a peasant, was in fact the privileged offspring of an eminent attorney and started in life with a much better chance of success at the bar than Mansfield. But no doubt Hardwicke had exaggerated his humble origins, as many lawyers liked to do.

F. E. Smith fell into the second category. Late in his life, especially when in his cups, he pretended that he had been born in poverty and suffered real hardship as a youth. He became irritated if anyone pointed out that his father had been Mayor of Birkenhead. In fact the Smith family was upper-middle-class, with solid money behind it. One of the many merits of John Campbell's new biography[1] is that it brings to vivid life F. E.'s family background and, in particular, the character of his father, Frederic Smith. The elder Smith was a very successful man; a plunger, a striking though rash public orator; a firebrand in local politics, a Tory Democrat and a violent anti-Home Ruler. His death at the age of 43 (the male Smiths all tended to die young) came just as he had embarked on a new career at the bar and had virtually secured a safe seat in Parliament. F. E. went much further than his father partly because, by going to Oxford, he got into the fast track much sooner, but chiefly just because he lived longer. He was essentially a heightened and intensified version of his father, and among the things he

[1] *F. E. Smith: First Earl of Birkenhead.* By JOHN CAMPBELL. Jonathan Cape, £30.

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inherited was a romantic northern brashness, so marked and so creative in the Mersey area. He was a character, a "card", who might have been invented by Arnold Bennett.

Of course F. E. himself had and took the opportunity to smooth down the edges. Mr Campbell describes how he lost his Liverpool accent at Oxford, and was soon drawling with the best of them; he quickly learned to drink and bet with dukes and look down on what he termed "the society of knights' ladies." But underneath he was and remained northern business-class, who liked to "put on a show" and "spend his money handsomely." This was the source of his reckless extravagance, which even his adoring son castigated in his official biography. F. E. always lived above his income, which was never quite as big as he liked to pretend, and in the last decade of his life he got into increasing difficulties over money, which eventually drove him out of politics and into a sad twilight in the City.

HE MADE HIS WAY THROUGH THE LAW, which was the guiding system of his life, and it was as a lawyer that he prospered in politics. He had a wonderful clarity of mind, and in his days as an Oxford tutor had really worked hard at the history and theory of jurisprudence, so that he had a grasp of the philosophy of law which is rare among practising advocates. Hence he was equally effective in criminal cases, in constitutional law, and in matters of equity and adjudication. F. E. had no chance of office in the pre-War period but he was a natural choice as a law-officer in the various wartime coalitions, and Lloyd George's judgment in making Smith Lord Chancellor in 1918 after winning the Coupon Election was brilliantly vindicated. F. E. showed himself a great supreme-court judge, a loyal custodian of the law's interests and, above all, a notable law reformer. Mr Campbell is very sound and thorough on all these aspects of F. E.'s life, though I think students looking for an account of his tenure of the Woolsack will still be wise to turn to R. F. V. Heuston's *Lives of the Lord Chancellors 1885–1940*.

F. E. brought to politics a certain recklessness rarely supplied by lawyers—what a contrast he makes with the "judicious" Asquith or the calculating Simon! but at bottom his approach to politics was legalistic.

This helps to explain certain paradoxes in his political career which have struck some historians, as indeed they struck many of F. E.'s contemporaries, as evidence of a basic vacillation, not to say frivolity, of purpose. F. E. made his name in Parliament with his famous maiden speech soon after the Liberal landslide of January 1906, and he followed it up later in the year with a fierce but reasoned philippic against the Trades Disputes Act. Mr Campbell rightly quotes this second speech at length, for it is a remarkably prescient statement of the evils of this piece of privilege legislation, especially on the subject of picketing. These, and subsequent speeches, were highly partisan, mordant, sometimes even brutal, designed to rally the troops and demoralise the enemy. Thanks to these speeches, F. E. soon made himself as indispensable to a weak Tory front bench as Lord Mansfield did to the Pelhams. Thus his initial political reputation was as a party man through and through, who would stop at nothing to advance the Conservative interest.

BUT OF COURSE THESE SPEECHES were, in a sense, "lawyer's brief" speeches, designed to make the best of a case. F. E. never had any doubt that it was a barrister's duty to present his client's arguments to the full extent of his powers; in Parliament that meant putting the party's point of view with force, even ferocity, and treating opponents as hostile witnesses. But all this was within the rules, as it were, of political jurisprudence. And, just as the object of the law was to uphold the principle of justice, so in politics the final aim of parliamentary activity was to advance the national interest. F. E. never forgot that, as a barrister, he was an official of the court, an officer of the law, not the slave of his client; so, as a parliamentarian, he was in the last resort a servant of the public, not of the party. In the law, the dual nature of advocacy is freely understood and accepted: the silk may feel it right, at one moment, to engage in fierce cross-examination and hostile rhetoric, and at the next, to press his client to settle with the very person he has just been seeking to destroy. The law cannot survive without compromise, and justice is done as much by sensible recognition of the strength of an opponent's case as by the effective presentation of one's own. The analogy with party politics is obvious, though not generally admitted. Indeed, it is much more than an analogy, for the English Parliament has always been shaped by legal philosophy, being in its origins a court and peopled by lawyers from the start.

HENCE THERE IS NO REAL conflict of principle between F. E.'s flaming advocacy on behalf of the beaten Tories, and his tendency, from 1910 and intermittently to the end of his life, to look for the centre ground. A lawyer ought to look for centre ground, for a lawyer's instinct is or ought to be to settle when litigation has served its purpose or is futile. It seemed to F. E., as it seemed also to Lloyd George and Winston Churchill, that by 1910 the nation was faced with great, fundamental problems—in industry, in Ireland, in the Empire, and in foreign policy—which might stand a better chance of being settled by a coming together of like spirits from both great parties, than by the relentless pursuit of rival polemics. They were frustrated by the party leadership on both sides, but who can now say they were wrong?

Certainly, in those last precious years before the War inflicted irreparable injury on our civilisation, the continuation of party politics solved none of Britain's problems. Some kind of breakdown was prevented only by the War itself, and the War in turn made coalition inevitable. The tragedy is that the famous trio were only permitted to come together in the exercise of power towards its close. By that time enormous damage had been inflicted on Britain's resources and self-confidence. Their post-War coalition lasted four years, but by then the spirit of 1910 had gone. Everyone had been coarsened and brutalised by the War, and right from the start the coalition was overwhelmed by the problems of holding together a social order that was irretrievably broken, and an empire which had been fatally fractured by the loss of its life-giving wealth. F. E.

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was probably right, none the less, to wish its continuation, for it was certainly preferable to the confused Bonar Law, Baldwin and MacDonald administrations which followed. But he was equally right to join Baldwin in 1924, for by then coalition was a lost cause and a return to Tory order the best bet, at any rate to the mind of a senior lawyer.

The same legalistic approach also helps to explain F. E.'s change of view, or rather change of strategy, over Ireland. His pre-War image was as Carson's "galloper" or ADC, in the titanic struggle against the third Home Rule Bill. Here F. E. was again the fierce advocate, putting the case—and it was an overwhelming case—that Ulster could not be coerced into a nationalist system of government it did not want. Carson never forgave F. E. for abandoning his out-and-out opposition to Home Rule and, still worse, being a leading architect of the Irish Treaty of December 1921. But it seems to me that Smith's behaviour was entirely consistent with his legalistic approach to political settlements.

The War had changed everything, for it had been transformed, in its final stages, into a war to advance the international principle of self-determination. The pass had already been sold on India in August 1917 when the Cabinet, of which Carson was a member, approved Montagu's statement of future policy, leading to "ultimate self-government." How could Britain withhold from Ireland what was offered to India? F. E. could argue that, the principle having been conceded, and coercion to delay its application having been tried and failed, justice could best be achieved by a compromise settlement, which excluded Ulster from the new arrangements. In the circumstances he thought it a fair deal, as did his Irish adversaries, and he hotly and successfully defended it when Carson went for him in the House of Lords.

Ireland cost Smith more than perhaps he or anyone else realised, for after he had signed the Irish Treaty, the strain of the negotiations led him to lose a bet he had made with Lord Beaverbrook that he would not touch alcohol for a year. He started to drink again, apparently in greater quantities than before, and it is clear from Mr Campbell's account that this marked an important watershed in his political and social life. Thereafter his political statements became more reckless, his public behaviour less circumspect, and his judgment deteriorated. In the years 1922–24 he cut an arrogant and often foolish figure, and though he returned to office in Baldwin's second administration in the easy job of Secretary for India, his financial affairs became increasingly confused and he was forced to leave politics for fat City directorships—an unhappy end for a distinguished Lord Chancellor.

Along with Lloyd George and Churchill, F. E. Smith was by far the most talked-about politician of his time. His speeches were better reported than anyone else's, including the party leaders. He had glamour all right, and his memory has lingered on among successive generations of undergraduates, who repeat his sayings (many apocryphal) with relish, and long to emulate his triumphs.

Mr Campbell describes all F. E.'s doings, good, bad and indifferent, with admirable objectivity (though his comments are sometimes obtrusive and the text could have been cut by 50,000 words without loss). He has not quite caught the spirit of F. E., but then who could? For F. E. was Janus-faced; he gave a

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message of good and evil. He said, in effect, to the brilliant young: "The world is your oyster, if you are clever and energetic enough. I have certainly made it mine and enjoyed it enormously. You may well think it has done me little good in the end. But no matter—you will be never be satisfied until you have tried it yourself." Now such advice to the young does not seem to me to be immoral. Indeed, you might even call it essential. For if all our ablest young people simply take jobs in Oxfam or social work, the human race may well end up by starving to death.

English Voice, Russian Conscience

Max Hayward's Essays—By D. M. Thomas



In 1956 Boris Pasternak told a visiting Oxford academic, George Katkov, that he had a novel he wanted smuggled out and translated speedily into English. Pasternak suggested Isaiah Berlin as the translator; Berlin subsequently told Katkov the novel was interesting but it wouldn't matter if it was not published for another fifteen years. Pasternak wisely declined Katkov's suggestion that Nabokov be approached: "That won't work; he's too jealous of my wretched position in this country to do it properly." Katkov decided eventually to test the manuscript on a close friend and colleague, Max Hayward. Hayward, at that time, was known mainly as a superb linguist, who professed little interest in literature and who had never done any translations.

Reading the manuscript of *Doctor Zhivago* was a transforming experience in Max Hayward's life. With a modesty characteristic of him, he wasn't sure if he was up to translating it. That same modesty and self-effacement, so vital in translation, allied to his perfect Russian and a graceful English style, allowed him to create (in collaboration with Manya Harari) the masterly English version we are fortunate to possess. The English (but not the American) edition also contained Hayward's literal free-verse translation of Zhivago's poems; and despite several later, metrical versions by distinguished poets, I would agree with Patricia Blake that the Hayward versions remain the best. As with the text as a whole, they have a modest transparency which allows Pasternak to shine through.

The Americanised text was savagely attacked by Edmund Wilson in *The New Yorker*. Revealing his own comparative ignorance of Russian, Wilson accused the translators of debasing Pasternak's great novel. The attack wounded Hayward deeply. It appears to be a strange characteristic, in the field of Russian-English translation, for the "post-horses of enlightenment"—Pushkin's tribute to translators—to turn into Macbeth's "horses which did eat each other": as Wilson and Nabokov would do, over the latter's version of *Onegin*.

Fortunately Max Hayward survived Wilson's bites, and went on to make fine and important translations, including Nadezhda Mandelstam's two great memoirs, works by Solzhenitsyn and Sinyavsky, besides collaborating modestly with poets in versions of Akhmatova and Voznesensky. Many of the essays in *Writers in Russia*[1] were originally introductions to his self-effacing and invaluable labours as a translator. It is also worth noting, incidentally, how many of his pieces were originally published in Encounter.

Patricia Blake's selection of his critical writings shows what a tragic loss we have suffered from Hayward's death, at this time of mutual ignorance. He was an incomparable enlightener, with a gift for expressing a complex subject clearly and briefly. The reader who wishes to understand the background to the Revolution could not do better than to read the opening essay, "The Russian Empire", written as an introduction to a book of pre-revolutionary photographs. Hayward's essay on Anna Akhmatova, originally introducing Stanley Kunitz's translations, grasps the essence of her character and poetry, in the laconic manner of her own speech and writings. The authority of his judgments is the more remarkable when one considers his personal background, the uncertain, confused, and at times apparently accidental way in which he approached his destiny as a mediator between Russia and us. Central to this book is Patricia Blake's introduction—a term that fails to do justice to what is, in fact, an illuminating, affectionate, 60-page-long memoir.

As she tells his story, Hayward was a working-class boy, whose abilities allowed him to receive a middle-class education, but who was never allowed to forget that he was a misfit. Street-gangs beat him up on the way to his superior school. "Since then", he would say, "I've always been a fake and a defector. . . . I'm a *muzhichok* [a peasant]—don't forget it and don't let anyone else forget it." His family's itinerant life, as his father searched for work, and his sense of being a displaced person, a street-boy in an Eton collar, led him to a profound early interest in Gypsies. One day he bought a second-hand, illustrated book about Gypsies, in Russian. He started to teach himself Russian so that he could read his book. But there was no instant sense of vocation; he became passionate about Celtic languages; went up to Oxford in 1942 to read German; but *really* wished to study Chinese. Having offended his Oxford professor by correcting his colloquial German, Hayward switched in his first term to Russian. While

[1] *Writers in Russia 1917–1978*. By Max Hayward. Edited and with an introduction by Patricia Blake. Harvill Press, £7.95.

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his spoken English was a unique medley of accents from Welsh to Liverpudlian, he developed a pure Russian speech which persuaded Russians he was one of them.

His introduction to the country itself came in 1947, when the Foreign Office offered him a temporary appointment at the Moscow Embassy. He saw at first hand the evils of the régime; he also witnessed, and vividly describes, an astonishing demonstration of the writer's sacred role as Russia's conscience: a staged public reading against Western warmongering, at which Pasternak alone declined to mouth falsehoods, and was wildly cheered. Pasternak's life had already touched the young Englishman's in a coincidental, premonitory way that would have delighted the poet: his undergraduate digs at Oxford had been in the home of one of Boris's sisters.

IT BECOMES EASY to understand, from Patricia Blake's introduction, how temperamentally fitted Hayward was for his own role as the English voice of that Russian voice of conscience. A misfit, a dissident himself, always on the side of the humble and dispossessed, he would naturally have been drawn to Russian writers who stood with and among the people, against the system. "I was with my people in those hours . . .", as Akhmatova put it. When Pasternak said, "In me are people without names, / Children, stay-at-homes, trees . . ." and when Nadezhda Mandelstam wrote that she loved the uncorrupted obscenities of peasant women, Hayward knew in his bones what they meant, as few English "intellectuals" could have done. The Gypsy in him once wept with emotion, he told Patricia Blake, when he saw a tattered Gypsy caravan on the Georgian Military Highway—a rare survivor of Stalin's genocide. His personal dissidence later took the form of alcoholic bouts, and generally not conforming with the rules and conventions of a don's life. We learn nothing, however, from Ms Blake of his emotional relationships. Since in every other respect she gives a rounded portrait of her friend, and by so doing enriches our reading of his essays, this seems slightly regrettable.

Similarly, any regret one may feel after reading the essays is a greed for more; a wish that he'd found the time—or perhaps had not been too modest—to write the great book about Soviet literature that he clearly could have written. In this miscellany of pieces there are inevitably overlaps and repetitions. The dogma of socialist realism is discussed several times. In one essay he tells us that Akhmatova's *Poem without a Hero* was composed between 1940 and '42; in his introduction to the Kunitz translations he corrects that simplification, in pointing out that the *Poem* continued to dominate and obsess her for fifteen years. His essays on the poet closest to him, Pasternak, give an impression of being no more than forays into the huge terrain of his knowledge. He ought to have been Pasternak's biographer, knowing *Doctor Zhivago* with creative intimacy, and sharing the poet's own view that the novel was the summation of his life's work. He knows that the great poetic novel cannot be judged by the same criteria as one would judge Tolstoy. As he says, the disorder and the coincidences for which it has been criticised are true to life in revolutionary times; though he does not add, as I think he might have done, that Pasternak's metaphoric, non-realist style is also a way of expressing the book's underlying moral: that rational, materialist systems are incapable of keeping pace with the living, breathtaking flows and leaps of actual existence. He also, perhaps, treats Pasternak too much as a saint, and gives insufficient space to his ambiguities, which are a partial explanation of his amazing survival.

Doubtless in a fuller study he would have attended to those ambiguities, for no critic of Soviet literature is so alive to subtleties. This awareness grew out of laborious reading. "He seemed", writes his editor, "to be the only person with stamina enough to read *Novy Mir* from cover to cover. No novel or play was too tiresome for him to scrutinise for traces of Aesopian language or for some smidges of sincerity amidst all the old, familiar cant." *Aesopian* is the Russian term for the cunning, hidden allusion to contemporary evils; and Hayward tells us that sometimes writer and censor would collaborate tacitly in letting through such allusions between the lines. The author's subtlety could exonerate the censor, should anyone complain. But, of course, sometimes the subtlety could go too far, so that some explosive Aesopian fable could strike conservative, i.e. Stalinist, critics as admirable. Thus, Yuri Olesha's "healthy man, full of the joy of life, who sang in the lavatory in the mornings", in his novel *Envy* (1927) could seem either a celebration of the positive Soviet hero or (as it was intended) deeply ironic. The analysis of the subtle interplay of conformity and dissent is an outstanding feature of these essays.

One of the finest, "Pushkin, Gogol, and the Devil", demonstrates that Russian literature, thanks primarily to the genius of

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Pushkin, is "a single enterprise in which no one writer can be separated from another." That is one vital respect in which it differs from our literature; another is that the autonomy and freedom of Pushkin's art has made it impossible, for all that Stalin and the other modern Czars have done, to blot out the free spirit of Russian literature. Hayward is contemptuous of Western apologists for the Soviet state; compassionate towards the Soviet writers themselves, in the heart of the fire; and ultimately optimistic. Since most of his essays date from a time before the present renewed ice age, I can't help wondering if he is too optimistic: at any rate, in the short term. Ultimately, he persuades us, the "Russian word" is safe and incorruptible.

The Reflecting Glass

New Poetry—By JOHN MOLE



TED HUGHES has never really been away from the river. It's his bloodstream. Dark brown god, soft sweet runner, muscle and fluency, primeval depths and surface dazzle, it has served him as a living metaphor—a tributary for patient contemplation, and a headlong rush inviting total immersion.

> *Join water, wade in underbeing*
> *Let brain mist into moist earth*
> *Ghost loosen away downstream*
> *Gulp river and gravity. . . .*

When, as he often does, he speaks of fishing—most recently on a taped reading[1]—his observations are those of a poet defining his art: "The sort of fishing where the angler sits beside the water and waits is just as curious as the sort where he wades up or down the river sometimes up to his chest in the water. I've enjoyed both." Of course, anyone who knows Hughes' work will smile at that word *curious* on which the observation turns. It couldn't be less innocent, just as it is impossible to imagine Hughes sitting anywhere without already being up to his chest (at least) in an ether of primal energies.

He has always been the most possessed of observers. Even his patience is impetuous, tense and populated with the poetry it is about to become. So fierce, in fact, is the sense of *presence* in his often overwhelming poems that any attempt to disengage their author from these energies—and to sort out the genuine from the manufactured—feels like an intrusion for which a price will have to be paid. Where criticism is concerned, it sometimes seems as if Hughes has become invulnerably identified with the sensational drama of his method, and one is not a little reminded of that *Punch* cartoon in which a timid visitor stands at the doorway to William Blake's workroom and calls out, through a teeming cloud of phenomena, "Mr Blake, may I speak with you *alone*?"

For the time being, though, it must be enough to say that his latest collection, *River*[2]—a bursting package of all that is best and most suspect in Hughes—is a lavish production. Its 43 poems, accompanied by Peter Keen's cold-crystal photographs, celebrate a year in the life of the river, watched at all times of the day and night, and the life and death of everything that surrounds and is contained in it. "*Only birth matters*/Say the river's whorls"—and the tone is sustained at a high pitch of amazed and grateful witness where death takes equal shares in the glamour, where for "An October Salmon" "this was inscribed in his egg./ This chamber of horrors is also home." For Hughes, life and death are always seeking a communion, or synthesis. They chase each others' tails while the river, in certain moods, "Acts fishless . . . /Fully occupied with its calisthenics/Its twistings and self-wrestlings", and in others is the "primitive, radical/Engine of earth's renewal" or renewing *itself* with a sort of charmed viscosity:

> *It keeps*
> *Making the effort to burst its glistenings*
> *With sinewy bulgings, gluey splittings*
> *All down its living length.*
> *The river is trying*
> *To rise out of the river.*

The poems ingest images plundered from every level of experience. In "A Rival", for example, a cormorant's "fossil eye-chip" unites prehistory with advanced technology, and then, having briefly undergone a Hammer Horror transformation into "An abortion-doctor/Black bag packed with vital organs/Dripping unspeakably", the bird is off "over the sea's iron curtain" with a cleverly timed frisson of contemporary politics left troubling the waters. This is brilliant, but one can't help glimpsing an element of opportunist contrivance in Hughes' exhaustive pursuit of analogies. The bird is swallowed up by the invention it has given rise to, and no amount of beautiful sound—"Sanctus Sanctus/Swathes the blessed issue"—or vigorous stretches of language can give it the simple life it *also* deserves.

To suggest that Hughes often goes too far is, no doubt, an ungrateful, short-sighted response to his work. Every page of *River* is as full of sustained and challenging complexities as it is of random phrase-making. Nevertheless, too unquestioning an involvement in a process where he seems to be appropriating the universe is in danger of repressing real doubts as to whether he is sometimes not also floundering in a vacuum of brilliance. A considerable degree of uncertainty cannot detract from his

[1] *Ted Hughes and Paul Muldoon*. A Faber Poetry Cassette. Faber, £6.95.

[2] *River*. By TED HUGHES. Faber, £10.00, paper, £4.95.

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stature, though, and as a witness to poetry's sheer power of affirmation he has few equals:

This is the sun's oiled snake, dangling, fallen,
The medicinal mercury creature

Sheathed with the garb, in all its inscribed scales,
That it sheds
And refreshes, spasming and whispering.

