

freedom first

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ORGAN OF THE INDIAN COMMITTEE FOR CULTURAL FREEDOM

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After Twentysix Years

by PHILIP SPRATT

Having come to India fresh from Cambridge University in 1926 to take a hand in establishing the Communist Party of India, Philip Spratt, now one of the Secretaries of the Indian Committee for Cultural Freedom, visited Europe this summer after an absence of twenty-six years to participate in the International Exposition of Arts in Paris organised by the Congress for Cultural Freedom. Here he shares his impressions with the reader.

THE argument between libertarians and totalitarians over culture and cultural policy has not been entirely one-sided. Though very few defend Soviet policy in relation to science or journalism, the case is otherwise as regards literature and the arts.

Many ordinary people in the west, at least, must have felt some sympathy with Stalin when he demanded "tunes you can hum". The totalitarians — for the Nazis hold the same sort of views — have in a certain sense taken the side of the common man in their attack on the peculiarities of twentieth-century literature, painting and music.

The line of cleavage in this matter, between the highbrows and the rest, does not now run parallel to any political or class line. There was a time when it did. From Baudelaire and Heine the *avant garde* tended to take the revolutionary side in politics, and this remained true till after Lenin's death. As communism degenerated, it anticipated Hitler on art, as on so many other things. In 1936 Gide wrote: "I doubt if in any other country the mind is less free, more bent over, more terrorized, more vassalized than in the U.S.S.R." Since then the opposition between totalitarianism and the distinctive trends in modern art has been plain. But in this dispute a democratic vote might well go to the totalitarians. On one point at least — in disliking, though not in suppressing,

modern art — Churchill and Truman find themselves in agreement with Stalin.

In addition to lowbrow support, the Stalinists have a sociological argument. They declare that the queer-ness of modern art is a symptom of the decadence of bourgeois society.

It is by now fairly clear that the Marxian organic law is unsound. Capitalism is not bound by any internal necessity to decline and give way to communism. The main economic defects, at least, to which the Marxists point seem to be capable of remedy within a free social system. What is wrong with the world is not capitalism but technology, which has got out of control and is forcing changes of all kinds so fast that we cannot adapt ourselves to them.

Nevertheless, modern painting, music and literature are queer, and it is natural to assume that their peculiarities are in some way similar and derive from a common source. May their critics not be right?

On this question, I found the Exposition of the Masterpieces of the Twentieth Century in Paris enlightening. The living voice, even if it speaks a language very imperfectly understood, seems to have more authority than mere print. I heard little, perhaps, that Roger Fry and Herbert Read had not written; but Malraux, Read himself, Venturi, Cassou, Weidle made me feel that mere polite assent was inadequate. To them it was obvious, to be assumed rather than asserted, that if anything it is academic, realistic art that is decadent, that modern art is not bourgeois, that art has gained a new liberty by ceasing to be merely representational, and that Cezanne opened one of the most vigorous and glorious eras in the history of art.

More than this, the paintings themselves opened my eyes. I had always liked Cezanne, without being able to say why. Now I could see a broadly similar quality in Braque, Matisse, Derain, Modigliani, Picasso, even Miro, Gris, Chagall. And whatever these men are, they are not decadent. As an Austrian artist there present said, with the emphasis of deep conviction, "This is my world" — the modern masters portray.

Modern art is strange because it is trying seriously to deal with a strange world, a world indeed wildly different from any that man has ever before lived in. But despite the strangeness of the new world, this art is not fearful or despondent; it is an experimental, aspiring art, enjoying the new possibilities, glorying in freedom. One could see why Stalin had to suppress it. He did so not merely out of incomprehension or dislike, but because it expresses the freedom of the mind.

In Paris I also attended several concerts of modern music, and in London I heard some more. Britain is experiencing a musical renaissance, and interest is manifestly greater than before. It was astonishing to find otherwise conservative people listening with keen appreciation to Walton, Britten, Hindemith, Prokofiev, Shostakovich, and even Schoenberg. This new idiom has never pleased me, but I was able to feel something of its spirit. Though to the old-fashioned it appears harsh, it can be lively, and is often powerful. It is distinguished by a vigorous repudiation of sentiment, a rebellious freedom from convention and cliché, and a determined exploration of new possibilities. Again one is not surprised that Stalin feels it to be subversive.

And after all, the same is true of modern literature. Whatever else Joyce may be, there is no decadence in him. Which is decadent, the traditional verse of Noyes and Masfield, or the modernistic verse of Eliot and Auden?

It remains true that many intelligent people who value freedom are out of sympathy with modern art. In some degree that is inevitable. There are otherwise normal people who are born tone-deaf or colour-blind or unable to grasp mathematics. Probably many people who think they like traditional art understand it wrongly. The appreciation of art, like other cultural acquisitions, needs training, and as culture becomes more complex the amount of training increases. What training can do one sees in Europe. It is evident that a large part of the people of Paris have an educated understanding of modern painting. Similarly a large proportion of the people of England have an educated understanding of modern music.

This last, too, is new. I venture to think that the wider interest in music, and the large amount of good music composed in England recently, though due immediately to the B.B.C., are also symptoms of a deeper change, a greater maturity. There are many who fear that the economic levelling now going on in Britain, and in particular the squeezing of the upper and middle classes, will result in cultural

decline. So far the suggestion is rather that the reverse process is taking place.

I noticed during my visit welcome signs which I took to indicate that the British public are growing to a higher level of maturity, but I also felt that they are likely in the near future