Spinal cord of the prone adoring land,
Rapt
To the roots of the sea, to the blossoming

Of the sea.

For Alan Brownjohn, a river more representative of our time is the A202. It makes diversions but is essentially directionless:

It leaves its despondent, foul
And intractable deposit on its own
Banks all the way like virtually all

Large rivers, particularly the holy ones, which it
Is not. It sees little that deserves to be undespised.
It only means well in the worst of ways.
How much of love is much less compromised?

Brownjohn is not unaware of the long perspectives, even though for much of the time he seems to doubt whether we're suited to them. Over the thirty years from which his *Collected Poems*[3] are gathered he has developed a method of wry, meditative investigation, worrying away at the point where civic and personal values intersect. Clearing a space there for exact but tentative insight, he makes a virtue of hesitancy and qualification in poems which conjure an almost stately lyricism out of the most random—even tawdry—occasions. He gives loss such full scope, such generous measure, that it becomes in the process a kind of gain, and although the aspirations of the numerous characters that populate his poems—lovers, employees, executives—amount to an implicit criticism of contemporary British society, Brownjohn gives them various voices which are seldom interrupted by his own unless it serves to reinforce the values by which they live and by which *we* must be judged. He is too nostalgic for the present, too aware that he is addicted to window displays, brand names, the melancholy attractions of obsolescence, to be a mere satirist. Instead, he is a witness to malaise—private and public—whose gift is for the accumulation and manipulation of nuance, whose eye never misses a gesture and whose ear transforms intriguing commonplaces into poetry. In this he is remarkably similar to Harold Pinter. Indeed there are times when Brownjohn's poems read exactly like Pinter's stage directions, charged with a sense of something evasively significant contained within a set of movements so immediately *recognisable*:

She rises with the cigarettes pointing.
She goes to the second woman first, who refuses.

[3] *Collected Poems 1952–1983*. By Alan Brownjohn. Secker & Warburg, £8.95.

The lights flicker as if his eye had blinked.

She goes to the second man second:
He accepts. She goes back poising her own cigarette.
The draught teems at the stopped-up door.

From her chair she offers now the first man
A cigarette. He takes it quickly, and nods.
A spray of rain patters the reflecting glass.

Like Pinter, too, Brownjohn is drawn again and again to interiors which exist in a no man's land between fantasy and reality, the disturbing and the precariously secure: "We dispose to think mostly indoors, for/Outdoors only stay the limited/Tactics of inanimate things."

Although he is very good at describing these limited tactics, much of his best work is preoccupied with what takes place "in the near space/ Between the unfolded pale screen and the bed" and with all those sudden interruptions "coming, un-ignorable and restless, to fret your neat room." A sense of disquiet and threat lurks not so much in the dark corners as in the very composure of a well-lighted place full of civilised objects:

Or, posing a record, leaving it
To settle itself, to play;
Or, an immovability about certain white cards
In a shelf-row . . .
Such things, therefore. And I dare
You, I dare you, disorder.

It is, of course, just such disorder—a mixture of fear and desire—that opens out the long perspectives, and it is here

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that the central theme of Brownjohn's work lies.

The society he depicts in so many poems is one of systems, grids, organisations, "virulent proprieties"—traffic "re-organised/Into an irreversible One Way"—where the apparent height of ambition is to have "paid off the Datsun in just under five months' time" and where poetry is "striving to root in a tub of dying plants/Put down on a vinyl landing." Yet the higher the gloss of materialism, the darker the chasm of loss and confusion that lies beneath it, and for all his strategies of detachment, Brownjohn is no stranger there. He dares it, watching and sharing what in one poem he simply and memorably calls "human play at the deep end." An often playful sense of depth and of familiar human activity as endlessly, sadly fascinating are what make Alan Brownjohn's poetry feel so close to home and give it its particularly immediate appeal.

TOWARDS THE END OF "Mornings After"—an early poem but entirely characteristic in its edgy, candid elegance—Fleur Adcock asks:

> *And are the comic or harmless fantasies*
> *I wake with merely a deceiving guard,*
> *as one might put a Hans Andersen cover*
> *on a volume of the writings of De Sade?*

This question, in various guises, remains the source of much of her best writing to date. She knows only too well that nothing, or nobody, she wakes with (least of all herself) is as harmless as may appear, and anyone who has read Hans Andersen at all carefully will certainly not be deceived into thinking that to use him as a cover for De Sade is to hide much in the way of pain and cruelty.

Like Robert Graves, whose combination of fastidious classicism and violent phantasmagoric effect has served her as a model, Fleur Adcock is caught in her own cool webs and has seen the spider. Part Alice, part Cat-goddess, the personality which emerges from her immaculately crafted poems is sensible and dangerous, attractively inquisitive but seldom less than puzzled to distraction. Her imagination works most effectively on a shifting ground between sleeping and waking where the landscape partakes of both and it is never clear which is illusion:

> *I am not at all sure that this is the real world*
> *but I am looking at it very closely.*
> *Is landscape serious? Are birds?*

It is typical of Fleur Adcock to ask this question in a poem which has already looked at "the real world" with an exact attentiveness. She just can't quite trust the *evidence*, just as in her many poems of travel she cannot feel at home in any of the places she so vividly describes.

Coming back to England after a visit to her native New Zealand, she asks (again and again these *questions* in a poetry which is, on the surface, so secure in its accomplishment), "By going back to look, after thirteen years,/have I made myself for the first time an exile?" No. She hasn't. Exile is the condition of her art. "I merely opened a usual door/And found this", she writes in "Unexpected Visit." What she finds is "Not my kind of country" (what is?)—

> *there is no*
> *Horizon behind the trees, no sun as clock*
> *Or compass. I shall go*
>
> *And find, somewhere among the formal hedges*
> *Or hidden behind a trellis, a toolshed. There*
> *I can sit on a box and wait.*

The last sentence is a fine example of Fleur Adcock's tense composure under the stress of disorientation. She will sit there making a poem out of the experience to carry her back through the door until the next dislocation returns her to the same (or nearly) spot.

The pleasures of her poetry are various: vivid observation of nature (particularly small animals which evoke a protective, unsentimental tenderness), the details of love-making recorded in its erotic particulars (her often anthologised "Against Coupling" is outflanked by the many poems which ignore its advice both in *Selected Poems*[4] and in her set of translations from medieval Latin[5]), and her humorous observation of the literary and social scene. But it is her awareness of how at any moment she may be seized by a terrible strangeness that admits the most compelling note into her work:

> *. . . something has caught me; around my shoulders*
> *I feel barbed wire; I am entangled.*
>
> *It pulls my hair, dragging me downwards;*
> *I am suddenly older than seventeen,*
> *Tired, powerless, pessimistic.*
> *I struggle weakly; and wake, of course.*

Of course. But . . . .

PETER SCUPHAM IS ANOTHER POET for whom formal elegance is a means of defining and controlling an often amazed sense of displacement. Certainly, at first sight, he appears stubbornly unfashionable—a hoarder of beautiful antique phraseologies, an allusive antiquarian addicted to the pursuit of apt quotations—but to see him merely as a kind of rococo plasterer who hides the brickwork of immediate response behind the distractions of ornament is to miss the peculiar, haunted life of his building.

In a poem from an earlier collection he wrote that "ghosts are a poet's working capital", and he has gone on investing them in the present with increasing confidence. A bookish sense of history, a feeling for the continuities of place and human activity, and an urge to retrieve the clarities of primal sensation combine to produce poems which often group themselves like talismans around a cluster of images designed to spell away the very darkness they admit:

> *Nights turning in, fold upon awkward fold,*
> *Leaves of a burnt book whose dull pages crumble*
> *Their brittle edges and discolorations.*

[4] *Selected Poems*. By FLEUR ADCOCK. Oxford University Press, £7.95.

[5] *The Virgin and the Nightingale*. Medieval Latin Poems translated by FLEUR ADCOCK. Bloodaxe Books, £3.95.

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The stitching weakens; flesh and spirit split.
Black epiphanies: a spring of night-sweats,
A text of dreams, a dance of matchstick bones
And soundless windows opening on no-place.
The hour-glass nips my sand against its fall.

When in the central sequence of *Winter Quarters*,[6] "Conscriptions, National Service '52–'54", Scupham gives attention to an episode from his own personal history, he does so with the ghosts at his back working overtime. Far from crowding out his response to experiences of poignant absurdity and ritual humiliation, of which as a temporary corporal he was forced to become a participating witness, they populate his imagination, providing a companionship which puts things in perspective. His capacity for seeing through trivial events to a larger community of put-upon fellowship sees *him* through: "Don Quixote leans there at our shoulder:/Gestures and angles underneath his whiskers,/A furious windmill of small arms and cane." Or with a delicious, vivid wit on the assault course:

We sink with Carver Doone to the abyss,
Tipple with Moriarty to the Falls . . .
Shake hands with Allan Quatermain, Tom Sawyer.
Through, over, under, off—a stocking stitch:
There's no doubt left that we must pull our socks up.

This finely-worked collage of idiom, myth, and *Boy's Own* bravado, from which emerges sudden flashes of plain compassionate desolation as in the portrait of the inevitable "Scapegoat"—"You are our crying need,/The dregs and lees of our incompetence,/A dark offence, a blur on the sharp air"—is in many ways like a small-scale, fragmentary version of David Jones' *In Parenthesis*. *Winter Quarters* contains several more successes. Another, shorter sequence, "Fachwen: The Falls", is spectacularly gracious in its playful animation ("the brilliance, versatility,/With which the waterfall adjusts its dress"), three delightful tributes to M. R. James, Walter de la Mare and Rudyard Kipling claim the title "Possessions"—yet again demonstrating Scupham's courteous appropriation of his ghosts—and the book closes with "The Candles", a densely written poem which superimposes affectionate memories of a Polish airman encountered in wartime childhood on stark images drawn from more recent events in Poland.

THE GHOSTS THAT HAUNT Tom Paulin's poetry are ancestral—at various removes—and his response to them holds a middle ground between recognition and detachment. On a recent tape-recorded reading[7] from his work he speaks of his admiration for the novels of Joseph Conrad—particularly *Under Western Eyes*—and his own preoccupation with a map of Ulster in which history and fiction dissolve into each other would seem to owe not a little to Conrad's method of narration at a distance; a technique of creating perspective and clearing spaces within which character, event and ideologies can jostle and cohere into analysis. One can almost hear the knowingly bewildered tones of the Professor of Languages speaking in "Martello": "Can you *describe* history I'd like to know?/Isn't it a fiction that pretends to be fact . . .?", and the reply is fact that presents itself with all the selective, atmospheric detail of fiction:

And the answer that snaps back at me
is a winter's afternoon in Dungannon,
the gothic barracks where the policemen
were signing out their weapons in a stained register,
a thick turbid light and that brisk smell of fear
as I described the accident and felt guilty—
guilty for no reason, or cause, I could think of.

The guilt, perhaps, is occasioned by the artistry at work on the material, the very effectiveness of the perception becoming (like a prize-winning newsreel shot) reprehensively vivid, "snapping" back in two senses of the word. But, then, the observer is also Paulin's *creation*, and what may at first seem like confession becomes—in the context of the various voices of *Liberty Tree*[8]—part of his analysis of guilt.

The juxtaposition of dialects, slogans, locations at the same time exact in their topography and symbolic in their resonance ("the dead centre of a faith", "the territory of the Law", etc.) set up a scenario in which the poet is manipulator, investigator, and just one more character picking his way across an echoing minefield of private and public concerns. This is much more the case in this new book than in Paulin's previous collections where the poems often stood more confidently on their own, and the result involves a degree of confused obscurity; but taken overall as a montage of cross-cutting full of brilliant flashes and linking commentary done in different voices, it demands thoughtful reading.

THE OBSCURITY IN Paul Muldoon's work is much more evasive, and often downright teasing. He's a sophisticated high-gloss technician, managing rhyme and stanza forms with dazzling accomplishment, but the greater the verbal clarity in his poems the more puzzling they seem to become. His third collection, *Quoof*[9] (the family name for a hot-water bottle), is prefaced by an account of an Eskimo

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[6] *Winter Quarters*. By PETER SCUPHAM. Oxford University Press, £4.50.
[7] *Seamus Heaney and Tom Paulin*. A Faber Poetry Cassette. Faber, £6.95.
[8] *Liberty Tree*. By TOM PAULIN. Faber, £4.00.
[9] *Quoof*. By PAUL MULDOON. Faber, £4.00.

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shaman, and begins and ends with poems which make reference to psilocybin. This sets the tone and the scene. Throughout the book Muldoon seems intent on taking anecdote and recollection as the starting points for exercises in pushing the actual through a series of transformations, breaking them up into hallucinatory fragments.

Whereas for Paulin "action is solid", for Muldoon it is anything but, though his shapely poems give an illusion of firmness. He'll often begin with a plain statement, something vivid and recognisable (even cunningly reassuring) and go on to develop it in a manner which confidently insists on its bearings even while readers may be losing theirs. Everything stays marvellously in focus, but what is happening? As one of the many voices in the volume's last, long poem (*a tour de force* of secular shamanism) declares:

> **The other world to which mescalin**
> **admitted me was not the world of visions;**
> **it existed out there, in what I could see**
> **with my eyes open.**

This seems to give some clue as to Muldoon's method. His fantastic imagination is not so much wool-gathering as mushroom (or cactus) gathering—"Mushroom Gathering" being, in fact, the title of the volume's first poem. It acts upon what he can see "out there" with his eyes open, and puts the pieces together in bizarre new formations. His reader is admitted to the sometimes whimsical, sometimes scary world of an artfully controlled *trip*. Along the way there are moments of tender lyricism and accessible humour but they keep loosening into a kaleidoscopic spin that lets nothing settle. This tiny poem, "Mink", is in small measure typical:

> *A mink escaped from a mink farm*
> *in South Armagh*
> *is led to the grave of Robert Nairac*
> *by the fur-lined hood of his anorak.*

Authoritative, neat as an epigram, provoking as a riddle, but with just a slight suspicion that the reader is being led by the sensitive tip of his nose.

TIME AS A WINDOW through which one looks from either side is the central metaphor of Kevin Crossley-Holland's new collection, *Time's Oriel*.[10] His poems are full of first and last things affectionately described. Daylight is tinged with sadness, but the dark is always light enough. So much of what he notices seems, as he puts it in "Postcards from Kodai", "trapped in place or time, hazy or shiny"—and it's far from being just an Indian light, though several of the poems result from travels in the East. It's the particular temperamental glow of his intelligence which likes things mellow and burnished. Attracted to Anglo-Saxon literature—of which he is well-known as a translator—he certainly doesn't ignore its hinterland of desolation and darkness, but it's all those crafted artefacts and resonant wordhoards that really engage his imagination. "Dazed brass gleams like a fallen moon" in another of the Indian poems, but it could just as well be doing so somewhere in the distance along The Wanderer's journey. Indeed a translation of "The Wanderer" is placed among Crossley-Holland's own journeys in *Time's Oriel*:—"Here possessions are fleeting, here friends are fleeting,/here man is fleeting, here kinsman is fleeting,/ the whole world becomes a wilderness."

Yes, *in extremis*, but what is set against that has the last word in Crossley-Holland's much more comfortable travels. A safer outing, a more civilised itinerary with its minor but precious occasions, is enough for him:

> *Time's wind bristles. But what*
> *is left in its wake is stubborn*
> *and persistent: emblems*
> *of an undying enchantment.*
> *Only keep your head well down*
> *alert for the telltale signs.*

It's as "emblems/of an undying enchantment" and of an undying relevance to present concerns that David Constantine experiences the Greek myths which provide him with numerous analogies, narratives and sources for some vigorous translations in his second collection, *Watching for Dolphins*.[11] The title poem is concerned with translation of a visionary nature—where the passengers on summer crossings to Piraeus gaze with various degrees of curiosity and longing for a sight of the dolphins which is never granted them:

> . . . *Every face*
> *After its character implored the sea.*
> *All, unaccustomed, wanted epiphany,*
> *Praying the sky would clang and the abused Aegean*
> *Reverberate with cymbal, gong and drum.*
> *We could not imagine more prayer, and had they then*
> *On the waves, on the climax of our longing come*
>
> *Smiling, snub-nosed, domed like satyrs, oh*
> *We should have laughed and lifted the children up*
> *Stranger to stranger, pointing how with a leap*
> *They left their element, three or four times, centred*
> *On grace, and heavily and warm re-entered,*
> *Looping the keel. We should have felt them go*
>
> *Further and further into the deep parts. But soon*
> *We were among the great tankers, under their chains*
> *In black water. We had not seen the dolphins*
> *But woke, blinking. Eyes cast down*
> *With no admission of disappointment the company*
> *Dispersed and prepared to land in the city.*

The point, of course, is that the poem itself is the sighting. It is about the transforming power of imagination (echoes of Yeats, a bit too insistently in the "cymbal, gong and drum") and embodies a concept of poetic truth which is "centred on grace"—a kind of certainty as palpable yet elusive as Rilke's angels. Or Constantine's dolphins. What is impressive about Constantine's poetry is the manner in which he can invest domestic occasions with this sense of the numinous while showing no sense of strain (as in "Islands"), and at other times rework a familiar myth with the freshness of original per-

[10] *Time's Oriel*. By KEVIN CROSSLEY-HOLLAND. Hutchinson, £4.95.

[11] *Watching for Dolphins*. By DAVID CONSTANTINE. Bloodaxe Books, £3.95.

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ception. His best poems combine firmness of diction with a sensuous fluency. Classical measures are danced out in a contemporary landscape, and contemporary concerns put on an antique clothing with only the occasional whiff of mothballs.

JAMES MICHIE'S *New and Selected Poems*[12] is a welcome collection. It contains several well-known pieces from his 1959 volume *Possible Laughter*, including the delightful "Park Concert" (which many readers may have first come across in Auden's commonplace book *A Certain World*) and a number of more recent poems. Michie is known as a translator from Catullus, Martial and Horace, and his own work is, not surprisingly, a nice blend of the epigrammatic and the discursive. His quiet, witty but always rather anxious poems belong, in their edgy urbanity, with those of Norman Cameron and James Reeves. He's a paid-up member of that rather gentlemanly awkward squad whose polish only thinly disguises a stubborn, even stoical, devotion to the occasions of disappointment. For all its sprightly elegance ("the long-faced grasshoppers" is a marvellous touch), "Nine Times" is a haunting analysis of failure, and its final sentence—out on the end of an oh-so-neat but hammering triplet—is the terrible plain truth:

> *Nine times, too, cooler than Nora*
> *Walking out of her Doll's House of sham*
> *With a flourish of doors is the quite soundless slam*
> *With which inspiration leaves. Back jumps the Sahara,*
> *Bringing the long-faced grasshoppers which are a*
> *Burden, rubbing their legs and making grimaces,*
> *Till paper becomes the parody of an oasis,*
> *A patch of drought in a world of jeering garden.*
> *God knows how those divine girls can harden*
> *Their hearts against the old devoted beaux*
> *Who fucked so boisterously once. God knows*
> *How poetry greys insensibly to prose.*

"To WORK (within one's capacity)/At a neatly demented desk" is the ambition of the speaker in "Room Seven is Leaving Today" from Elma Mitchell's third collection, *Furnished Rooms*,[13] and a kind of hard-bitten, distrait fastidiousness—short lines, clipped sentences, tight stanzas—is characteristic of the poems as a whole and in danger of becoming a mannerism. Several of them end with punchy, deliberately trite last sentences—"That's right. That's life", "I like it here", "I wouldn't, if he'd asked me"—and the overall effect is of a somewhat suburban Dorothy Parker. No illusions, but not too many hard feelings either.

Although she's accomplished and bracingly sharp-tongued, it is hard not to feel that Elma Mitchell's earlier poems, though equally domestic, were written less within her capacity and were much more resonant. The best poem in the collection, "Expatriate", can also be found in the beautifully-produced first issue of Harry Chambers' Peterloo House Journal, *Poetry Matters*,[14] and Elma Mitchell reads from her work (in company with U. A. Fanthorpe) on the first of what promises to be a series of Peterloo poetry cassettes.[15]

For Norman MacCaig, in his latest collection *A World of Difference*,[16] "experience teaches/that it doesn't." It always has. MacCaig delights in the variousness of things and rings every possible change on them. A number of his recent poems have been preoccupied with themes of death, but they are as inventive as ever and the vigour of their conceits gives the Old Boy a run for his money:

> *I hate death, the skull-maker, because he proves*
> *that destroying and making happen together.*
>
> *He'll be no friend of mine, as long as I'm still*
> *a feathery pigeon or a scrapeskin dogfish*
>
> *—I mean a man, whose skull contains*
> *ideas death never thought of.*
>
> *They'll cheat him, for they'll lodge in another skull*
> *—or become nothing, that comfortable absolute.*

MacCaig is for the ascendency of quick-witted invention in the

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[12] *New and Selected Poems*. By JAMES MICHIE. Chatto & Windus, £3.95.

[13] *Furnished Rooms*. By ELMA MITCHELL. Harry Chambers/Peterloo Poets (Treovis Farm Cottage, Treovis, Upton Cross, Liskeard, Cornwall PL14 5BQ), £3.00.

[14] *Poetry Matters*. Harry Chambers/Peterloo Poets, £1.50.

[15] *Elma Mitchell and U. A. Fanthorpe*. Peterloo Poetry Cassettes, £6.00.

[16] *A World of Difference*. By NORMAN MACCAIG. Chatto & Windus, £3.95.

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face of mortality, and his brilliance with metaphor is a kind of escapology. If at times he seems just too prodigal for words, so that his language crumbles into those whimsical "flibbertigibbet fripperies" he claims to cherish in "How to Cover the Ground", it is impossible to dislike these excesses. They come with the man, and, besides, they don't come too often.

"LAUGHTER-SMITHING" IS HOW Kit Wright describes his craft in "Birthday Poem for Gavin Ewart" from *Bump-Starting the Hearse*,[17] and at first glance another poem, "The Divine Comedy," seems to offer an introduction to the art of side-splitting:

Laugh? They were sick.
They rolled on the floor, they

Didn't seem to see it,
The funny side.

Doubled up, curled up,
Fell about, they

Pissed themselves, all
Utterly helpless,

Roared and screamed
And rocked and cried: they

Just couldn't see it.
Laugh? They died.

Looked at more closely, though, this clearly never leaves the Inferno. It's about anything *but* laughter. The pain is real, and although the terms are those usually used to describe helpless jocularity, they are not serving that purpose here. These are the damned whose fate is never to see the funny side. Kit Wright's often hilarious, vastly entertaining, and above all *desperate* poems are mostly out on the end of a tether. They *just* manage to reach for laughter and go wild with relief. They celebrate the funny side of desperation and invite one to join in with their frequent refrains and rollicking metre. They lighten the darkness with a brilliant levity—interspersed with quieter, more reflectively observant pieces like "The Day Room" (a moving "notebook" sequence from mental hospital), and others such as "The Losing of Liverpool" and "The Yoke" where although the lightness remains in the metre all else is "energy torn from exhaustion like despair." *Bump-Starting the Hearse* is Wright's Survival Kit.

Ian McMillan's poems are more innocently entertaining, although there's plenty of roughage in their playfulness. Apparently McMillan's ambition is to be a stand-up comic, so he'll probably know the situation gag where a policeman approaches a man who is behaving suspiciously, says "Come on, lad, you'd better watch it!" and receives the reply, "Yes Officer, but where *is* it?" The title of his second collection, *Now It Can Be Told*,[18] raises something of the same question as to what *it* is. McMillan rejects the label "surrealist" but his poems nevertheless constitute an engagingly odd behaviour cobbled together with a random, free-flow jokiness in the face of routine, dull authority and anaemic good intentions. Some of them, like the splendid "From the Section dealing with The Loss of Grace" (a copy of which should be sent to every trendy vicar in the country), have real targets:

And the priest shall answer:
Walk past the white caravans

The communicant shall walk past the white caravans.
At the fifth caravan, the greyhound
shall burst from the darkness
and shall bite both legs of the communicant.
The faces shall appear at the caravan windows.

And the gypsy women shall shout:
Kick it, mister, Kick it, mister.

Alternative Forms:

A: The communicant shall kick the dog.
B: The communicant shall not kick the dog,
and shall continue to walk past the white caravans.

If alternative B is followed
the priest shall say the following:
Enough. Shout back the greyhound.
Switch off the bedroom light which is always on. . . .

However, most are simply happy to improvise on whatever spot they happen to be—which is usually close enough to a recognisable place to give pleasure.

Celebrity

Here comes the melting man, see him sniff
and drip and dribble as he comes. The more
he melts, the more enormous he becomes.

"Fetch my stool", he cries, and his buttocks
droop to the floor on either side. "Fetch my tables",
and on one he rests his vast gut, on the other

his drinking pot. He is a favoured customer,
so much so that extra servants wait on him:
one to wipe his nose, another to scrape away

his drying sweat (for when he drinks, his face
burns like the sun), one to clear up his weak
excrement, yet another to be a herald

shuffling to each stranger in turn, telling
of this man's greatness, how he once strangled a horse
and then swallowed a yard of ale, glass and all.

Alan Harris

[17] *Bump-Starting the Hearse*. By KIT WRIGHT. Hutchinson, £4.95.

[18] *Now It Can Be Told*. By IAN MCMILLAN. Carcanet, £4.50.

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MUSIC

Are the Americans Still "Colonials"?

Letter from New York—By SAMUEL LIPMAN



WHATEVER MAY be the case in the visual arts, in serious music the United States is deeply dependent on Europe for both repertory and performers. The exact nature of this colonial relationship has often been noted by perceptive observers foreign and domestic. In his magisterial (and now quite forgotten) survey, *The Americans* (1904), the German-born Harvard psychology professor Hugo Münsterberg caught the national attitude for, it now seems, all time: "Sometimes a suspicion has been expressed that American composers must have been systematically suppressed by the leading German conductors like Damrosch, Seidl, Gericke, Thomas, and Paur. But this is not remotely true. The American public is much more to be blamed; for, although so patriotic in every other matter, it looks on every native musical composition with distrust, and will hardly accept even the American singer or player until he has first won his laurels in Europe."

At the end of World War II, it is true, a fundamental change in American musical dependency seemed to have taken place. On the one hand, the cream of European musical life had (during the Hitler régime) moved to the United States. Arnold Schoenberg, Igor Stravinsky, Béla Bartók, and Paul Hindemith among composers; Lotte Lehmann, Friedrich Schorr, and Elisabeth Schumann among singers; Artur Schnabel, Joseph Szigeti, Emanuel Feuermann, and Wanda Landowska among instrumentalists; and Bruno Walter, Pierre Monteux, Arturo Toscanini, and Fritz Reiner among conductors—all were now not just active in America but resident the year around. And, on the other hand, native American musicians were finding a new willingness, spurred as much by nationalism as by the enforced isolation from the cultural mother countries, on the part of the musical public to accept home-grown products.

SAMUEL LIPMAN, *concert pianist and teacher, is publisher of "The New Criterion", a new cultural monthly in New York, and music critic for "Commentary." He is the author of "Music After Modernism" (1979) and the forthcoming "The House of Music", and is also a member of the National Council on the Arts (the advisory board of the National Endowment for the Arts).*

The examples of this new state of affairs were many. In composition, Aaron Copland and Roy Harris had become the leaders of a new approach to élite musical composition which, for the first time in American history, could be said to represent the nation and its aspirations. In ways less flamboyant and provocative, the romanticist Samuel Barber and the intellectual Roger Sessions were showing that a non-overtly patriotic American music could command audience attention. In conducting, the first native-born leader to display the welcome stigmata of future stardom, Leonard Bernstein, was already by 1945 a major factor in musical life; in singing, Jan Peerce, Leonard Warren, and Richard Tucker were raising hopes of a coming silver age at the Metropolitan Opera. American orchestras like the New York Philharmonic, the Boston Symphony, and the Philadelphia Orchestra were now widely seen to be among the greatest in the world; American universities and music schools were invigorated by the influx of eminent European émigré teachers in musicology as well as performance.

Though the result of all these new attitudes and new talents was indeed some glorious music-making during the late 1940s, it hardly took very long for old habits of fealty to reassert themselves. In composition, the major influences of the 1950s were to come not from America, but from Europe. The future of American music was to be determined in Darmstadt and Paris, not in New York and Los Angeles. The heroic figures to be worshipped by the young were not Copland and Harris, or Barber and Sessions, but Olivier Messiaen, René Leibowitz, and Pierre Boulez in France, and Karlheinz Stockhausen in Germany; tellingly, even the American resident Arnold Schoenberg was replaced in the historical pantheon by his own student, Anton Webern, so tragically killed (accidentally, it is true) by an American soldier in Austria at the War's end.

In performance, matters were much the same. European artists began to flood the American market, both in concert and on records. The long-playing record provided a means of circulating cheaply-produced foreign performances to a mass public; the careers of pianists Géza Anda and Paul Badura-Skoda will serve as excellent examples of the marriage of old-world artistic gifts to advanced technologies, with the marriage arranged by indubitably American marketing skills. In the world of opera, European recordings of complete works (again, cheaply made) destroyed the possibility of American

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productions finding their way to disc. Not only did these recordings provide invaluable career aids on the American scene for the singers involved; American singers now found it necessary to go to Europe for performance experience, audience approval, and above all the reputation necessary as a precondition for employment at home. And in education, the Fulbright Awards served as a coveted prize, directing the attention of American music students to Vienna and Paris as places for finishing their training in style.

BUT WHAT I HAVE JUST described took place, after all, thirty and more years ago. Have not matters changed in the meantime?

Perhaps the best place to begin to answer this not unreasonable question might be with the situation of the most celebrated American orchestras and their music directors. There are six of these groups, and I give the name of their current conductor in parentheses: Boston (Seiji Ozawa); Chicago (Sir Georg Solti); Cleveland (Christoph von Dohnányi); Los Angeles (Carlo Maria Giulini); New York (Zubin Mehta); and Philadelphia (Riccardo Muti). And though Los Angeles is currently looking for a replacement for the sick Carlo Maria Giulini, and though there are massive undercurrents of dissatisfaction with Mehta in New York and Ozawa in Boston, there is vanishingly little chance that any of these prestige positions will be occupied by an American in the foreseeable future.[1]

Regardless of what these musicians' specific qualities—or defects—may be, their collective contribution[2] to American musical life is hardly the enduring, omnipresent, and committed influence which might be provided by native-born Americans or indeed by resident immigrants. It all reminds the observer too much of what the American composer Douglas Moore wrote about Toscanini (then between the New York Philharmonic and the NBC Symphony) in 1936 in an article for *The American Scholar*:

> "Aside from his service in selecting and training the personnel of the orchestra he has shown no interest in exercising his musical leadership in the community. He has scarcely seemed to notice the existence of a musical life in the city. He usually arrives from Europe the day before his first rehearsal and departs at midnight after his last concert. While here he participates in no way in the musical life of the community outside of his concerts. . . ."

The first charge, then, against our most celebrated imported conductors is that they are, in effect, "absentee landlords." They conduct less than half—in some cases very much less than half—of their orchestras' concerts; often, necessary business negotiation with them must be undertaken abroad, while they are fulfilling lucrative guest-conducting engagements or even serving as the musical leaders of other famous presenting institutions. Overall, it is clear that however many paychecks may come from the United States, the hearts and minds of these famous men reside abroad.

IT IS NOT THAT these conductors do not play American music. Indeed, most of them are careful in observing their duty to play new domestic works. But the key word is duty, and duty is hardly love. Compositions are commissioned, and played once; for all save an occasional meretricious exception, once means never again. Furthermore, due to general trends in music performance the world over, these conductors are not themselves composers, nor do they function as instrumentalists. As a result, the communities they putatively serve are deprived of their musical example in composition or in any kind of performance save standing on a podium giving orders.

OUTSIDE the rarefied realm of superstar conductors and orchestras, the picture for Americans is perhaps a bit brighter. Native instrumentalists, following in the wake of Van Cliburn,[3] have made world careers, though as yet none has possessed his box-office glamour at home. American singers have for many years now been regularly engaged by the largest American opera houses, and some of them—notably Leontyne Price and Marilyn Horne—have become stars. And enjoying the greatest success of any American conductor since Leonard Bernstein, James Levine has recently been named the undisputed artistic head of the Metropolitan Opera.

Yet, even here, American success rings hollow. Again the problem is one of repertory. No matter how much in demand native executants may be on their home terrain, their prosperity has been achieved, and is maintained, at the price of performing an almost exclusively European serious musical repertory. Nowhere is this more true than at the Metropolitan Opera, which has not put on an American work since the 1967–68 season. Though the Metropolitan has attempted to fill this gap by commissioning works from Jacob Druckman and John Corigliano, Met officials in private conversation do not seem hopeful about the chances of these works being mounted any time soon. Elsewhere, despite the well-intentioned attempts of major foundations and the National Endowment for the Arts to encourage (in the fashion of European governments) the writing and performance of American works, this has only resulted in the production of yards of new material and the audience's and musicians' acceptance of none.

TWO COMFORTABLE EXPLANATIONS for this regrettable situation must, I think, be rejected. There is no conspiracy at work here. The music business, like other market-oriented processes, is highly responsive to the likes and dislikes of its professionals and its audience. Nor can it be maintained that new American

[1] Nor will these orchestras be appearing on domestic record labels any time soon, either. There is almost no new recording of American orchestras being done today on American labels; orchestra recording in the United States is now largely the work of the great European combines.

[2] In fairness, it must be stressed that the returns are not yet in on Dohnányi in Cleveland, where he has yet to conduct his first complete season.

[3] Even Cliburn's triumph, alas, proves the rule of foreign primacy: he only made a career at home *after* winning the Tchaikowsky contest in Moscow in 1958.

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works have been rejected in favour of their European counterparts. The ban seems to fall on both origins equally, as is clear from the inability of even Benjamin Britten to achieve wide repertory status in this country on his musical merits alone.

The crux of the American problem in music, therefore, is at its core no different from that of the European problem. New music the world over is being rejected, not just by audiences, but by musicians themselves. In turning its eyes and ears away from the United States and towards Europe, the American musical public is not casting a vote in favour of contemporary Europe; it is rather making clear its artistic preference for the music written before, and not after, World War I. Any attempt to alter this preference must be based on doing rather more than emphasising the comfortable post-1914 music of Stravinsky, Bartók, Prokofiev, and Shostakovich; for this music, attractive as it is, has its roots in the training and culture of an earlier era. It must be based, too, on discarding the present practice of juxtaposing new works just written with favourite masterpieces of the 19th century. One possibility surely deserves investigation: the reclaiming through performance of the little-known masterpieces written in the decades after World War I both in Europe and America. This investigation of the recent past would provide a bridge for musicians and audiences alike between what is widely successful and what is all too new.

In the meantime, we must not find it surprising that Americans have chosen Europeans (and European-oriented non-Westerners like Zubin Mehta and Seiji Ozawa) to lead their most prestigious orchestras; nor must we be surprised that the careers of American performers are made in the same repertory as those of Europeans. The predominance of Europe in American musical life is a musical choice, based upon the public's decision that the art it loves is the product of an imperial, and not a local, tradition. Given the greatness of the the tradition, the imperialism involved would seem to be benign—unless, that is, you happen to be an American musician.

Exile's Return

From Texas to Berlin, & Back—By PAUL MOOR

UNTIL SEPTEMBER 1981, for thirty years—more than half my life—I lived in Germany and reported cultural (particularly musical) events there and elsewhere in Western and Eastern Europe for leading publications in New York, London, and Paris. Understandably, since I had progressed from my native Texas via New York to the great musical centres of Europe, and since I had always had a particular interest in the music of my own time, I followed with special interest the musical cross-pollenisation which took place between Europe and America in the years which followed the end of the War in 1945.

In 1951 I travelled from Paris, where I then lived, to Munich for what I foresaw as a visit of perhaps one or two years. In fact I stayed for five years (followed by exactly a quarter-century in Berlin), and my discovery of the almost incredible range of first-rate performances in Munich of important new works—regardless of their country of origin—became one of my main reasons for forsaking Paris.

Karl Amadeus Hartmann, an impressive composer and an extraordinary, lovable man with an admirable political record, had started a Munich concert series called *Musica Viva*, devoted exclusively to new music, as soon after the War as such efforts became feasible. Similar organisations sprang up elsewhere in Germany during those optimistic years which followed the end of the Nazi dictatorship, but I have always had the impression that Hartmann's *Musica Viva* achieved and maintained a special distinction. Although he had to start modestly for evident financial reasons, presenting solo and chamber works to audiences wearing all the clothes they owned in order to keep warm, Hartmann concentrated on works which for twelve years Joseph Goebbels and his musical lackeys had banned from German concert programmes. *Musica Viva* at that time could not function without help from the American Occupation authorities (in later years, the *Bayrischer Rundfunk* became its generous partner), and a number of works by American composers, then almost completely unknown in Germany, got their first hearings in Munich. About ten years later, when I asked Hartmann why his policy had changed, why the number of American works in his programme had dropped almost to vanishing point, he said he had made a mistake in presenting so many at the beginning, for that had resulted in a distinct resistance to any new works by American composers.

It has long fascinated me to try to find some logic in the unpredictable phenomenon of which musician, whether composer or performer, will find success in which country. The pianist Hans Richter-Haaser, for example, took America by storm some years ago and received critical and audience acclaim out of all proportion to his reputation in his German homeland.

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The same applies to two conductors, Klaus Tennstedt and Kurt Masur, and to other musicians. On the other hand, two American composers, Charles Ives and John Cage, achieved their major international breakthroughs only after their recognition in Europe, especially in Germany. Some American interpreters of modern music, among them Cathy Berberian and Francis Travis, had so much more to do professionally in Europe than in America that they decided to make their homes there.

The first big transatlantic influence in the westerly direction after 1945 came in the form of the dodecaphonic technique developed by Arnold Schoenberg. Oddly, enough, it came by way of Paris. Although Schoenberg spent his final years living and teaching in Los Angeles, the relative lack of interest accorded to his atonal music in his adopted country caused him profound embitterment. New York during that period had two leading organisations, the League of Composers and the American section of the *Internationale Gesellschaft für neue Musik* (*IGNM*), which organised concerts of new works. A tiny group of dodecaphonists, led by the European-born Kurt List, had taken over control of the *IGNM* group, but they had almost no money and their modest concerts took place with a minimum of notice.

The League of Composers, although certainly not rich, managed to hire the auditorium of the Museum of Modern Art and attract sizable numbers of the most intelligent, discriminating, and influential music-lovers in New York. It presented concerts in honour of visiting European composers, among them Zoltán Kodály and Francis Poulenc; it made available many new works by Béla Bartók, Paul Hindemith, Darius Milhaud, Igor Stravinsky, and other immigrants from Europe; and of course it offered new works by Elliott Carter, Aaron Copland, David Diamond, and many other native composers. But generally speaking it regarded Schoenberg and his followers with indifference, perhaps even with suspicion and apprehension. Indirectly, one single musical personality, that of the awesome Parisian spinster Nadia Boulanger, dominated the League like a kind of fertility goddess, for she had taught virtually all the influential American composers of that time—and, in addition, enjoyed the unbounded esteem and admiration of Igor Stravinsky, who once, in response to the question as to why he did not teach, said, "Why should I, as long as Nadia Boulanger does?"

UNDERSTANDABLY, most American composers, when the War ended, looked to Paris for omens of the future. Virgil Thomson, one of the first to travel to Paris soon after the War, returned with accounts of an exotic new composer named Olivier Messiaen and of a brilliant young composer-conductor, René Leibowitz, who had established single-handedly a beachhead for Schoenberg and his disciples—in France, of all places. Then, and only then, did young American composers begin to take an interest in Schoenberg's revolutionary technique of composing with twelve equally important tones within the span of the octave.

The influence of Pierre Boulez still lay in the future. In 1949, in Paris, after John Cage had introduced us, Boulez—a strikingly handsome young man, still with a headful of thick, wavy brown hair—invited an English couple and me one afternoon to his modest lodgings in the IV*ème arrondissement* where, on an upright piano, he played his baffling, impenetrable new symphony, heavily influenced by Anton Webern; Roger Désormières had agreed to conduct it, but he died before he was able to. I left that afternoon—I mean this not as a joke but in complete seriousness—with genuine doubt as to Boulez's sanity, and I had the impression that the English couple shared my feelings. In my own defence, let me say that I was all of twenty-five years old and, dodecaphonically speaking, woefully inexperienced.

An early omen of the post-War influences which would travel in the opposite direction—from America to Europe—came when the French composer and conductor Manuel Rosenthal paid an early visit to New York. At Aaron Copland's house on the East River, the League of Composers gave a party for him, where it surprised many of us to find John Cage among the invited guests, since Copland and Cage had almost nothing in common, musically speaking, and although certainly not enemies, hardly regarded each other as friends. In response to my question, Copland said Rosenthal had told him in advance that he especially wanted to meet Cage. Also, when Rosenthal looked through Copland's collection of contemporary music on phonograph records, almost nothing interested him except a few fragments of works by Charles Ives which at that point comprised the entire recorded repertory of that extraordinary, truly unique composer, towards whom most of his fellow countrymen, if they had heard of him at all, reacted at that time in much the same way as I had at my first encounter with the early music of Pierre Boulez.

MANY OF US HAVE SPECULATED as to the imponderable but certainly major influence upon post-War music, not only in Europe, exercised by Heinrich Strobel, for many years director of music at the *Südwestfunk* in Baden-Baden. When the NSDAP published Hitler's Nuremberg Racial Laws, Strobel—then an influential critic in Berlin—chose to emigrate rather than accept his Jewish wife's offer to divorce him. (A colleague and friend of Strobel's, subsquently a major figure in music publishing, said he would accept a similar offer from his own wife—who thereupon killed herself.) When Strobel returned to Germany and took over the music department of the *Südwestfunk*, he revived the pre-War tradition of an annual festival of avant-garde music in Donaueschingen, and with the formidable assistance of two conductors—Hans Rosbaud and then Ernest Bour, who were expert in such difficult music—he attained for Donaueschingen an influence on contemporary composition unique in the entire world.

The festival, late each autumn, lasted only one long weekend, but it consisted almost exclusively of the world premières of works by young, still virtually unknown composers of various nationalities whose talents had attracted Strobel's attention. They included Luciano Berio, Mauricio Kagel, Luigi Nono, Krzysztof Penderecki, Karlheinz Stockhausen, Iannis Xénakis, and a number of others—including, of course, Pierre Boulez, who, both as composer and conductor, became

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the apple of Strobel's eye and even voluntarily turned his back on Paris and moved to Baden-Baden.

Rightly or wrongly, a young composer who had the luck to receive a Donaueschingen commission from Strobel could regard himself as having arrived. This resulted, internationally, in a great deal of what Nicolas Nabokov used to call "*verstrobelte Musik*"; the Donaueschingen concerts consisted of the kinds of music Heinrich Strobel personally liked, and young composers tended to listen to those programmes and then, for reasons of ambition, adapt their own styles accordingly.

The annual festival at Darmstadt also provided a major forum for avant-garde music, but in a more democratic and eclectic way. For example, it selected for performance many works from among new scores which, in one way or another, arrived in Darmstadt unsolicited—among them the first Soviet dodecaphonic work (by Edison Denisov) ever performed in a Western country. Pierre Boulez and Karlheinz Stockhausen, among other composers, occupied positions of influence in Darmstadt similar to those they held in Donaueschingen.

Within that framework, John Cage's debut in Donaueschingen had an enormous impact on European music. Younger European composers took Cage seriously to an extent which his American colleagues, up to then, never had. The great new word became *aleatoric*—involving the introduction into music, specifically musical performance, of the element of chance. In a conversation in Donaueschingen during that period, the Polish composer Kazimierz Serocki compared Cage's international influence on composition with that of Jackson Pollock on painting.

European composers who rose to positions of importance found champions in various conductors and other interpreters who sponsored their music in America. American composers—in particular Charles Ives—benefited from the tax-supported radio institutions in Europe, particularly in Germany and England, which had the financial means to make possible the performance of difficult new works requiring large numbers of avant-garde experts. Only the financial structure of musical life in those countries made such performances possible. And only after the attention attracted by those performances, generally speaking, did attention follow elsewhere.

IMPROVED COMMUNICATIONS made that sort of musical cross-pollenisation, in both directions, ever more possible and effective; and music on both sides of the Atlantic has unquestionably become the richer for it. In my personal opinion, musical composition today has in the main fallen upon sterile and evil days—from which, certainly, it will recover and rise again just as it always has. It continues to baffle me that European musicians fail to investigate and exploit many outstanding works by Samuel Barber, Aaron Copland, Roy Harris, Carl Ruggles, Roger Sessions, and other American composers of their generations—but then, on the other hand, I can think of a fairly long list of impressive European works which I discovered during my thirty-two years there, but which have remained unknown, or almost unknown, to my fellow Americans.

We have done much to enrich one another. There is still much more we can do.

A Night at an Inn

I travelled by train to meet you at a small French country town.
A literary pilgrim, I gazed about with a frown,
And tore my skirt on the iron steps as I clambered down.

You had booked two rooms at an inn. The landlady smiled. I tried
To understand what she said, as she led us up to a wide
Wooden gallery with vines, and our bedrooms side by side.

She opened the doors of all the other rooms to show
That we were the only guests, and we dined up there, in a glow
Of candles and wine and summer and her smile and the vine; and so

We talked about poems and love, and novels and love, and you
Spoke of my love for your friend. You were in love once too.
His name was Paul. He was French. That was when I first knew

Of other kinds of love. We sat in the dark upstairs
With our empty glasses and plates, no candle, two creaking chairs,
All those open doors behind us, and shared our love affairs.

With books in hand in the morning, we walked about the town;
Saw the church, the hawthorn, the river, the ways we could take, the frown
On our landlady's face as you left, I unfolded a map and sat down.

Ruth Silcock

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A Look at Castro's Statistics

By Norman Luxenburg



A QUARTER OF A CENTURY ago (in January 1959) Fidel Castro entered Havana in triumph, grabbed the reins of the government, and began re-ordering Cuban society and Cuban life in general. In looking back to assess Castro's achievements since he assumed power in 1959, there is a tendency to assume pre-Castro Cuba was a typical, underdeveloped Caribbean nation, and to forget that in many ways its standard of living was comparable to Western European countries. For example, about a year ago *The Wall Street Journal* wrote on its front pages: "The average Cuban lives very well these days by Third World standards." It went on to state that this fact had made Castro popular with the Cuban people.

However, pre-Castro Cuba was definitely not a Third World nation in the commonly accepted sense. Neither was it a typical Caribbean nation. By whatever measure used, whether it is the number of students in higher and secondary education, the number of physicians per capita, the infant-mortality rate, the gross national product in relation to its population, or number of telephones, television sets, or cars, the Cuba of the late 1950s was far ahead of any other nation in the Caribbean and the Third World. Its social development made strides—indeed significantly in the liberal administrations of Dr Grau San Martin and others, long before the Batista dictatorship—towards modernisation and the creation of large professional middle classes. Journalists, no matter how quick with typewriters, cannot safely dispense with the perspectives offered by history and sociology. It is not only the popular journals that make such errors. In 1977, a Congressional House committee headed by Representative Jonathan Bingham of New York visited Cuba and, apparently impressed by talks with Cuban officials, stated in its official report that before Castro there were "187,000 students" in Cuba and that the literacy rate under Castro had risen from 25 to 99%.

However, in pre-Castro Cuba there were not 187,000 students, but about one million. The literacy rate was not 25% but 78% (source: *Britannica*, 1959 article on Cuba; UN *Statistical Yearbook*, 1960, 1962).

IF ONE ACCEPTS without question such outlandish figures, as the Committee apparently did, it becomes very easy to excuse almost all excesses and inadequacies of the Castro régime and to ascribe many undeserved virtues to it. Before Castro, Cuba had a favourable balance of trade and a steady "hidden" income from tourism. Today the nation is operating at a deficit

THE HEADLINE *which the obviously enthusiastic news editor of "The Times" (London) gave to the dispatch from Havana ran across five columns:* HOW CASTRO HAS CREATED A WELFARE STATE TO BE ENVIED. *For a moment we could have been caught up in some journalistic time-machine and transported into other lands and other enviable achievements. Here we are in the 1930s and the Webbs are telling us how Stalin created a welfare state to be envied. And here we are in the 1960s with a constant flow of Western TV reporters (and cameramen photographing chubby smiling babies) announcing how Mao Tse-tung was creating a welfare state to be envied, down to the last little "barefoot doctor."*

In each case there was, subsequently, a rude awakening—a sad one, for no one takes pleasure in the sickly spectacle of an ill-fare state. Studies by Russian and Chinese experts, who do not accept propaganda hand-outs as genuine evidence, soon illuminated a far more critical and complex picture, and threw a sceptical light on unchecked, or unconfirmed, or ambiguous statistics. Bedraggled refugees often escaped to tell a quite different story. Most of all there was shock at the wide-eyed naivety of the innocents or the cynical propaganda of the manipulators who get away with the same canard once (or twice) in every generation.

The "Times" dispatch (Reuters, 30 December 1983) included the following:

Havana

"Even Fidel Castro's harshest critics would have difficulty in belittling the progress made by Cuba's revolution. 25 years old on 1 January, in creating a welfare state worthy of a much richer country. A guarantee to free education and public health services has been one of the main goals of Cuba's Communist Government which inherited a far different society when Dr Castro's guerrilla army took power in 1959.

Official statistics, backed by United Nations specialists working here, illustrate the transformation that has taken place in the tropical, largely agricultural island. The average life expectancy of a Cuban born in the 1950s was around 50 compared with 73 today, while infant mortality has been slashed from about 60 per 1,000 live births to 16. Inoculation campaigns and improved diet, sanitation and living conditions have all but eliminated diseases which still wreak havoc in most Third World countries. . . . [It is all] symbolic of the authorities' near obsession with providing the best in medical treatment. . . ."

"THE OBSERVER'S" *observance of the Castro anniversary filled some 15 lurid pages of its colour supplement (22 January). It was rather more realistic about the past than "The Times", but equally myopic about the present. It begins in a deceptively critical tone:*

"In the 1950s when its revolution began Cuba was statistically one of the richer countries in Latin America. There were more doctors and dentists per head of the population, more cars, more radios and television sets. Incomes were high. Yet these flattering statistics hid a distressing reality." (John Griffiths, p. 7)

What, then, are the distressing realities that now need to be put in the current balance against the Revolution's achievements? After all, there has never been a society in human history which has embodied all *the utopian virtues; for if Greece had Periclean demo-*

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and is kept afloat only because the Soviets sell Cuba petroleum at below-market prices and buy its sugar at inflated prices. Cuban capital was gaining on foreign capital in the pre-Castro economy. Cubans were taking control of enterprises held by North Americans and other outsiders.

Before any realistic assessment of Castroism can be made, many important facts have to be looked at—and then looked at again.

THE FACT THAT pre-Castro Cuba was no typical Caribbean nation becomes immediately evident upon an examination of the statistics for public health. Thus for example, in 1958, on the eve of Castro's seizure of power, Cuba's 6.6 million inhabitants had more than twice as many physicians as the 19 million residents of the other Caribbean nations combined.

NUMBER OF PHYSICIANS IN 1957

Cuba	6,421
Costa Rica	379
Dom. Republic	544 (1954)
El Salvador	437 *
Haiti	120 *
Honduras	365
Panama	286

(* figure is for 1955)

SOURCE: *U.N. Statistical Yearbook* (1958), Table 176

In Cuba, as in virtually every other nation, the doctor ratio was growing. Thus, for example, the number of medical doctors in Cuba had grown from 3,100 in 1948 to 6,400 in 1958. The ratio in the ten-year period had increased from one doctor for every 1,650 persons to one per 1,021—which compared rather well with many nations of the developed world.

Between 1960 and 1976, the last year for which the United Nations *Statistical Yearbook* listed Cuban medical figures, the number of doctors relative to population actually declined slightly in Cuba while increasing very greatly in the other Caribbean nations. However, in a speech of 14 June 1980—a speech published in the government paper *Granma* two days later—Castro stated that Cuba had at present 15,000 medical doctors, a figure almost twice that given for 1976.

POPULATION PER PHYSICIAN

	1960	*1976*
Cuba	1,020	1,121
Dom. Rep.	7,149	1,866 (1973)
Costa Rica	2,729	1,524
El Salvador	5,232	3,745
Guatemala	4,644	4,338 (1973)
Haiti	34,325	15,666

(*The 1980 U.N. Yearbook gives no figures more recent for Cuba.*)

SOURCE: *Statistical Abstract of Latin America* (1977), p. 116
U.N. Statistical Yearbook (1978), Table 207

If Cuba really did have the 15,000 physicians claimed by Fidel, the increase would have come since the mid-1970s and would represent a great improvement. However, when it is borne in mind that the number of physicians in Cuba had more than doubled in the pre-Castro decade, even an increase from 6,421 doctors in 1957 to 15,000 in 1980 would represent something less than the rate of increase that occurred in the pre-Castro period.

cracy it also had slavery, and medieval Florence's flowering was surely not pure Renaissance.

"The Observer's" report is infatuated with contemporary cosmetics: with Havana's "facelift"; with "shops and cafés, exquisitely renovated"; with the "impression" of elegance; with an old city "lovingly restored." It was evidently more difficult to get on to the more "distressing" hidden details. Where now was the "reality" behind flattering optical impressions? All we got to see was how lingeringly their cameras focused on the crowds cheering Castro, on girls in uniform carrying machine-guns, on the Leader speaking for six hours to 16 microphones, on Soviet warships nestling in the harbour. . . .

Any distressing statistics? About, for example, the number of dead and wounded in Angola where Castro's imperialism dispatched a Cuban army? About the number of political prisoners? About the real national deficit, made up by Soviet subventions to cover the imbalance between military services and economic mismanagement? Not a line. "The Observer's" Hugh O'Shaughnessy was once expelled (as he himself notes) "for asking questions", but the interrogative and investigative instinct doesn't seem to have returned. The complete suppression of a free press (or don't the Cubans deserve one?) is dealt with cursorily in a remark about how "dull and predictable" the newspapers are. Castro's military adventurism at Moscow's behest is nicely disposed of thus:

> **"He has sent troops to Angola, a task in which he nicely balanced Cuban thirst for military glory against the risk of a high number of casualties. . . ."**

Nice, too, is the disposal of what once was Cuba's noble libertarian ideal of democratic self-government: "Dissent is still punished more often than it is welcomed. . . ." No unflattering statistics are put to this estimate either (although imprisoned writers, now free, like Armando Valladares and Reinaldo Arenas—see their bitter accounts in ENCOUNTER *for June 1983 and January 1982—could have helped, as indeed could Amnesty International). As for the "dissent" which is "welcomed", no flattering details are offered.*

*In the last analysis, the whole "Observer" feature is a bromidic exercise in Western hero-worship, extolling a despotism and what once used to be notoriously known as the "***Führerprinzip***." Here is the Cuban coda rising to a crescendo:*

> **"Breeding cattle and directing the operations of the firemen at a particularly nasty blaze in Havana, a proud father who has no time for family life, Castro is constantly achieving, active, never resting. He is a Moses to his people, leading them away from the captivity of their enemies towards a Promised Land that he himself will never live to enjoy. . . ." (Hugh O'Shaughnessy, p. 32)**

Poor chap, he will have to content himself with merely enjoying the passing pleasures of absolute political power, over a 25-year-reign which is already twice as long as Hitler's and roughly equivalent to Franco's and Stalin's. One hopes that these statistics nicely balance flattery and distress.

PROFESSOR NORMAN LUXENBURG, *who here casts a cool eye on such press reports, is an American scholar teaching at the University of Iowa.*

M.J.L.

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MISINFORMATION ABOUT Cuban public health is still repeated and printed in official Cuban publications and makes its way into the Western news media.

A recent Cuban National Bank Report (*Informe*, August 1982) states on p. 6, para. 7, for example, that life expectancy in Cuba at the time of the Castro takeover was only 53 years. *Stern* (20 February 1980) uses 58 years as the starting point for the Castro régime.

In actuality, life expectancy in pre-Castro Cuba was not 53 years, but 61.8 years (U.N. *World Population Trends and Policies*, 1977, vol. I, Table 75). By comparison, life expectancy in Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua, and Haiti ranged from 41 to 46.

Many popular journals in the United States and Europe, *The New York Times*, *Newsweek*, *Time*, and *Stern* among them, have pointed to a reduction in infant mortality as proof of improved health care under Castro. The Cuban National Bank report, *Informe*, stated that the infant mortality rate in pre-Castro Cuba was more than 60 per 1,000 for the first year of life, and Castro himself, in the speech cited in *Granma* (16 June 1980), confirmed this figure, which had been accepted and printed without question by the German illustrated weekly *Stern* (20 February 1980). Fortunately, Cuban infant mortality before Castro was not 60 per 1,000 live births, but 32 per 1,000 (*Latin American Statistical Abstract*, 1977, p. 107).

For some reason, Cuba's present relatively low infant mortality rate is accepted by a number of writers as an extremely positive indication of what Castro has wrought on that island. Thus, *Newsweek* (23 May 1980) stated, "The most notable achievement of Castroism is the infant mortality rate. . . ." *Time* Magazine (11 March 1978) also ascribed the low Cuban rate to Castroism. However, the pre-Castro rate of 32 infant deaths per 1,000 births was already one of the best in the world. It was not only far better than that of any other Latin American nation (the rate for countries such as Brazil, Colombia, Guatemala, and Peru was about 100 infant deaths per 1,000 births) but better than that of Germany, Italy, Spain, and a host of developed nations. An indication of how Cuban public health had been improving in the pre-Castro years is the fact that the number of infant deaths in Cuba in the first year of life had been reduced from 99 per thousand in the period 1935–39 to 32 per 1,000 in the period 1955–59.

The Cuban infant mortality rate today, after having worsened during the first decade of Castro's rule, is stated to be 19 per 1,000; and this is better than it was 23 years ago. However, it would be difficult to find a nation of the developed or developing world where this is not the case. Moreover, a number of states such as Spain, Puerto Rico, Germany, and Italy, with higher infant mortality rates than Cuba in the pre-Castro period, now have lower rates (14 or less per 1,000).

Will History Absolve Him?

HUGH THOMAS
CUBA
or
THE PURSUIT OF FREEDOM

WHAT ARE *Cuba's revolutionary achievements? And are they really revolutionary?*

The fact is the pattern of the Cuban economy has not changed since the 1950s quite as much as is often assumed. Of course, as in all communist states, the state plays the determining role in the economy. But that economy—in 1982 as it was in 1957—is itself dominated by sugar. If anything, the monoculture has been increased.

For that reason, if for no other, Cuba's foreign policy is as dependent on Russia as it used to be on the USA. Most of Russo-Cuban commerce concerns sugar, which Russia buys at a price about three times higher than present world market prices—an arrangement which reads like a weird parody of the one Cuba used to have with the USA and which Che Guevara attacked in 1960 as constituting such an outrageous subservience.

THE *modest rations the ordinary Cuban has to put up with—two pounds of meat a month, one and a half pounds of chicken for the same period, two ounces of coffee every two weeks—must seem a comedown to many who, in the past, could certainly aspire to, and in many cases actually enjoy, a greater variety of food than is ever available now.*

This rationing puts the standard of living in Cuba far behind the communist countries of Eastern Europe, some of which appear indeed a cornucopia in comparison, as Eastern Europeans are the first to agree.

THE CUBAN STATE *has begun to be managed much as if it were an outlying part of the Soviet Union rather than a distant Caribbean island. Thus the economy is now run on the basis of material incentives with no attention to the Utopian or Maoist dreams of Che Guevara. Economic management is in the Russian style. Professionally educated specialists now run the different spheres of the economy on the basis of courses taken in Russia.*

THE CUBAN ECONOMY **has thereby been, as it were, mortgaged to the Russian one indefinitely. Seventy-five percent of Cuban trade was with Russia in 1980. Cuba's total debt to Russia is believed to stand at $7 billion—it may even be $8 billion if all subsidies are included.**

IT IS OF COURSE *easy enough to visit Cuba and draw the conclusion that the régime is popular. But that impression has been gained by travellers in innumerable dictatorships in the 20th century.*

How easy it was to be cheered by the sight of Nazidom's laughing gymnasts or the fit hikers of the Hitler Youth! Will we never learn that those whom travelers may meet probably would not speak critically of the system to those who might betray them by negligence or even by design?

THIS REGIME *thus seems indeed to have been more than anything the first Fascist Left regime—by which I mean it is a régime with totalitarian left-wing goals established and sustained by methods of fascism. This phraseology has been used before about many terrorist organizations but it fits the Cuban government best of all. Perhaps we should have realized as much when people who knew Castro in his days as a student recalled that he took a marked copy of "Mein Kampf" about with him, and others remembered that he had José Antonio Primo de Rivera's works in the Sierra Maestra. Hitler, at his trial in 1923 after the Munich Putsch, said:*

> **"You may pronounce us guilty a thousand times over, but the goddess of the eternal court of history will smile and tear to tatters the brief of the state prosecutor and the sentence of this court. For she acquits us. . . ."**

Castro ended his first famous speech at his trial in 1953 with almost identical words:

> **"Condemn me: History will absolve me."**

Hugh Thomas
in *The Washington Times*

HUGH THOMAS—**now in the House of Lords—is author of the standard history of "The Spanish Civil War" (rev. Penguin ed. 1977) and of a history of Cuba, "The Cuban Revolution" (1977).**

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A fairly typical example of the plaudits given to Castro's public health achievements can be observed in the following letter, published in *The New York Times* (6 April 1982). Irwin Kaiser, Professor of Gynaecology and "Chairman of the U.S.-Cuban Health Exchange", writes,

> "It is a matter of public record, based on statistics endorsed by the Pan-American Health Organization and the World Health Organization, that in this period [Castro] the level of health in Cuba has risen from that of an underdeveloped country to that of the United States and other developed societies."

This assertion deserves closer analysis.

If Cuba were indeed an "underdeveloped country" in its "level of health" as Dr Kaiser asserts, the term "underdeveloped" would take on a meaning far beyond that which is normally understood by it. Cuba had a life expectancy of 61.8 years compared with that of 43 and less for some Latin American nations. Ethiopia, in the period 1955–60, had a life expectancy of 33.5; Angola's was 32; Nigeria had 33.5, and Guinea-Bissau's inhabitants could expect to live 30.5 years. To use the term "underdeveloped" to apply in terms of health both to Cuba and to these other nations is stretching it somewhat.

I have already noted that on the eve of Castro coming to power, Cuba's 6.6 million people had more than twice the number of medical doctors than the 19 million inhabitants of the other Caribbean nations mentioned. The number of doctors there had doubled in the decade 1948–58 and obviously would have continued to increase. For health advances in the Cuba of the pre-Castro period could well be considered most impressive. Thus, fewer persons died in Cuba in 1953 than died in 1943, and fewer Cubans died in 1943 than died in 1933. During this period of time the population had grown considerably.

	Number Deceased	Total Cuban Population
1933	51,000	3,962,000
1943	50,000	4,779,000
1953	37,000	5,829,000

Source: For 1933, *Censo de Cuba* (1943), p. 530; for 1943, *Censo de Cuba* (1953). For 1953, *U.N. Demographic Yearbook* (1958), Table 9

An idea of how some of the diseases that had formerly plagued the Cubans were being successfully combated, and consequently changing the public health picture in the Island, can be obtained from the following table.

Cuban Mortality from some Selected Diseases

	1943	*1951*
Gastroenteritis	7,803	3,469
Bronchial Pneumonia	3,424	1,913
Chronic Bronchitis	574	247
Typhoid Fever	597	62
Septicaemia	239	56
Pulmonary TB	3,295	2,172

Source: *Censo de Cuba* (1953), Table D, p. 321

These figures merit another look.

In 1933 20,000 more Cubans died than in 1953. However, the population in 1953 was almost 50% greater than it had been twenty years earlier. In other words, had the mortality rate in 1953 remained what it had been just twenty years earlier, one could have expected some 80,000 deaths in the island that year, instead of just 37,000. Obviously, the Cuba of 1953 in the area of public health was a far different nation than it was in either 1933 or 1943.

It is only by ignoring the basic social trends of a country, and in this case the real advances of the pre-Castro decades, that Castro and his supporters are able to take credit for subsequent Cuban health progress. In reality, 25 years in the mid-20th century is a long period in medical progress.

In Puerto Rico, for example, the number of deaths from tuberculosis was reduced from 3,200 in 1949 to 252 in 1974. The number of deaths from pneumonia in that island was reduced from 2,057 (in 1949) to 905 (in 1947), and during that same

Faring Well

Love & Privacy: *If long queues and scarcity of goods are a trademark of socialism, Cuba's unique adjustments to the shortages reflect some of its revolution's successes and failures.*

When boy meets girl in Cuba, courtship frequently takes place in pay-by-the-hour rooms in Government hotels. The hotels often make the wait a little easier by offering rum to the men and women, at times including married couples who want to escape the cramped quarters of their apartments.

Government spokesmen concede that the housing shortage represents a major failing of the régime. With tiny homes packed with children, parents and grandparents, Cuba possibly never will have apartments to serve as love-nests.

Cars, which could allow some intimacy, are in such short supply that even the Army waits in the queues. A lieutenant-colonel who was sandwiched inside a two-pence-per-ride bus dutifully explained that cars are reserved for only the top brass.

Mark Fazlollah
in the Daily Telegraph

Life & Death: *Amnesty International has received reports that five Cubans, whose ages range from 19 to 26 years, were sentenced to death on 25 January 1983 by the Chamber of Crimes Against Security of the Havana Provincial Tribunal ("Tribunal Provincial Popular"). They are said to have been among a group of seventeen people who faced charges of "industrial sabotage." The other twelve defendants are reported to have received prison sentences. (Unconfirmed reports state that the charges of "industrial sabotage" were connected with their alleged attempts to form an independent trade union.)*

The use of the death penalty in Cuba continues to be one of Amnesty International's major concerns in that country. Cuban legislation provides for the death penalty for a wide range of offences. Amnesty International has received reports of a number of death sentences being carried out in recent years. In October 1982 twenty-nine prisoners were reported to have been executed by firing squad in the Combinado del Este prison, after being convicted of attempting to assassinate President Castro.

Amnesty International opposes the death penalty in all cases without reservation on the grounds that it is a violation of the right to life as proclaimed in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and is the ultimate form of cruel, inhuman and degrading punishment.

Amnesty International

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period of time the number of deaths from enteritis was lowered from 3,000 to 179 (source: *Anuario Estadistico de Puerto Rico*, 1964, 1974).

With a steady increase in the ratio of physicians to population, with new treatments, improved medicines, greater hygienic awareness, increased medical knowledge, and such factors as refrigeration and education, it is only natural to suppose that there would have continued to be significant improvements in Cuban public health, and that this would be the case regardless of who controlled the government.

Fidel Castro's government, by denigrating the level of Cuban medicine, public health, infant mortality rates, life expectancy, etc., in the pre-Castro period, has been presenting an inaccurate, exaggerated picture about the achievements of Cuban medicine over these last 25 years, and has attributed them to "Castroism."

Those who wish to arrive at a fair assessment of Castroism's achievements in public health would be well advised to go back to the sources for pre-Castroite figures and then draw their own conclusions. Propaganda's first victory is always over historical knowledge, and sociological analysis is not far behind. One needs always to look at the patterns of the past and the basic social trends. It is unfortunate that our Western press lends itself so ignorantly to mendacious handouts.

Thinking About Heaven

I lay, and thought about heaven.
I was eight. The ceiling offered no clue.
The problem was not: "Am I going?"
But: "When I get there, what do I do?"

The show, they said, would run and run
Forever. That was my major fear.
However pleasant what you did there was
How would it feel in its millionth year?

I could sense a nightmare coming on.
The principal task was to comprehend
How big heaven was in time and space
To size it up from end to end.

I panicked when I saw an endless line
Of rods of time laid whitely in the gloom
Forever and forever; would not say amen
To that infinite horror in the room.

The curtains flickered in the night.
Groaning, I prayed for sleep, which came.
Afterwards, they told me that "eternal"
And "everlasting" are not the same,

That heaven is eternal, outside time,
Which measurement of years or miles cannot record.
Later, I had my appendix out
And got a notion of the great reward

As a sort of anaesthetic
And Jesus as the surgeon with the knife.
This model served a stopgap purpose
Until the time came in my life

When the problem didn't figure any more.
Heaven has receded, but earth designs
Equivalent dilemmas, and the ceiling still
Encodes its messages in cracks and lines.

John Richmond

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CHRONICLE

The Triumph of Lenin & Stalin

On the Origins of Totalitarianism—By LEONARD SCHAPIRO



BEFORE THE BOLSHEVIKS took power in October 1917, there was nothing in their writings to suggest that the victors in the "proletarian revolution" would require a political security police force. Lenin's writings repeatedly emphasised that when the people seized power the maintenance of order would be a simple task, easily accomplished by a people's militia; and there is nothing to suggest that he did not believe the utopian fantasy. No doubt he was carried away by his own propaganda that the proletarian revolution would signify the victory of the enormous majority over a small minority of exploiters. What he does not seem to have envisaged was that, in order to survive, the new régime would require an instrument of arbitrary repression much more powerful than that of the old one.

The "All-Russian Extraordinary Commission for Combating Counter-Revolution and Sabotage", universally known as the *Vecheka* or the *Cheka*, came into existence in response to the conditions that arise when a minority is determined to rule alone. Before it was set up, security functions were already exercised by the Military Revolutionary Committee (the *MRC*), which, at Dzerzhinsky's suggestion, organised a "Commission for Combating Counter-Revolution and Sabotage" on 21 November 1917. This was, however, attached to the Central Executive Committee of the Soviets. The *Cheka* was, from the start, subordinated directly to *Sovnarkom*, which created it on 7 December, acting on the report of a commission chaired by Dzerzhinsky, together with Lenin's comments on it. The *Cheka* was conceived as an administrative organ, and its powers were expressly limited to the investigation of cases which, if need be, were to be passed for trial to revolutionary tribunals set up at the same time.

Attachment to *Sovnarkom* meant that the *Cheka* escaped interference by the non-Communist elements which were still included in the Central Executive Committee. On 8 January 1918, however, the Left Social Revolutionaries (*LSR*)—apparently opposed by Lenin—joined the *Cheka* and remained there until their final clash with the Bolsheviks the following July. Their unrealistic view that an unpopular minority could hold power in such circumstances without recourse to terror meant that while they remained members of the *Cheka* they exercised an unwelcome restraint on its activities. It was Steinberg, the *LSR* Commissar for Justice, for example, who on 18 December released a number of socialists detained by the *Cheka*.

The *Cheka* rapidly expanded both in size and in scope. By mid-1921 (in the estimate of its historian, G. H. Leggett) its total strength was over a quarter of a million. Of this, civilian staff numbered some 30,000, while internal and frontier security troops were respectively over 137,000 and 94,000 strong. During the period of its existence, until 6 February 1922, when it was replaced by a body named the State Political Executive (*GPU*), its powers continued to expand, and in the main it successfully resisted attempts by the Commissariat of Justice and the Central Executive Committee to limit its scope. Nor did the *GPU*, in spite of its more formalised powers, cease to be an instrument of terror. As Lenin repeatedly asserted in the course of debates when the *GPU* was constituted, "dictatorship of the proletariat" was not possible without terror, including, as he put it, terror against "agents of the bourgeoisie (especially the Mensheviks and the *SRs*)."

A decree of 5 September 1918 conferred sweeping powers on the *Cheka*, which it never in practice lost. This extension of power, which was officially known as the "Red Terror", was

LEONARD SCHAPIRO, *doyen of Western historians of Russia, died in London on 2 November 1983, at the age of 75. He had just completed his last book, entitled "1917: The Russian Revolutions and the Origins of Present-Day Communism" from which these pages are excerpted. It will be published in April by Maurice Temple Smith. Among Professor Schapiro's other works are "The Origins of the Autocracy" (1955), "The Communist Party of the Soviet Union" (n.e. 1970), "The Government and Politics of Soviet Russia" (1965), "Rationalism and Nationalism in Russian 19th-Century Political Thought" (1967), and (1979) a biography of Turgenev—whose selected letters were the subject of his last book review, published in the February* ENCOUNTER.

A memorial meeting was held on 23 January at the London School of Economics, where he taught for over twenty years; among the speakers were Ralf Dahrendorf and Maurice Cranston.

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instituted in response to the assassination of Bolshevik leaders in June and August, and an attempt on Lenin's life in August. Lenin's claim that it was made necessary by Allied intervention was false. It was, in fact, an extension of what had gone on before. In July, before any Allied landing, 407 captive insurgents had been shot after a rising in Iaroslavl, and over 500 hostages were murdered in Petrograd before the decree on Red Terror. Attempts were made from time to time, by legislation, to transfer some of the *Cheka*'s powers to the Revolutionary Courts; but it was never more than nominally subject to the law. As Lenin openly acknowledged, it had been regularly shooting its victims and practising mass repressive action since February 1918 at least. On 16 July the ex-Czar and his entire family, his physician, and his servants were massacred at their place of confinement in Ekaterinburg by the local *Cheka*, on orders from the district soviet concerted with Moscow—ostensibly for fear that they would be rescued by the approaching White Army. This also took place well before intervention or the Red Terror.

The *Cheka* also assumed the power of administrative deportation to forced labour camps. These, run in conjunction with the People's Commissariat for Internal Affairs (*NKVD*) were first officially instituted by a decree of 15 April 1919, though confinement by the *Cheka* had long preceded the legislation. By October 1922 there were 132 camps with approximately 60,000 inmates. Judging by available statistics, a large proportion of the prisoners were workers or peasants. Estimates of deaths caused by the *Cheka* in the four years of its existence are necessarily difficult. The most recent figure (arrived at by Leggett) is 140,000 by execution, and a further 140,000 in the course of suppressing insurrections. (Executions in the last Czarist period, from 1866 to 1917, on the basis of detailed Soviet statistics, numbered 14,000.)

Bolshevik leaders were addicted to drawing analogies with the French Revolution, and they certainly followed the Jacobins (to whom the common bond of fanaticism united them) in such practices as the mass murder of hostages. They also copied the French terror by waging war not against individuals but against "a whole class"—in this case the bourgeoisie—as numerous statements by their leaders showed. (They tended, however, to exempt those bourgeois whose skills they needed.)

On the other hand, among the many cases which only the imagination of the *Cheka* could regard as genuine counter-revolution, it did uncover a few real attempts to overthrow the Bolshevik régime in the course of the civil war. The *Cheka* also developed a counter-espionage section (*KRO*) in response to what was believed to be the threat presented by the influx of foreigners, following upon diplomatic recognition of the Soviet Union. The major successes of the *KRO* were the capture and show trial of Boris Savinkov[1] and the destruction of his anti-Soviet organisation, as well as an elaborate deception operation, known as "The Trust", which infiltrated the émigré monarchist movement and culminated in the seizure of a British spy named Reilly.

Opposition to the Communists was both economically and politically motivated. When they took power they were faced immediately with the simultaneous collapse of industry and a catastrophic drop in grain supplies to the towns—from 641,000 tons in November 1917 to 46,000 in January 1918. They therefore declared a crusade of enforced confiscation against the peasants and relentless war against the illegal private trade which sprang up between the towns and the villages. It was the excesses committed in the execution of this policy that caused the first break between the Bolsheviks and their recently so enthusiastic allies, the *LSR*. The forcible collection of food was centralised at the end of 1918 under the Commissariat of Food and Supply, acting through commissars who organised the armed detachments of workers and poor peasants who exacted grain from the reluctant villages. This was a prime cause of the peasant violence that flared up during the civil war. The peasants, having obtained the land under the distribution effected by the Bolsheviks in one of their first acts, the Land Decree, no longer had anything to hope for from the new rulers.

In terms of the theory known as "War Communism", which prevailed until March 1921, the market had been abolished, and the industrial products of the towns were to go to the peasants in return for their food. In reality, industry had collapsed, and the peasants refused to part with food when no products were available in return. Right up to 1920, the survival of the country was dependent on the illegal market, not only in food but in raw materials as well. Nationalisation of industry was completed on paper by the end of 1920, but in practice the central machinery proved incapable of managing the vast network of large and small enterprises. Surpluses accumulated in one area, for example, while production was halted for lack of raw materials in another. The losses which the Russian economy had suffered as a result of the peace treaty with Germany, and through the ravages of civil war, added to the self-induced chaos.

By the end of the civil war (which was virtually over by November 1920) even such support as the Communists could expect from peasants who, however reluctantly, preferred them to the Whites who threatened to take away their newly-acquired land, came to an end. The recalcitrant peasants were sowing less; and the break-up of the large estates meant that they were now producing for their own consumption. In some parts of the country, the town population was consuming only 41% of the pre-War level, and even peasants in the food-consuming areas were worse off than state-assisted victims of famine had been before the War. In the food-producing areas their level of consumption remained unimpaired (up to the bad harvest of 1920) but this only exacerbated relations with the towns. Starvation told on industry. By 1920 manpower was halved by the drain of workers to the villages in search of food; Petrograd, for example, lost over half its population. Produc-

[1] Savinkov was a prominent *SR* terrorist, appointed Deputy Minister of War by Kerensky but dismissed for his alleged part in the Kornilov affair. The most active of the anti-Bolshevik conspirators, he organised insurrections in Iaroslavl and two other places in 1918. He was tricked and captured by the *Cheka* in 1921.

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tion fell drastically, especially in heavy industry. Light industry was better able to short-circuit the state bureaucracy, and produce for the black market. The general death rate more than doubled: over seven million are estimated to have died from malnutrition and epidemics between January 1918 and July 1920.

POLITICALLY, THE OPPOSITION of the workers was exercised through the trade unions and, among the political parties, mainly through the Mensheviks—the Russian Social-Democratic Labour Party, as they now called themselves. By May 1918 they were reunited with Martov's Internationalists and Julius Martov had become the acknowledged leader of the party. Their policy remained steadfast to the end: to uphold the ideals of social-democracy, to oppose Communist one-party rule by all possible constitutional means, to demand freedom for workers, but to give no support to armed resistance or to foreign intervention. By October 1917 their influence in the country had sunk to insignificance, but as the reality of Communist rule became apparent to those who had backed it in the belief that it stood for genuine socialist soviet government, support for the Mensheviks grew. By the middle of 1918 they could claim with justification that, but for systematic dispersal and packing of soviets and arrests at workers' meetings, their following among the proletariat would eventually have brought them to power. The Communists responded with a policy of force and fraud, of false accusations and fake trials. In a period when a group of fanatics was destroying the foundations of social-democracy in the belief that it was building a new and better world, the Mensheviks, for as long as they were able to survive, struggled for the traditional ideals of Russian socialism.

There was a certain ambivalence about Communist policy towards the Mensheviks—possibly due to the fact that not all the leaders shared the passionate fear and hatred of socialism that characterised Lenin and Zinoviev. Although the Mensheviks (along with the Socialist Revolutionaries) were expelled from the Central Executive Committee on 14 June 1918, on the ostensible charge that they had fomented risings, they were readmitted in September and action against them was thereafter confined to administrative rather than legal means. But they never recovered their press, which was closed down in June; and thereafter had to make their case by the skilful distribution of leaflets and pamphlets, largely made possible by the wide support they continued to enjoy among the printers. It was a tribute to their skill and courage that, as late as 1920 and in spite of persistent Communist obstruction, they won sizeable delegations in some of the provincial soviets—205 in Kharkov, for example, and 120 in Ekaterinoslav.

The Communist charge, repeatedly made, especially by Lenin, that the Mensheviks engaged in violence against the régime (an accusation still to be found even in some Western histories) was palpably false. The new individuals who engaged in armed action were expelled from the party. Two "trials" intended to establish Menshevik guilt failed in their avowed purpose. The best proof that the Communists knew the charge to be fraudulent was that throughout the civil war there were Mensheviks working in prominent official positions; and that, although constantly harassed, the party was allowed some degree of political tolerance and was only finally liquidated when the civil war came to an end. The real offence of the Mensheviks in Communist eyes was their constant advocacy of libertarian principles such as freedom for the workers, or the abolition of the *Cheka* and the death penalty. (In accordance with Russian social-democratic tradition, they did not object to "the complete or partial forfeiture of civil rights" by social groups other than "those who take part in public productive labour."[2])

Menshevik influence grew steadily in the trade unions in 1919 and 1920. Zinoviev estimated Menshevik and anti-Communist sentiment in the union rank-and-file in 1921 at 90%. He was prone to exaggerate, but even Trotsky had to justify Communist dictatorship on the grounds that it "*was more important than some formalistic principle*", since it defended the true interests of the working class—a very familiar Communist argument, convincing to those who believe that intellectual theorists are better able to judge what workers want than the workers themselves.

It was, perhaps, convincing to the delegation of the British Labour Party that visited Moscow in June 1920 and had a full opportunity of meeting representatives of the socialist parties. It even witnessed the forcible dissolution, with 40 arrests, of the Moscow Printers' Union, which had dared to organise a free meeting for the benefit of the visitors. Though it included an account of this incident in its reports, the delegation failed either to publish secret appeals with which socialists (at the risk of their freedom) had entrusted it, or to point out that repression of freedom applied in Russia to all the delegation's fellow socialists. This mealy-mouthed report contrasted sharply with an account given later by one member of the delegation who said that the proletariat in Russia had no freedom, and that the Russian people were as severely repressed as they had been under Czarism.

By 1921, when the final assault on the Mensheviks began, congress after congress of trade unions on which Mensheviks had secured majorities was closed down, and replaced by suitably rigged bodies dominated by Communists. In the first months of 1921, roughly 2,000 Mensheviks were arrested, including the whole of their central committee. It was the virtual end of the party. In 1922 some ten prominent leaders were allowed to emigrate, and for a time they became the best informed and most accurate source outside Russia on the Soviet régime. Had Zinoviev not been overruled by the Central Committee, they would have been shot.

THE ANARCHISTS, a varied conglomeration of eccentric idealists, active terrorists, anarcho-syndicalists and plain criminals, must also be included among the political opponents of the Communists if only because of their steadfast resistance to all authority and their strong libertarian tradition.

Many of them had proved valuable allies of the Bolsheviks during their rise to power—indeed, the political slogans of

[2] Quoted from their manifesto of Summer 1919.

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Bolsheviks and Anarchists were often identical. But, once in power, the Communists were above all anxious to establish the discipline which, in combination with the provisional Government, they had helped to destroy. The Anarchists not only proved an obstacle to this; given the natural attraction which their beliefs held for the Russian people, they presented a danger to Communist power. They therefore suffered severely at Communist hands—though the fiction was always maintained that such operations by the *Cheka* as an armed raid in April 1918 on their Moscow premises, which resulted in some 600 arrests, were directed solely against common criminals. They managed to survive the constant administrative harassment until the end of 1920, to keep their clubs going and even to publish a few periodicals, and to propagate anarcho-syndicalist ideas. They were destroyed by arrests at the end of 1920.

After that they were able to enjoy one day of freedom, on 13 February 1921, when they were released from prison in order to attend Kropotkin's funeral. The Anarchists in exile could with justice complain that they were treated worse in Soviet Russia than in any capitalist country. The émigrés listed no fewer than 180 prominent Russian Anarchists, with circumstantial details of their fate up to 1921. Of these 38 had been shot, 70 were in prison or in exile, and the remainder driven by persecution to their death or to flight from Russia. . . .

Lenin's Last Years

Soon after the Tenth Party Congress (in 1921), it had become apparent that promises of democracy in the Party and in the trade unions were a sham. The Central Committee appointed for the Metal Workers' Union, the oldest Bolshevik union, a controlling committee consisting entirely of its own nominees. The hated *Tsektran*, whose abolition had been urged by Lenin, Zinoviev and Stalin, was restored. Victimisation of supporters of the Workers' Opposition became particularly intense. The attacks on them, such as discrimination in appointments, transfers from one district to another, and even expulsion from the Party, were not based on ideological grounds but followed on any kind of criticism of the Party's shortcomings, even at private meetings. The Workers' Opposition, headed by Shliapnikov, appealed to the Central Committee; but its complaints were flatly rejected as untrue. Its leaders thereupon decided to enlist the support of the Communist International.

The Third Communist International (*Comintern*) came into being on Lenin's initiative in 1919, and was from the first overshadowed and dominated by the Soviet Communist Party. This was not surprising, in view of the prestige and authority acquired by the first extreme left-wing movement that had actually come to power. The nascent European Communist parties were hypnotised by the "First Socialist State", and the Executive Committee of the *Comintern* could scarcely be expected to sympathise with complaints about the "flouting of democracy" in the Soviet Party or its growing "non-proletarian" composition. A commission appointed to examine the charges duly exonerated the Party and claimed that accusations against it merely provided encouragement to Mensheviks and "counter-revolutionaries" generally.

Lenin himself was particularly infuriated by the fact that the Russian oppositionists had also established contact with left-wing splinter groups in the European Communist movements, who argued that the *Comintern* was dominated by "Russian interests", and not those of the working masses. But Lenin's health was failing. He was to suffer his first stroke in May 1922, and he had been able to attend only the opening and closing sessions of the Eleventh Communist Party Congress (which met on 27 March of that year). At that Congress the Central Committee virtually got its own way on the issue of the Workers' Opposition, which it condemned, although the delegates refused to expel the oppositionist leaders as the Central Committee demanded. This virtually marked the end of what still remained of democracy in the Party. The most important decision of the Congress was to elect Stalin as General Secretary, apparently with Lenin's approval, and to add a number of his known supporters to the Central Committee. Under Stalin's overall control, the hold of the central party was considerably extended.

The spread of Communist influence over the life of the country, which began in 1919, was accelerated. Two processes were of primary significance in this development. One was the setting up of departments of the Central Committee which, under the direction of the General Secretary, were eventually to dominate the whole life of the country. The other was the extension and improvement of the records on Party members. The assignment of the right men to all appointments, the disciplining of individuals by exile or dismissal, and the selection of officials and delegates necessarily depended on such records. By 1923 considerable progress had been made towards the establishment of the system of Party domination which has remained essentially the same ever since: the control over postings, which enabled the central apparatus to place well-screened and trusted nominees in key positions; strict discipline over Party members and over local organisations; and the establishment of supremacy over state institutions.

While this was going on, the New Economic Policy was transforming the life of the country. The resolution of the Tenth Congress, as extended by subsequent legislation, virtually restored a system of small-scale commerce in the country.

The fact that the peasants could now keep and sell on the free market what remained after the payment of a tax encouraged them to increase their production. (It was also a powerful factor in calming them, although even so the Red Army had to spend about a year putting down guerrilla activity.) Restricted leasing of land and hiring of labour were also introduced and brought prosperity to the more ambitious peasants—the so-called "kulaks", who were to become the first of countless victims of collectisation in 1929 and 1930. Eventually the monetary system was rationalised, with the assistance of a former *Kadet* Minister of Finance, and legal codes were enacted which were intended to provide stability for commercial transactions. The aim of this policy was to attract the investment of foreign capital in Soviet enterprises,

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although the new rulers' determined repudiation of all the debts incurred by the Czarist government continued to deter outside entrepreneurs from sinking money in Russia.

Small-scale trade and industry flourished, and in this the return of enterprises to private management was an important factor. Around three-quarters of retail trade would eventually be in private hands; but the state kept an extensive hold on large and medium-scale industry, on finance, and on foreign trade. The New Economic Policy (*NEP*) was, in fact, a great material success. After a disastrous crop failure in 1921 and 1922—of which the consequences would have been much worse but for the generous help provided by the American Relief Administration of Herbert Hoover—the Soviet economy made rapid progress, although the revival of industry was slower than that of agriculture, and the real incomes of workers in heavy industry in 1922–23 were still less than half their earnings in 1913. All this was to lead to economic and political complications.

As the release of what Bukharin called "the demon" of capitalism became increasingly apparent, so opposition to *NEP* spread inside the Communist Party. There were many who had accepted it only reluctantly as a temporary necessity in 1921. When it became clear that *NEP* had come to stay for some time, the left opposition inside the Party, of which Trotsky eventually became the leader, gathered force. It was, in any case, always a powerful argument among the rank-and-file that the Revolution had brought benefits only to the peasants, and none to the workers. But by the time of Lenin's death arguments in the Party were no longer won or lost by reason of their content.

The improvements in the central apparatus of the Party, largely effected by Stalin during his first years of office, had ensured that political issues would be decided not by debate but by manipulating the election of delegates to Party congresses and conferences, and by the exercise of Party discipline. The question of *NEP*, and of policy towards the peasants, became interwoven with Stalin's bid for sole power and his personal conflict both with the Left of the Party under Trotsky, and later the Right of the Party, headed by Bukharin and Tomsky. But this development was to take place after Lenin's death.

NEP was also a period of flourishing intellectual life. Large numbers of Russian writers and scholars had repudiated communism, and had either emigrated or joined the White side of the civil war. On the other side there were some Communist writers and academics, but for the most part literature and learning in the early 1920s were maintained by those who, while rejecting communism, were prepared to cooperate with the government—either from patriotism, or because they hoped that the régime would eventually change for the better. This suited both those Party leaders who, like Bukharin, expected to win over the intelligentsia by the merits of communism, and those who, like Stalin, viewed cooperation with non-Communists as an unavoidable necessity until such time as they could be replaced by Communists or pro-Communists.

The *NEP* years were something of a golden age in Russian intellectual life. For the time being, the universities and the Academy of Sciences (formerly the Imperial Academy) retained a good deal of their freedom. But parallel Communist institutions were set up, with the intention of training a future academic élite—the Red Professors' Institute, set up in 1921, and the Socialist Academy. These two bodies produced works of distinguished Marxist scholarship, especially in the legal and historical fields.

In the case of literature, there was the difficulty of reconciling the Party's desire to control creative activity with the writers' equally strong determination to retain their freedom. Marx and Engels had held conventional views on literature, and Lenin did not conceal his dislike of modern experimental schools. In due course, his pronouncement on the subject of "literature" made in 1905, which seems to refer to Party-political rather than creative writing, was much canvassed in support of complete control over writers. But, in general, literature remained relatively free, apart from rough censorship by the security forces. Alexander Blok, possibly the greatest poet of his generation, supported the Bolshevik revolution to the dismay of his friends, but was soon disillusioned: he died in 1921, consumed with disappointment and remorse. The most talented writers formed a group called the Fellow Travellers: they were the constant object of attack by the extreme left-wing "Proletarian" writers, but during the early days of *NEP* the Party remained mainly neutral in this struggle.

Religion fared less well. Lenin had always been a militant atheist, though he wisely remained silent on the subject during the struggle for power in 1917. After the Bolshevik victory, anti-religious activity was stepped up by the *Cheka* and by amateur bodies of anti-religious fanatics. The Constitution of 1918 proclaimed the separation of the church from the state, but recognised the freedom of both religious and anti-religious propaganda. However, there was much harassment of priests, frequent expropriation of church property, and refusal of legal recognition to church marriages. In 1922 a staged trial took place of 54 high dignitaries of the Orthodox and Roman Catholic churches. Nevertheless, the assault on religion made little real progress during the *NEP* period. In the case of the Jews, the official policy was to encourage assimilation. Manifestations of anti-Semitism (which, since so many leading Communists were Jewish, often meant anti-communism) were repressed in the early years.

The effect of *NEP* on the foreign policy of the Russian Socialist Federal Soviet Republic (*RSFSR*) was soon to become apparent. Hitherto its relations with the outside world had been largely those of an outcast fomenting world revolution, and itself the object of intervention by the capitalist powers. But by 1921 the prospects of revolution had receded. Attempts to stir them up in Poland, in the independent Baltic states and in Germany had failed. The immediate need of the Soviet state was for normal trade relations with the capitalist world. It was hardly a coincidence that an Anglo-Soviet Trade

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Agreement was signed in London on the day after Lenin's announcement of *NEP* to the Tenth Party Congress. At the Third Congress of the *Comintern* (in June and July 1921), the Russian delegation, firmly led by Lenin, sounded the retreat from world revolution. Considerable opposition to this policy was voiced by non-Russian left-wing critics, and there is no doubt that their views found sympathy among members of the Soviet delegation, even if they did not voice it. The Russians sensed the danger of this. The disciplinary powers of the Executive were strengthened, and before long the dissident left-wingers were expelled.

At the much more obedient Fourth Congress of the *Comintern* in 1922, the keynote was the need to direct all action towards helping the Soviet state. Lenin, already very ill, astonished his colleagues by criticising the resolution on Party structure (adopted in 1921) for being "too Russian" and unintelligible to non-Russian comrades. However, the Congress ignored him and adopted an even more "Russian" resolution on Party structure.

Progress was also made in conventional diplomatic relations. It is true that a conference in Genoa in April 1922, from which it was hoped to obtain both recognition and loans for the development of industry from the capitalist powers, ended in failure, foundering on Allied claims in respect of debts repudiated by the Communists, and the nationalisation of foreign-owned enterprises. But a political and commercial alliance was clandestinely concluded at Rapallo with the other outcast, Germany. This alliance was further bolstered by certain secret agreements; tentative negotiations had gone on in 1921 for the manufacture by Germany in Russia of military equipment prohibited to Germany by the Treaty of Versailles.

BY THE END OF 1921, illness had compelled Lenin to abandon full-time work. His public appearances in 1922 were very few, and by March 1923 he was totally incapacitated. At intervals until then he had continued to dictate memoranda and articles; but his Party colleagues were by now pursuing their policy in many ways in disregard of his views, and his relations with them were strained. Many matters were kept from him, ostensibly out of consideration for his health. His two secretaries were reporting on him to Stalin—or so he believed. Even his wife failed to carry out his wishes on one vital occasion. His confidants were Bukharin and Trotsky—though the latter could not always be relied on to keep his promises to the sick man.

One of the causes of conflict between Lenin and his fellow-Communists was the policy pursued towards the non-Russian minorities of the former Russian empire. In spite of opposition from his colleagues, Lenin had insisted on making self-determination for all the component elements of the empire part of Bolshevik policy; and this principle was embodied in an early decree of the new government in 1917.

But, as the control of the Red Army was progressively extended during the civil war over border areas which had secured their temporary independence, it became evident that traditional Communist insistence on centralised control would prevail over theory as propounded by Lenin. Communist organisations, with the aid of troops, were used to overthrow national governments. The Constitution of 1918 described the *RSFSR* as a "federation of national soviet republics." In March of the following year, the Party programme, while reaffirming the right of minorities to self-determination and secession, had qualified this by explaining that the Soviet pattern of federation should become "one of the transitional paths to complete unity", and that in every case who precisely had the right to choose separation must be decided "according to the historical stage of the development of that nation." In practice, this usually came to be interpreted as meaning that the "bearer of the will" was the small, Moscow-dominated, mainly Russian, local Communist Party. Even where Communist Parties in national territories enjoyed a measure of local support, the principle embodied in the Party rules in December 1919—that the local national committee was a regional committee subordinated, like any other, to the Central Committee—inevitably led to friction.

LENIN, ALTHOUGH FULLY BEHIND the policy of centralisation, became increasingly disturbed by national tension which he attributed not to the unpopular policy of Moscow's control, but solely to the lack of tact in handling non-Russian minorities on the part of Stalin as Commissar for Nationality Affairs, and his Great Russian (or assimilated non-Russian) emissaries.

By the end of 1922, it was decided to give formal recognition to the re-incorporation which had in fact taken place. On 29 December, articles of union were signed by representatives of the Communist Parties of the four republics concerned—the *RSFSR*, the Ukraine, Belorussia, and Transcaucasus (the latter comprising Georgia, Azerbaidjan and Armenia). The Constitution of the USSR (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics), as it was now to be called, was approved on 6 July 1923 and ratified by an All-Union Congress of Soviets on 31 January 1924. As regards federation, it included the now derisory right of secession, left the union republics sole competence in certain areas (health, education), and provided for a federal Council of Nationalities. Party control of administration and election ensured that centralisation would be preserved.

Party discipline had made certain that the opposition to centralisation of local Communists had been kept from expressing itself. This was especially strong in Georgia, and on 21 October 1922 the entire Georgian Central Committee had resigned in protest against the failure of the Central Committee's emissary to discuss with them the plan for creating the Soviet Union.

Lenin, who had been increasingly critical of the treatment of the Georgian Communists by Stalin and his emissaries, dictated in December three notes on the national question. In these, he roundly blamed Stalin and his associates for their "Great Russian chauvinism", and urged that the possibility should be considered of leaving independence to all commissariats in the republics, except those for foreign and military matters. He particularly cautioned against chauvinism in questions relating to the right to use the native language—a matter on which nationalist sentiment is always particularly sensitive. He ended with a warning of the havoc that would

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result, "on the eve of the emergence of the East", from adopting "something like imperialist relations" to Soviet Russia's own minorities. He said nothing, however, about the centralised control of the Party, which made a mockery of any independence left to the government machinery in the republics.

STALIN BECAME AWARE OF Lenin's notes, and attempted to see him. An effort by Krupskaya to shield her husband led to a "rude outburst" from Stalin, and on 5 March to a letter to him from Lenin, demanding an apology.

Three days later a stroke put Lenin out of action for good; but before then he had forwarded his notes to Trotsky, apparently as the result of Trotsky's agreement to take up the case of Georgia at the Twelfth Party Congress (due to meet in April). He had also sent a letter of strong support to the Georgian Communist leaders. Stalin was able to ward off the threat to his own position, largely owing to Trotsky's failure to take any action on the notes at the Congress, and also helped by Lenin's secretary, who forwarded the notes to the *Politburo* with a warning that Lenin had not had time to revise them. Stalin was thus able to avoid publishing the notes—much to his regret, as he said. The decisive factor, however, was probably Trotsky's silence, for which there is no satisfactory explanation. In spite of bitter opposition speeches, the victory of Stalin's policy by an overwhelming majority was ensured by the fact that the Congress was packed with his supporters. In a concluding speech, which was a masterpiece of hypocrisy, Stalin praised the unity of the Party, adding how much he regretted Lenin's absence.

Lenin's conflicts with his colleagues in 1922 and 1923 were not confined to the national question. The most serious attack on Stalin, with whom he had expressed disagreement on a number of other important issues, was contained in several memoranda which he specifically stated were intended for the "forthcoming" Twelfth Congress of the Party. In the first note (dated 25 December 1922), Lenin warned that the main threat to the stability of the leadership lay in the bad relations between Trotsky, "the most able man in the present Central Committee", and Stalin, who had concentrated "enormous power" in his hands and was not always sufficiently cautious in using it. On 4 January 1923, after Stalin's attempt to speak to him on the nationalities question (and the clash with Krupskaya), he dictated a postscript to the effect that "Stalin is too rude" and that "I propose to the comrades to think out some way of removing Stalin" from the post of General Secretary.

The other matters in these and subsequent memoranda (which became known as *Lenin's Testament*) related mainly to his views on the need to restock Party organs with workers and peasants, so as to put an end to corruption and inefficiency. He seems to have shown no realisation of the threat to the Party posed by the growing power of the secretariat, but remained convinced that the trouble lay with the moral character of the incumbents of offices. So far as our evidence goes, he never considered that if once you place uncontrolled power in the hands of an élite, abuse of it is certain to occur—a principle underlying all the checks and balances invented to control governments throughout the centuries.

We can get a fairer picture of Lenin's thoughts on the future as he saw it from a number of articles which he wrote during his lucid period in 1922 and early 1923. One cannot, of course, know how he would have conducted affairs had he returned to power in 1924. But in his state of disability, with no real prospect of recovery, he got nearer than ever before to constructive thought on the future of the régime which he had played so big a part in creating.

In the first place, he recognised that the attempt to construct socialism in a country as backward as Russia had been out of line with orthodox Marxist thought, which frequently warned against such action. In the conditions of 1917, he maintained, there had been no alternative. But this had meant that the political revolution (by which he meant the seizure of power by the Bolsheviks) had taken place before the necessary social conditions had matured. Now that political power was in the hands of "the proletariat" (meaning the Communist Party) a long period would be required in which the peasants could be raised to the level of social consciousness that a socialist revolution demanded. This meant many decades; and this time should become one of peace between town and countryside, since conflict between these two parts of society was the greatest danger which could befall the Soviet state. During this long era of peace in the villages, the peasants must learn the benefits of cooperation. With power in the hands of the "proletariat", cooperation could ensure real progress towards socialism, and play a big part in raising the educational level of the peasants.

A CONSTANT REFRAIN in these late writings is complaint at the inefficiency of state institutions, which he blamed on the fact that these were the pre-1917 ones, "only slightly anointed with Soviet holy oil", as he put it. What he failed to point out was that the "holy oil", in the form of the Communists who penetrated the institutions, made life and work impossible for the old civil service by their interference. There was also some reflection on the future on the world scene. The dream of swift revolutions in the industrial countries had collapsed—evidently capitalism was stronger than had been believed. What was imminent now was the inevitable ultimate conflict between the imperialists and the awakening colonial peoples. In this clash of forces, the exploited were certain to win, and it was essential that the Soviet state should survive until the defeat of the capitalists by the subject colonials came to its rescue. The upshot of all this was to justify *NEP* and the limited market economy which it entailed, and to see it not as a short-lived effort to get out of trouble (as many in the Party regarded it in 1921), but as a serious long-term policy for the foreseeable future.

How many were persuaded by these arguments it is difficult to say. What is certain is that Bukharin was convinced by Lenin's vision, and did his best to put it into practice in the years before *NEP* was killed, and he and his allies politically defeated, by Stalin in 1929 and 1930.

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LENIN DIED on 21 January 1924, three months before his 54th birthday. From the age of seventeen his life had been devoted to the aim of Revolution. He played no part in February 1917 when the monarchy collapsed. His sights were set on the only kind of revolution that he acknowledged, one in which the Bolshevik Party, created by him in 1903, would hold the monopoly of power in the name of the working class. Other socialist parties, claiming to be workers' parties, were to be excluded as fraudulent pretenders.

All methods were justified to achieve this end, because Lenin and his close supporters believed with fanatical intensity that their success in Petrograd on 25 October 1917 would inaugurate a new era in the history of mankind, and would bring forth a new and happier world. This faith may have diminished as the practical problems of office accumulated. Notes of doubt or disillusionment seem to sound in the last writings of Lenin that we know; and in 1921 *NEP* had indicated an abandonment of the intransigent "war communism" and a recognition that theory had to be tempered by common sense. But to ignore the faith that dominated Lenin and his close followers like Trotsky, Dzerzhinsky, Sverdlov or Stalin is to misunderstand the history of the Russian revolution.

In the actual organisation of the final stages of the Bolshevik revolution, Lenin's role fell far short of Trotsky's, for example, who saw the importance of linking the Bolshevik seizure of power to the meeting of the Second Congress of Soviets. Yet there is no doubt that without Lenin the Bolshevik coup would have been postponed, and might conceivably have failed. Even more significantly, the whole notion of the Bolshevik monopoly of power was Lenin's, as well as the vital device of using the Party as the instrument for maintaining it.

Moreover, in inventing a system in which a disciplined, centrally controlled party is used to manipulate a façade of ostensibly freely functioning and popularly elected institutions like "soviets" or trade unions, Lenin added to the store of political devices an entirely new type of mechanism, and one which has since been imitated in many parts of the world.

No doubt the debate will continue for years whether Lenin's doctrine and practice were a perversion of the doctrines of Marx, or the inspired implementation of the theory in practice. Perhaps the answer does not matter all that much. What is important is that the refusal to compromise with the socialist parties, and the headstrong implementation up to 1921 of dogmatic policies from which great hardship and misery flowed, were the direct result of the fanatical confidence of Lenin and his followers that they alone held the key to making Marx's theories work.

The first Party Congress after Lenin's death, the Thirteenth, was due to meet on 23 May 1924. A few days before that date Krupskaya forwarded to the *Politburo* the notes which Lenin had dictated between 22 December 1922 and 23 January 1923 —the so-called *Testament*.

She explained the delay by the statement in an accompanying letter that Lenin had expressed the "definite wish" that these notes should be submitted to the next Congress "after his death." No explanation has ever been offered of this assertion, which flatly contradicts what Lenin dictated in the notes themselves. The year's delay in dealing with the explosive *Testament*, of which Stalin must certainly have been aware, was presumably not wasted by him. At any rate, the threat posed by the notes, which could have meant his downfall in 1923, now seemed to present no danger to him. In the end, the notes were not laid before the Congress, but only read, with suitable comments, to leaders of delegations. The Congress was a model of unanimity. Immediately after it, at a meeting of the Central Committee, Stalin offered to resign. The entire Committee pressed him to remain at his post. Most probably, under the effect of the shock of Lenin's death, the leaders of the Party feared that if Stalin were removed from the helm it would endanger their own survival in power.

SINCE LENIN'S DEPARTURE in 1922, power had been in the hands of a triumvirate consisting of Stalin, Zinoviev, and Kamenev. Trotsky, together with 46 of his supporters, mainly old left-wingers, had come out openly against what they described as the "inadequacy of the Party leadership" in economic policy and the "completely intolerable" régime within the Party. In mid-October 1923, they had served on the *Politburo* a document containing these charges, which became known as the *Declaration of the Forty-Six*. Trotsky was now the main object of attack by Stalin and his supporters. Shortly after Lenin's death, a journal called *The Bolshevik* came into existence with the avowed object of combating "Trotskyism."

Minor attacks by Stalin against Zinoviev and Kamenev began in June 1924. By the autumn of that year relations between Stalin and his ostensible allies were near breaking point. Before long, Trotsky was to join forces with them, in a struggle to defeat the formidable machine which Stalin had built up—a struggle that was to culminate on 19 January 1928 with the announcement that some 30 oppositionists, headed by Trotsky, had gone into exile.

From the outset the attempt had been hopeless. By that time Stalin's predominance was beyond challenge.

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IN THE MARGIN

P. G. Wodehouse's "Noo Yawk"

By Melvin J. Lasky



O IS HUMOUR good for anything else but a laugh? Nothing appears to be more pernicious among critics than to try to be serious about a joke. Koestler once tried it in a book and got the punch-lines regularly wrong. Freud wrote a psychopathology of everyday wit, and was in turn forever subjected to analysis-in-depth himself. Max Eastman explored the enjoyment of laughter, and the most memorable thing about it was the infectious dust-jacket featuring the handsome silver-haired author in twinkle-eyed open-mouthed hilarity. No, if the interpretation of dreams is a nightmare, the discussion of humour is no laughing matter. A recent "structural analysis" of Evelyn Waugh's *Put Out More Flags* and a scholarly screed on *Three Men in a Boat* provoked the literary editor of the *Daily Telegraph* into grim polemics. Critics were excommunicated, the whole genre interdicted.

> "There must be humourless idiots who are waiting for an annotated P. G. Wodehouse which will give the source of every quotation that he uses or bends for his own purposes. . . ." (David Holloway)

Well, there is a lot of source-spotting in Frances Donaldson's new biography of P. G. Wodehouse, and she too gets her wrists slapped by yet another proctor.

> ". . . [she] tells you all you need to know about Plum. Too much perhaps, for the discussion of his techniques of writing, and the reasons for finding his work funny, for example, almost leave the reader wondering whether it can be funny after all." (Christopher Warman, *The Times*)

And yet I must confess that when the other day, I was chuckling through the Wodehouse Penguin of *Psmith Journalist* (first published in 1915), I was overwhelmed by just this humourless affliction: the longing for an explanation, a bit of esoteric research, for a footnote or two. Those Psmith stories were always something special in the Wodehouse *oeuvre*, and fans often regretted their early abandonment in his writing career. Lady Donaldson notes certain qualities of "intellect . . . unWodehousian toughness . . . a kind of ferocity" which are quite unlike anything found in the later books. Psmith in America is especially problematical, for Wodehouse was fascinated by New York, and spent his first Fleet Street pay-cheques on getting to Manhattan. There he tapped a rich vein of social (and verbal) detail which almost made him a documentary or even a "committed" writer, practically disorienting his light-hearted and light-minded strengths as a fiction writer.

Before his entrancing decision to take on a manner "more English" than any other writer, he was perhaps tempted in his room in Manhattan's old Brevoort Hotel on 5th Avenue to try his hand at being "very Noo Yawk." His biographer feels certain that "by now (1915) Wodehouse knew where his real talents lay", and that "Psmith was a bridge . . . between the youthful period . . . and the humorous books, with their established castes [casts?] of characters and unchanging format."[1]

All the more reason, then, to know more about Psmith's American adventures, which revolved around a journalistic crusade against intolerable slum conditions being maintained by crooked property speculators. No sign of Jeeves here.

So, WITHOUT THE CRACK of a smile, I found myself forced to wonder what Wodehouse's New York was really like. For some it evidently makes no difference, for novels are supposed to capture a truer, or higher, or deeper reality. Who knows, or cares, whether Proust got that evening exactly right at the Duchesse de Guermantes', or whether Joyce in Zurich kept up with Dublin argot? How could Thomas Mann, writing his *Doktor Faustus* in Californian exile, know how wartime Germans spoke when making their pact with the devil?

Does it matter? Aesthetically, surely not. Literal truth is what we demand only from our historians, not from our novelists. Still, who is there with mind so dulled as not, on occasion, to entertain a certain curiosity about the knowledge of the external world as it interweaves itself through the plots of our story-tellers? An impassioned reader of Balzac like Professor Georg Lukács was absolutely convinced—without ever having looked at any other evidence (documents, statistics, financial records)—that the pageant of a "declining peasantry" and a "rising bourgeoisie" was so accurate as to dovetail scientifically with all the theorems of Marxism-Leninism. No such luck with Wodehouse. And yet on almost every page of the New York adventures of the journalist Psmith in 1915 one is tantalised by the question of how things really were: in the plodding German historian's phrase, *wie es eigentlich gewesen ist*. Is the young Wodehouse, "yearning for

[1] Frances Donaldson, *P. G. Wodehouse: The Authorized Biography* (1982), p. 91. See also the books on PGW by Benny Green (1981), and David A. Jasen (rev.ed., 1981).

All in all, he understood New York better than, say, Berlin. On the famous "Berlin broadcasts" (first published in ENCOUNTER, October and November 1954), see the controversial articles by George Orwell (in *Dickens, Dali & Others*); Malcolm Muggeridge (in *Tread Softly for You Tread on My Jokes*); and in ENCOUNTER recently by *M* and Ian Sproat (June–July and September–October 1982).

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America" (as he writes in his *Over Seventy*), telling it like it is?

I was stopped on the very first page where the Preface explains that very little was "invented", that "most of the incidents in this story are based on actual happenings." Perhaps. But surely what we need for that scholarly annotated edition of Sir Pelham Grenville Wodehouse, full of fine footnotes and ample appendices, are some comparative statistics.

> "There are several million inhabitants of New York. Not all of them eke out a precarious livelihood by murdering one another. . . ."

How true. And still one wants to know how many, and how often: for that alarmed sense of mass mayhem which one gets nowadays in New York could not really be (or could it?) an invariable constant. "The conditions of life in New York are so different from those of London", and indeed they have so remained: more murders are committed in N.Y.C. per annum than in the whole of the U.K. Does nothing change throughout a century? Why do we hear so little about "murderous Manhattan" in Henry James' otherwise marvellously perceptive pages about New York in his *American Scene*? There are social observers who are persuaded that whatever is actually happening is constantly reflected in the same preconceived emotions of an intellectual class who attend to the register of urban sins (and virtues), and who see to it that it always adds up to something unprecedented and outrageous. Irving Kristol once scandalised his *New York Times* readers by arguing that 50 or 75 years ago the liberals were protesting as vociferously against racist tensions, traffic jams, urban decay, and street-corner violence as they do today. Are things always the same, the more they change? Does nothing get better, nothing worse? Wodehouse is writing of a pre-World War I America:

> "In New York one may find every class of paper which the imagination can conceive. Every grade of society is catered for. If an Esquimau came to New York, the first thing he would find on the bookstalls in all probability would be the *Blubber Magazine*, or some similar production written by Esquimaux for Esquimaux. Everybody reads in New York, and reads all the time. The New Yorker peruses his favourite newspaper while he is being jammed into a crowded compartment on the subway or leaping like an antelope into a moving street car."

I suppose the US Publishers Association could provide us with a table of comparative statistics, breaking down American sales, reading habits, and specialist publications. For my own part I found on my visit to New York last month an announcement from a Queens' publishing house which caters to "Jewish homosexual subscribers", that a new magazine would be appearing, to appeal to "gay Black converts." Cool, man; cool like an Esquimau.

TAKEN ALTOGETHER, Wodehouse's vignettes of New York around 1914–15 are vivid and incisive, and the language of the day (I take it, on faith, to be such) rendered with a keen ear and a careful pen. This, and a curious socio-political element (those slummy crime-controlled tenements), quite belies the later Wodehouse formula which, as he put it, was: "I believe there are two ways of writing novels. One is mine, making a sort of musical comedy without music and ignoring real life altogether; the other is going right deep down into life and not caring a damn. . . ." But the point of *Psmith Journalist* is that the Old Etonian Psmith learned, while still retaining his monocle, to care a damn—that "deep down" there *was* "something worth fighting for."

> "Psmith was one of those people who are content to accept most of the happenings of life in an airy spirit of tolerance. Life had been more or less of a game with him up till now. In his previous encounters with those with whom fate had brought him in contact there had been little at stake. The prize of victory had been merely a comfortable feeling of having had the best of a battle of wits; the penalty of defeat nothing worse than the discomfort of having failed to score. But this tenement business was different. Here he had touched the realities. There was something worth fighting for. His lot had been cast in pleasant places, and the sight of actual raw misery had come home to him with an added force from that circumstance. He was fully aware of the risks that he must run. . . ."

If this sounds not unlike the young affluent publisher of the *Village Voice* finding a cause in the radical idealism of the 1960s, it was because P. G. somehow got it all uncannily right. Here is Psmith's credo when he first takes over his New York paper and decides to change its editorial course:

> ". . . briefly, my idea is that *Cosy Moments* should become red hot stuff. I could wish its tone to be such that the public will wonder why we do not print it on asbestos. We must chronicle all the live events of the day, murders, fires, and the like, in a manner which will make our readers' spines thrill. Above all, we must be the guardians of the People's rights. We must be a searchlight, showing up the dark spot in the souls of those who would endeavour in any way to do the PEOPLE in the eye. We must detect the wrongdoer, and deliver him such a series of resentful biffs that he will abandon his little games and become a model citizen. . . ."

There are at least two daily newspapers in New York which in the past year or two have remodelled their editorial course along lines which would have pleased Psmith; (The P is silent: "Like the tomb. Compare such words as ptarmigan, psalm, and phthisis.")

Had he gone on, Psmith would have become the Joseph Pulitzer of the day, which is only to say that Wodehouse some 70 years ago managed to sense in Manhattan that paradoxical mix of civic alarm and metropolitan pride which is recognisable even today in the "Big Apple" of Mayor Ed Koch. Here is Wodehouse's vignette of the Subway (that fearful underground which is currently being "improved" so that graffiti on trains and stations can in future be easily washed off):

> "Conversation on the Subway is impossible. The ingenious gentlemen who constructed it started with the object of making it noisy. Not ordinarily noisy, like a ton of coal falling on to a sheet of tin, but really noisy. So they fashioned the pillars of thin steel, and the sleepers of thin wood, and loosened all the nuts, and now a Subway train in

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motion suggests a prolonged dynamite explosion blended with the voice of some great catastrophe."

Evidently he never lost his affectionate tone (it is there in his late letters), although in his final emigration he hardly ever ventured forth from his ocean-side house on Long Island. Unlike the hard local men of angry protest literature he knew that there were "two New Yorks."

". . . . One is a modern, well-policed city, through which one may walk from end to end without encountering adventure. The other is a city as full of sinister intrigue, of whisperings and conspiracies, of battle, murder, and sudden death in dark by-ways, as any town of medieval Italy. Given certain conditions, anything may happen to any one in New York."

How "well-policed" New York may have been then, or now, one has to leave to the annotations of the scholarly sociologists. They will also have to record whether police strategy and tactics have changed much when caught up in the altercations of gangland wars or ethnic riots of more recent days.

"The behaviour of the New York policeman in affairs of this kind is based on principles of the soundest practical wisdom. The unthinking man would rush in and attempt to crush the combat in its earliest and fiercest stages. The New York policeman, knowing the importance of his own safety, and the insignificance of the gangsman's, permits the opposing forces to hammer each other into a certain distaste for battle, and then, when both sides have begun to have enough of it, rushes in himself and clubs everything in sight. It is an admirable process in its results, but is sure rather than swift."

"Gangsman"? The dictionary (Webster; Random House; Partridge) lists *gangster* as common 20th-c. usage, and one finds it of course in the Manhattan pages of O. Henry, Ring Lardner, Damon Runyon, Mark Hellinger.[2] One wonders whether young Plum always got the word, phrase, inflection, slangy innovation quite right. Here were stranger characters than, dash it, the Jeeves and Bertie Wooster to come.

I suspect that his unusually good ear just missed the off-colour *double-entendre* in words like *lay* and *hump* (pp. 65, 100). Would a New York landlord refer to the eviction or dispossession of a rent-due tenant by saying, "*Then it's outside for theirs*" (p. 114)? I take his word for it that getting drunk was "*to get gat*" (pp. 148, 154) and that "*a real skiddoo*" (p. 146) was something different from its more familiar "23-skiddoo" usage. But would a N.Y. boxer praise a newspaper's muckracking articles by saying "*They're to the good*"? Wodehouse hesitates sometimes, and uncertainly puts quote marks around drawing a good "gate" in a reference to box-office receipts; and he takes refuge in the recondite in explaining what a *sitz-redacteur* was (and I may well have learned it in the same sort of German émigré printing-plant that he did). But he is soon again his confident self with *gats, coons, dagoes, jeans* (as early as that), *simoleons* and the like. He confidently lets Psmith say "*this act is going to be a scream*"; and, having learned fast, Psmith ventures the remark that crooked politicians were finished because "*the right plan would be to put the complete kybosh (if I may use the expression)*" on their chances.

"WHY AMERICA? I have often wondered about that." So Wodehouse wrote in his memoir *Over Seventy* (1957), and offered the touching explanation, for whatever it's worth: "This yearning I had to visit America . . . was due principally, I think, to the fact that I was an enthusiastic boxer in those days and had a boyish reverence for America's pugilists—James J. Corbett, James J. Jeffries, Tom Sharkey, Kid McCoy and the rest of them." At any rate "Kid Brady" became an heroic figure in Psmith's crusade against "raw actual misery" and, consequently, we often find ourselves at the ringside of adolescent longing.

"The contest was short but energetic. At intervals the combatants would cling affectionately to one another, and on these occasions the red-jerseyed man, still chewing gum and still wearing the same air of being lost in abstract thought, would split up the mass by the simple method of ploughing his way between the pair. Towards the end of the first round Thomas, eluding a left swing, put Patrick neatly to the floor, where the latter remained for the necessary ten seconds."

This he could have seen, and could have written, in London. But if he longed for something more and different, for "the realities", he found some of them in the bars and gyms of the New York sporting underworld. Here is Pugsy Maloney explaining the cat in his arms ("It's a kitty what I got in de street") to Billy Windsor (who, combining "the toughest of muscle with the softest of hearts", was "always ready at any moment to become the champion of the oppressed on the slightest provocation"):

"I wasn't hoitin' her. . . . Dere was two fellers in de street sickin' a dawg on to her. An' I come up an' says, 'G'wan! What do youse t'ink you're doin', fussin' de poor dumb animal!?' An' one of de guys, he says, 'G'wan! Who do youse t'ink youse is?' An' I says, 'I'm de guy what's goin' to swat youse on de coco if youse don't quit fussin' de poor dumb animal.' So wit dat he makes a break at swattin' me one, an' den I swats dem bote some more, an' I gets de kitty, an' I brings her in here, cos I t'inks, maybe you'll look after her."

Was this the way the Pugsy Maloneys spoke in New York in 1915? I don't know, and I can't imagine who does. Mark Twain's *Connecticut Yankee* apparatus might catch the voices on a bygone wavelength, and today we have archives of "oral history", with a tape for every conceivable accent, inflection, and ethnic lilt. But the history of the language "as spoken by common men" depends necessarily on contrived fictions,

[2] The Burchfield *Supplement* (1972) to the *Oxford English Dictionary* cites first American newspaper usages of 1896 and 1911. Wodehouse is quoted for "gangster" from his *Blandings Castle* of 1935. "*Gangsman*" the O.E.D. records as "a dock porter" (1793) and as "one who has charge of a gang of workmen" (1863). Evidently Wodehouse brought a lot of verbal baggage with him across the Atlantic.

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artfully recorded, and confidently defended on the theory that the truth is in the poetry. Yet there is, and historians have unfailingly insisted on it, also a poetry in the truth. It may well be that the ephemeral "spirit of the age", or *Zeitgeist*, is impossible to recapture: *temps perdu*. But at least we ought to be able to sense or imagine the difference.

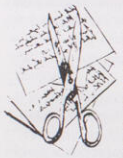
Wodehouse commentators often miss the point. J. B. Priestley once wrote:

> "In the matter of wildly metaphorical slang he has beaten the Americans at their own game. Meet a New York crook of Mr. Wodehouse's invention and you find he talks not as such crooks actually do talk, but as they would like to talk."

This drives us into a roundabout, indeed a vicious circle, for how could Jolly Jack have had the faintest notion of how New York crooks "would like to talk"? Or is it the wild fate of all social reality, its words and deeds, to find an ultimate existence, a final form, in the related fantasies of fiction? The actual Père Goriots are all dead, but Balzac remains our living source.

For a book or two young P. G. Wodehouse became a poet of "million-footed Manhattan." The Pugsy Maloneys are gone, but Plum's "little old Noo Yawk" lives.

The Art of Misquotation: B.B. & K.K.



FINE WRITERS have a penchant for fine phrases. Occasionally when the inspired formula turns out to be at once thoughtful and memorable it runs into one peculiarly troublesome fate—the felicitous lines tend, more often than not, to be misquoted. Inaccurate and wrenched badly out of the full context, they may finish up implying (and even directly stating) the very opposite of the original poetic intention.

Take the recent cases of Bertolt Brecht and Karl Kraus, and no two better phrase-makers can be found in modern German and Austrian letters: B.B. with his unforgettably Berlin-cynical Marxian twists; K.K. with his large ironies, broad enough to shock old Vienna.

One Brecht quote has come to dominate the German debate in Bonn over unilateral disarmament; and it is not often that high politics concerns itself with etymology, theology, and literary citations. But the German Peace Movement has been going in for a lot of effective quotation, from the Bible to B.B., and has currently been making much mileage out of a witty line of Brecht—

> **"Stell dir vor, es kommt Krieg, und keiner geht hin. . . ."**
> (*Just think of it, war breaks out and nobody turns up. . . .*)

Nobody less than Chancellor Kohl's right-hand man, the general-secretary of the CDU (Herr Heiner Geissler), ordered his research staff to look it up and double-check. When they did, Geissler was able to let loose a literary salvo against the "*Friedenskämpfer*" which may cause some casualties. For apparently the pertinent pacifist sentiment of the poet and playwright has been torn out of the proper context which, not surprisingly, was not peace-loving at all but militant, if not militarist. The very next line revealed how far Brecht, as a Marxist and Communist, was from sentimental peace-mongering. It reads:

> *"It would amount to fighting for the cause of the enemy if one did not fight for one's own cause."*

In other words, as the familiar Marxist dialectic has it, defeatism means "objectively" working for the victory of the other side. Not exactly, I would think, the Brechtian message the Peace Movement wants to convey.

IN THE CASE OF Karl Kraus one certainly knew that he fought for his own cause, but his artful phrase-making has curiously served to befog it.

In 1933, an embittered and outraged Karl Kraus let loose his full contempt for the Nazis who had come to power in the neighbouring German *Reich*, and it ultimately became an Austrian book of some 280 pages entitled *Die dritte Walpurgisnacht*. Unfortunately it began with a line so memorable that nothing else seems to be remembered. One Kraus biographer has collected a dozen recent references to Kraus and the famous opening line—"*Mir fällt zu Hitler nichts ein* (On the subject of Hitler, nothing occurs to me)."[1] Astonishingly, it is taken to be the full and complete expression of Kraus's political response to the *Führer*. What an abdication of literary and political responsibility! Could nothing more occur to him than that one non-committal sentence? One literary editor (Fritz J. Raddatz of *Die Zeit*, who has been known to read whole books and thus should have known better) sat in severe judgment: ". . . This was no *bon mot*, but a declaration of bankruptcy." A writer in *Stern* (which evidently gets nothing right when it comes to Hitleriana) scolded Kraus for not having more "occur" to him. Anti-Nazi writers bemoan his resignation, his withdrawal, indeed his "self-indulgent abandonment of reason." How could the impeccable Kraus, who would go on and on about a misplaced comma or a dangling participle, remain silent?

But, of course, he hadn't—the entire volume is an indictment of Nazi "*Unkultur*." This, surely, is one of the rarest cases in modern writing: a book which began so well that nobody went on to read it.

THE PROBLEM of quoting and misquoting that "great phrase-maker" Bert Brecht is certainly not exhausted by my example

[1] See in ENCOUNTER (August 1975), J. P. Stern's "Karl Kraus and the Idea of Literature." As Professor Stern has written me:
"*Die dritte Walpurgisnacht* was set in the summer of 1933 and should have appeared in *Die Fackel*; Kraus decided against it, being afraid it would unleash an anti-Semitic campaign in Germany. Instead, in July 1934, he published a long piece in *Die Fackel* (Vol. 36, 890-905), "Warum die Fackel nicht erscheint", on p. 2 of which the sentence occurs. A good many passages in that essay are identical with *Die dritte Walpurgisnacht*, which was finally published in Munich by Kösel in 1952 (ed. Heinrich Fischer)."

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above. Very often, in the past, the difficulty has been that the phrases were not his but artfully copied from others. Thus, there was in the Weimar time a famous scandal involving the charges of plagiarism against Brecht since he had "lightly rewritten", and then offered as his own, some little-known verses of François Villon (lifted, apparently, from an equally obscure translation).

I once heard a tragic-comic explanation of some of Brecht's difficulties in Hollywood with the FBI from his friend and fellow anti-Nazi exile, the actor Fritz Kortner. The FBI had become alarmed at some published lines of Brecht which called, in resounding terms, for the rising of all sailors at sea against their repressive naval taskmasters. They approached Kortner to explain them and to confirm or deny that the revolutionary poetic sentiments were actually Brecht's own. Kortner pooh-poohed the whole affair as "mere rhetoric", only "words." Then he rushed over to Brecht's to ask him why he was getting everyone in trouble with such imprudent verse. Brecht replied that they weren't even his lines—for he had in fact borrowed them from *Byron*! Kortner was exasperated, and begged him to attribute more accurately and precisely in the future. But Brecht shrugged his shoulders (according to Kortner, the famous man of the theatre who acted it out for me), as if to say: Why begin now. . . .

To be sure, first-class rewriting may well be considered to be superior in literary-critical eyes to second-rate originality. But Brecht knew all the classical masters, and tried hard to equal them (at times, one must say, successfully). I have often wanted to play "quote-detective" and collect the original sources so far as they can be reasonably established to be Brecht's actual or probable inspiration. For example, that haunting refrain from the *Threepenny Opera* (Brecht via John Gay)—more haunting, possibly, because of Kurt Weill's marvellous music than Brecht's much-quoted words—in which Polly sings of the loyalty of love and togetherness: "*Wohin du gehst, geliebter, geh ich auch* (where you go, loved one, I will go too). . . ." B.B., to be sure, knew his Shakespeare well, especially in the Schlegel-Tieck translation; and there in *Richard II* (V.i.85) there is the moving line of the Queen to Northumberland—

Then whither he goes, thither let me go . . .

The context constitutes a beautiful lyric, and memorable enough to inspire a whole host of even the most cynical Brechtians.*

And must we be divided? must we part?
Ay, hand from hand, my love, and heart from heart. . . .
Then whither he goes, thither let me go.
So two, together weeping, make one woe. . . .
Once more, adieu; the rest let sorrow say.

In the German which Brecht knew, it reads well in Schlegel's translation:

So scheiden müssen wir? uns ewig missen?
Ja, Hand von Hand und Herz von Herz gerissen . . .
Wohin er geht, erlaubt denn, dass ich geh'.
So zwei zusammen weinend sind ein Weh. . . .
Leb' wohl! das andre mag dein Kummer fassen.

But there are echoes within echoes, and it could be that Brecht, or Schlegel, or even Shakespeare had it first from the Bible (*Ruth*, 1.16). The Old Testament story-teller of Ruth goes significantly beyond the romantic emphasis on personal loyalty, and adds a notable political and theological commitment. Accordingly, if Schlegel, then in the Luther translation:

Wo du hingehest, da will ich auch hingehen;
wo du bleibest, da bleibe ich auch.
Dein Volk ist mein Volk,
und dein Gott ist mein Gott.

And if Shakespeare, then in one of the first English translations which he had at hand (the Genevan, 1560; the Bishops', 1568; the Douai, 1609):

. . . for whithersoever thou shalt go, I will go;
and where thou shalt dwell, I also will dwell.
Thy people shall be my people,
and thy God my God.

Orwell '84: Seeing is not Believing

Bonn



It seemed innocent and routine enough to begin with—considering that the Orwellian year had not yet begun. To "the barbarians" the Greeks last winter sent a delegation of six, bearing no gifts at all, to do a little tour and win some good will for the Papandreou government which needs West German help in Cyprus, and in the EEC negotiations, and indeed for the small army of Greek "*Gastarbeiter*" gainfully employed in West Germany and West Berlin.

But once in the former German capital out popped a Communist whip from the Trojan horse. The delegate of the Athens Communist Party refused to visit the Wall which the East German Communist government had erected to divide the city hermetically. The other five took the hint and followed suit. None would allow themselves to be "manipulated." The "reactionary" tour to the Berlin Wall was cancelled.

Foreign Offices in Bonn and Athens were soon alarmed. West German Foreign Minister Genscher spoke of "an *affront* . . . an *eklat* . . . a *scandal*. . . ." (He had been upset enough by the recent treaty between Papandreou and Honecker which provided for the extradition of East German dissidents back to the Communist homeland.) Were the West Germans now angry enough to pursue a little "linkage", denying Papandreou help with his problems if he proved to be so stingy with formal sentimentalities for his West German allies? The pressure was on—and the six Greek Parliamentarians relented . . . a little bit. They would agree to visit the *Reichstag*, the old bombed-

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out national assembly, now a rebuilt national monument on the Western border of the dividing line. Diplomacy had triumphed yet again; joy reigned. But there was a proviso. The Greek delegation would not visit any of the *Reichstag* chambers in the Eastern wing, since those windows looked out on the Wall. No rooms with a forbidden view would be entered.

So the Greeks conquered: they came and saw not. The next day they were warmly praised by the daily paper *Rizospastis*, official organ of the Communist Party of Greece, which recognised their Athenian steadfastness in turning down the "pilgrimage of the hawks" which would only have revived "Iron Curtain" propaganda and "the ghost of the Cold War."

Whom the gods would make "forward-looking" they first make blinkered.

The Big Lie & the Big Story



THE ARTICLE BY Joachim Fest on the forged Hitler diaries (in the November ENCOUNTER) was an incisive and useful summary of the German scandal primarily involving *Stern*, that Hamburg illustrated weekly with an entirely unwarranted reputation for "serious journalism." *Stern* has always been sensational, although its crusading left-wing bias on home and foreign affairs gives it in some circles a semblance of ideological earnestness. It opposes Chancellor Kohl as it did Adenauer and Erhard; "exposes" Franz Josef Strauss (and occasionally apologises or loses a libel suit, as in the phoney Lockheed charges); supports the PLO and a half-dozen other liberation warriors in the Third World. It plays up the successes of the Greens and the Peace Movement, as it once did the '68 student rebels and the "idealism" of the so-called moderate terrorists; supports the Women's Lib revolution although its "sexist" female nudes on the brightly coloured covers have driven the feminists to take legal action against *Stern*'s male chauvinism. It attacks American imperialism and its "junior partner" German capitalism; and has not infrequently bought and published questionable documents (e.g. the *KGB*-manufactured exposés of Solzhenitsyn's private life). Its professional irresponsibility (coupled with its technical ingenuity) has doubtless contributed to its profitable circulation successes; at nearly two million weekly copies it is the largest picture magazine in the West since *Life* and *Look* went out of business or regular distribution. It always gets the photo-of-the-day or the scoop-of-the-week, at great expense to its publishers, considerable risk to its correspondents, and mortal danger to its conscience (often slightly troubled by erratic captions and non-existent authentication). The "Hitler Diaries" scandal was the high (or low) point of its post-War career—if they were authentic, *Stern* had the greatest scoop-of-the-century; if they were not, they would publish (and they did!) the biggest "inside story" of the biggest hoax-of-the-century. Heads they win, tails the readers lose. The two chief editors who were the "guilty men" of *Stern* were each paid three million marks for their services and resignations.

Joachim Fest did take a side-glance at *Stern*'s foreign partners, the *Sunday Times* in London, and the humble apology offered in *The Times* for its error in publishing (on the self-admittedly faulty advice of Professor Hugh Trevor-Roper) a first Diary instalment which would begin to "revise our whole view of the Hitler epoch." But there was also an American side to the story. Mrs Katharine Graham's *Washington Post*/*Newsweek* combine had also purchased the forgeries—"crude and obvious", according to the handwriting experts who finally dismissed the 60-volume fraud for which millions of marks, pounds, and dollars had been paid out. But *Newsweek* neither exposed itself and drew certain editorial consequences, as did *Stern*; nor did it apologise, as did *The Times* in London. It brazened it out, and hung in there tough (to borrow the Watergate phrases from the *Washington Post*'s favourite villain, ex-President Nixon).[1]

The whole explosive matter was broached last year at the annual shareholders' meeting, at which Mrs Graham (still outmodedly referred to as "the chairman" of the *Washington Post* Company) officially reported: "Quality is an ever-present goal as we exercise the craft of journalism. It's reflected in the pursuit of accuracy, fairness, completeness, and truth. . . ." It occurred to more than one shareholder that if these ideals were being pursued, the *Post*/*Newsweek* editors were frequently failing to catch up with them. Memories are still fresh of the Janet Cooke "junky" story which won a Pulitzer Prize award for the *Post*—until it turned out to be a shameless piece of contrived fiction. Editor Ben Bradlee then made the classic remark, "Well, it might have been true. . . ." So could the tale of flying horses, if they had wings. But I wouldn't want to put it on the front page.

AMONG THE OBJECTIONS was one registered by Arnaud de Borchgrave, veteran *Newsweek* correspondent and (with Robert Moss) author of *The Spike*, the best-selling novel about low corrupt practices in high-minded journalism. According to the transcript of the shareholders' meeting on 13 May 1983 (as published in Reed Irvine's *Accuracy in the Media* bulletin of June 1983), Borchgrave said:

[1] The "intellectual authentication" of the Hitler diaries was provided by the well-known German writer and editor Klaus Harpprecht (in a film he made for *Stern* which was given a nation-wide showing). I have now read his personal account of his role in publicising and recommending the so-called document—even dragging in his own war injuries and his wife's Auschwitz tragedy (all the more reason, evidently, why we had to read all about it in Hitler's own hand). I remain uncertain, after so much dialectics, whether he was merely explaining his *gaffe* or actually apologising. (See Klaus Harpprecht, "Die Fälschung als Lehrstück", in *Geschichte Fernsehen*, September 1983, pp. 39–44.)

Thus, the Englishman says he's sorry; the American says so what; and the German opines that life is full of metaphysical ironies.

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"I'm sure it will come as no surprise to the management of the *Washington Post* Company if I tell you that *Newsweek*'s treatment of the Hitler diary forgery has deeply shocked the journalistic fraternity—not to mention the public at large. Nothing like it has been seen since the Janet Cooke scandal in the *Washington Post*. If any high-ranking government official had been guilty of such a grievous error of judgment, the *Washington Post* would have demanded his or her resignation.

The so-called 'Hitler Diaries' were palpable forgeries from the word go, and I said so publicly on radio and television three hours after the story first broke. Not only did *Newsweek*'s two top editors decide to devote a 13-page cover story to the scam, but the 39-column story itself repeatedly conveyed the impression that the diaries were authentic. This is a clear case of unaccountable media power out of control.

The *Sunday Times* apologized for buying into the scam; two top editors of *Stern* resigned for their part in perpetrating the scam, and the reporter responsible has been fired and is being sued by his former employer. Bob McCloskey, the *Washington Post* ombudsman, was appalled by *Newsweek*'s conduct. Nowhere in its follow-up cover story did *Newsweek* acknowledge that its original cover misled its readers. *Newsweek* even went so far as to say that the diaries were of tremendous historical significance, whether they were genuine or not. That is the most ludicrous statement I have ever seen in *Newsweek* and I spent 30 years on the magazine. I have seen four *Newsweek* editors fired over the last 10 years for what were minor misdemeanours compared to this latest scandal.

So my question to the management of the *Washington Post* Company is whether any editor at *Newsweek* who was responsible for this fiasco has submitted his resignation. If not, does management plan to dismiss the editors responsible? And if not, why not?"

The following reply by Mrs Graham was recorded:

MRS GRAHAM: The answer to your question, Arnaud, as you know, is that no resignations have either been submitted or asked for. The editors' statement, and I agree with them, is that the diaries *were* an interesting story—that it was an interesting story whether they were true or false, and, of course, you have to ask the question, were they forgeries. But the fact that they had surfaced and they were circulated was made a cover story. It also ran on the front page of *The New York Times* for several days. It ran on the front page of most other publications, and the decision to make it a cover story was a decision which I wouldn't disagree with.

At this point, another shareholder—who happened to be Reed Irvine—expressed astonishment that such an "obviously terrible *faux pas*" could still be defended.

REED IRVINE: Mr Maynard Parker [editor of *Newsweek*], on the night before the German government revealed the evidence that these were terrible forgeries, said on Hodding Carter's TV program, "Inside Story", that these diaries were a find of tremendous historical significance that would make a great story, and that's why they played it that way. Obviously they were not a find of tremendous historical significance, and (as Arnaud said) they were a tremendous embarrassment to anyone who considered them in that light. While *Newsweek* alerted us to the fact that they weren't authenticated, [*Newsweek* was] certainly leaning heavily in that direction. . . . I think that Mr Parker, who put himself way out on that limb, certainly made himself very vulnerable. . . . I suggest that maybe you need a new editor of the month at *Newsweek*.

MRS GRAHAM: We disagree.

WHAT WE ARE LEFT WITH is a wide-open Pandora's box devoted to the horrendous new principle in contemporary journalism that stories are "interesting" whether or not they are "true or false." In a recent exchange with the Editor of *The Times* I suggested, in connection with the contemporary reporting of wars and civil strife (from Viet Nam to the Lebanon), a serious degeneration of both moral and professional standards in the dissemination of news in our Western media. It would seem to be not merely a matter of distortion, partisanship, misinterpretation, and alien bias. It is becoming now a matter of the value of truth itself. The hunger for sensation is devouring the appetite for facts, for news; for the real thing, authenticated, double-checked, incontrovertible. Everything is becoming permissible; and anything can be taken for true, if it "*could* be true" and is held to be "*interesting*" enough.

The *Führer* might well have enjoyed the post-War spectacle of how his doctrine of "the big lie" became usefully transmogrified into the credo of "the Big Story." Evelyn Waugh once thought it all very humorous and made (in *Scoop* and *Black Mischief*) good jokes of it. It no longer is funny.

Political Muscle

He is the warlord of the shore,
the sleek athletic Supercrab,
the green crustaceous tank
advancing on his weaker prey
behind one giant claw.

The claw is twice his body size;
it is the code by which he lives,
the locking jaw and interface
of life and death: the claw is both
his visor and his eye.

Supercrab—the rational pursuit
of one irrational desire.
You pluck him gently from behind:
his claw need not be quite so huge
were not his brain so small.

Cal Clothier

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Life & Letters Today

Paris

INVENTORY: **According to the inventory of the world's languages just completed by the French Academy of Science, there are at least 2,796 different languages. In its study, just published, the number of dialects is listed as 7-8,000; it goes on to divide the various languages into 11 basic and 50 subsidiary "linguistic families."**

NEUE ZÜRCHER ZEITUNG

Bad Kissingen, Germany

BATTLEFIELD WRENCH: *Army educators should move away from the cultural aspects of language training and teach soldiers the language they'll need to survive on the* NATO *battlefield, top enlisted representatives of the US Army in Europe said here Thursday.*

"We've got to do something", V Corps Command Sgt. Maj. Robert C. Lewis told more than 300 educators at a week-long Army workshop here.

"Sure, second language is always important. But I think it's also important that we put the emphasis where it ought to be at that level. We need a program at the units that will tell soldiers how to say **wrench** *in German, because those are the kinds of terms soldiers will need if we ever have a shooting match in Europe."*

VII Corps Command Sgt. Maj. Roger W. Putnam agreed. "Last night I talked to an individual that I think has one of the finest ideas on language training I've ever heard of," he said. "He has a class to teach German to American engineer units. Soldiers know how to ask directions to the train station and how to find the exit on the Autobahn, but they don't know how to ask the German soldier for a new fuse."

"We know we're not going to teach the majority of our soldiers the German language proficiently and fluently," Lewis added. "We're going to give them just enough to be dangerous out there, and then we hope they'll pick up on that. . . . But they'll have to know how to say, 'I have a problem with my tank track,' the kind of language we'll use on the battlefield rather than in the Gasthaus. They'll pick up the Gasthaus terms on their own." Added USAREUR Command Sgt. Maj. Walter Kruegert: "This goes for Dutch, Turkish, Greek and Italian languages as well."

STARS & STRIPES

Peiping, China



CHINA'S PUZZLE: **What a price has to be paid for this thick layer of lies in China—the secrecy, even extending to such basic information as telephone numbers and addresses; the disregard for truth that becomes commonplace. There is the story by the novelist Ding Ling, that where two people meet in China, they talk frankly. "When there are three they tell jokes, and when there are four they tell lies."**

They often debate just how much they are ruled by their urge for consensus, and how much by their individual needs. But the Chinese word for liberty is one which means literally "one's own motives" and would often be interpreted as connoting selfishness. To be yourself is indeed to be selfish, and the Chinese are not ready for that.

WASHINGTON POST

London

PARTY LINE: **Not all the party-goers at the "Gay News" anniversary party at the Embassy endeared themselves to the club's owner, Stephen Hayter. One left-wing writer was trying to persuade the waiters to form a "gay communist collective."**

THE STANDARD

Washington D.C.

INVITING INVITATION: *The formal-looking invitation to a few million potential Republican contributors is not a real invitation; it's a solicitation using the President's name [writes William Safire]. But direct-mail solicitors have a certain responsibility to observe the formalities when they presume to go formal. The GOP fund-raisers start with a gaffe on the envelope: "***R.S.V.P. Requested.***" Inside, on the "invitation," the gaffe is compounded. "***Please RSVP***."*

R.S.V.P., which should have the periods after each letter, stands for the French "Répondez s'il vous plaît"—literally, "Reply, if it pleases you," or more accurately, "Please reply."

*Although an "***R.S.V.P.***" is a noun for an invitation with R.S.V.P on it, the letters do not lend themselves to redundancy. ("SALT talks" or "START talks" are in error, too, since the T stands for talks, but not everybody is expected to know Arms-Controlese. Every writer of formal invitations is expected to know how to write a formal invitation.) "***R.S.V.P. Requested***" is gauche, and "***Please RSVP***" ridiculously redundant.*

NEW YORK TIMES

Los Angeles

BEYOND BAROQUE: *Poetry has been abruptly cancelled as an Olympic event on top of all the fuss about America pulling out of Unesco. With Unesco's help, the plan was to bring bards from more than 20 countries to the Los Angeles Games next July, restoring an Olympic tradition of ancient Greece.*

Members of the Los Angeles Arts Centre, the "Beyond Baroque Foundation", said they could find no rhyme or reason for the change of heart, but they suspect Unesco's involvement was deemed politically unacceptable by the conservative businessmen running the private-enterprise games.

A poet and consultant for the festival, Paul Vangelisti, said it was unlikely to have been an ideological occasion for Unesco. The line-up included storytellers from West Africa, Eskimo throat singers from Eastern Canada, and traditional and avant-garde poets.

The American poet Allen Ginsberg, who was to have been master of ceremonies, said the cancellation was a betrayal of the Olympic ideal.

DAILY TELEGRAPH

London

CHAMBER OF THE STAR: **The "star chamber" these days is the group of ministers apparently hearing appeals from other Ministers against "the cuts." Mr Neil Kinnock, Labour's left-wing leader, is manifestly determined that the phrase "Star Chamber" should arouse the terror of the British working class. In achieving this aim, he faces difficulties [Frank Johnson writes]. Most of the British working class, in so far as they have heard of the Star Chamber at all, assume it to be Miss Joan Collins's dressing room. They therefore regard it as, if anything, rather a jolly place.**

THE TIMES

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LETTERS

Dr Brzezinski's Dilemmas

DR BRZEZINSKI'S ANALYSIS, "Tragic Dilemmas of Soviet World Power", in ENCOUNTER (December), is, as one would expect, wide-ranging and stimulating. It is, however, marred by one major fallacy. He asserts that "the Soviet Union is a global power only in the military dimension, but in no other." He adds (correctly): "It is neither a genuine economic rival to the United States nor—as once was the case—even a source of a globally interesting ideological experiment."

The failure to grasp the *non-military* uses of Soviet power, of which this is a glaring example, remains an important impediment in the formulation of an appropriate Western policy. The North Atlantic Treaty of 1949 made no provision for the non-military techniques at the disposal of the CPSU. Nor, of course, does the UN Charter.

Yet Soviet military power either played a minor role or none at all in the installation of Soviet-aligned régimes in Cuba, Nicaragua, and Grenada; in Ethiopia and South Yemen; in Afghanistan; and even in Viet Nam. In the latter, massive supplies of modern equipment were, however, of great importance. In Angola and Mozambique, the logistical capability of the Soviet armed forces in airlifting tens of thousands of Cuban troops was of decisive importance. However, in all these countries, the most important element of all was *the systematic training of revolutionary cadres*, mostly in the USSR itself, but also in Cuba and other surrogates, for intervention at the critical moment.

It is in this context that "ideology" has to be seen. The ideology of Soviet Communism has long ceased to have a significant attractive force. But as an instrument for the extension of Soviet power, ideology has an importance that far outstrips its intrinsic value.

As regards economic power, although the USSR does not compete with the United States and other free economies, the economic value of its gigantic arms exports is far from negligible. This, too, is a factor in Soviet global expansion.

Another point in Dr Brzezinski's article may be contested. He says that

> "it is quite doubtful that the Soviet leaders operate on the basis of some broad revolutionary blueprint, or that they even have a systematic long-term strategy."

According to the high-ranking Czechoslovak defector, General Jan Sejna, there is indeed a detailed world strategic blueprint, modified tactically indeed according to changing circumstances, but valid in the long term for all areas of the world. The plan is described in detail in his book, *We Will Bury You* (Sidgwick & Jackson, 1982).

London BRIAN CROZIER

BRIAN CROZIER'S comments are not, I feel, in basic conflict with the views that I expressed. It is true that Leninist ideology as a technique for seizing power, and for rationalising its monopolistic control, remains an important tool of Soviet policy. My point was, however, that as a mobilising and attractive force, capable of stirring the imaginations of millions of peoples, the Soviet ideology—and the Soviet system that it reflects—has suffered a catastrophic decline. By and large, the Soviet experiment is increasingly perceived worldwide as an historic failure.

As to the "blueprint" issue, it may be a matter of semantics. The Soviet leaders doubtless have a broad strategy for their competition with the United States. But on day-to-day, or even year-to-year, issues this policy tends to be shaped by bureaucratic infighting, personal rivalries, and *ad hoc* responses to specific external opportunities. Much also depends on the degree to which the Soviet system is guided by a leader firmly in control. That lately has not been the case, with the result that Soviet decision-making is also part of the struggle for power. The notion of a blueprint is, therefore, too neat an idea.

ZBIGNIEW BRZEZINSKI

Washington, D.C.

Lenin's Nose

LESZEK KOLAKOWSKI'S remark (ENCOUNTER, May) that Lenin's mummy may prove to be made of wax reminds me of a story related to me last year by a distinguished Finnish doctor, which he had picked up while attending a conference in the Soviet Union several years ago.

He was approached by Russian colleagues, who asked him and his Finnish associates whether they could help the Russians to acquire knowledge about American embalming techniques. They were, it appeared, somewhat anxious about the adequacy of the traditional Russian techniques for embalming Mr Brezhnev, whose health already at that time was known to be precarious.

But the Finns were more than a little surprised to learn the reason for the Russian doctors' concern. They were told that dissidents—they believe they were Estonian students—attacked Lenin's sarcophagus in early 1980 and before the guards could stop them they succeeded in knocking off Lenin's nose.

Eminent Soviet medics were called in to replace the nose; and it seems that on examining the mummy they found that the embalming technique which was used was not altogether satisfactory. Replacing the nose apparently took some time and was found to be a tricky operation, which is said to be the reason why the Lenin Mausoleum in Red Square was closed for several months at this time. (Officially, it was said that it was closed for cleaning and repairs in preparation for the Moscow Olympics.)

A plastic nose was eventually fitted, but when the mausoleum was reopened, the mummy was placed further away from the spectators, and this was not merely as a precaution against a repeat attack. To the initiated, it seems, there is a slight difference in the before and after profile.

Attempts to verify this otherwise unverifiable story by acquiring photographs of the before and after mummy came to nothing. There appear to be few, if any, extant photographs of the mummy before the alleged operation; and none from after.

HILARY BARNES

Copenhagen

Andropov, Reformer?

I WAS PLEASED to read the critical and sceptical account in ENCOUNTER (Leo Wieland, "Comrade Andropov's Basic Problem", November 1983). That kind of approach, with its detailed evidence, has been conspicuously missing, and there has been in the Western press a common journalistic refrain, to wit: Yuri Andropov, the Red Army and the *KGB* recognise the ineffective tenets of Marxist-Leninist doctrine and want to introduce decentralised

WE NOTE, *with regret and deep sadness, the passing of* ENCOUNTER *contributors and friends in 1982–83.*

DWIGHT MACDONALD
LOUIS KRONENBERGER
GERSHOM SCHOLEM
VARLAM SHALAMOV
PETER DE MENDELSSOHN
SIR JOHN FOSTER

HERMAN KAHN
SENATOR HENRY JACKSON
NIKOLAUS PEVSNER
IAN NAIRN
ARTHUR KOESTLER
REBECCA WEST
CONSTANTINE FITZGIBBON
SIR DUNCAN WILSON

RAYMOND ARON
MARY RENAULT
JIRI LEDERER
ALFRED FRIENDLY
ANDRÉ CHAMSON
LEONARD SCHAPIRO

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planning and market incentives to stimulate the USSR's ailing economy.

Several recent books—including *Andropov: Challenge to the West* by Arnold Beichman and Mikhail S. Bernstam—have demolished the thesis that Yuri Andropov is, or ever was, a liberal on economic affairs. In addition, recent evidence from the USSR indicates that the Andropov régime is advocating a hard-line, more orthodox Marxist-Leninist economic policy.

For example, P. Ignatovskii, writing in the August 1983 issue of *Kommunist*, argues that the USSR's economic ills can only be corrected by more centralised control, more people dedicated to orthodox Marxist-Leninist policies, less reliance on monetary incentives, and a rejection of new success indicators. All journalists should be a bit more circumspect about their sources before they present a new portrait of the Soviet leader.

STEVE H. HANKE

Johns Hopkins University
Baltimore, Maryland.

Revolution & Murder

I READ with great interest the Urban-Kirkpatrick interview [ENCOUNTER, November], and I can quite understand how it moved Lord Gladwyn to cite that text when he participated in the House of Lords debate on Grenada [ENCOUNTER, January]. In fact as things have developed both subjects—US foreign policy, as presented by Ambassador Jeane Kirkpatrick; and the impact on world opinion of the Grenada liberation—are closely connected. And your readers may well be interested in two passages which belong together.

The first is from the recent speech which Mrs Kirkpatrick made to the UN General Assembly.

> "The United States believes that there is, as some nations have suggested, a parallel that can in fact be drawn between the action in Grenada and the Soviet action in Afghanistan—a very meaningful parallel. Just as Maurice Bishop was murdered in Grenada because he tried to free himself from the Soviet stranglehold, so too was Mohammed Daoud murdered in Afghanistan. And after him, Hafizollah Amin was murdered in Afghanistan.
>
> They, too, discovered that the only thing more dangerous than embracing the Soviet bear is trying to break loose from its deathly grip. They too learned that the price of trying to reverse the course of history—the inexorable course of history in the Soviet view—is violent death. This, and this alone, is the parallel between Grenada and Afghanistan. The difference is that the people of Grenada have now been spared the cruel fate of the people of Afghanistan."

If this is, and I think it is, "the real parallel", how is it that there is so much confusion on the issue?

My second passage is from an article by Jonathan Steele in *The Guardian* (London) which, in its wilful ignorance, throws a blinding light on the subject:

> "Why and how Grenada's prime minister, Maurice Bishop, died will be debated for years to come. In the varied history of Marxist revolutionary movements, Grenada's experience offers an almost unique case where the founder and leader of the revolution was killed.
>
> What happened to the process in Grenada to lead Bishop to a fate which revolutionaries in larger and more globally significant countries were all spared? The only rough parallel seems to be the murder of Afghanistan's Nur Muhammed Taraki in 1979."

"All spared"?

Somewhere between "almost unique cases" and "only rough parallels" lies the vast historical record of founders and leaders of revolutions who have in point of fact been killed. A pattern of "eternal recurrence" was formulated in the well-known phrase, "The revolution devours its own children. . . ." One thinks of Trotsky and Bukharin after the Bolshevik Revolution, of Liu Sha-chi after Mao's Purge, of the French Revolution's Danton and Robespierre (chronicled so memorably by Wajda in his brilliant motion-picture recently). If Mr Steele is truly interested in "what happened to the process" he should be reminded that political murder is hard to establish if one refuses to look at the corpses.

LOUIS LABIN

Paris

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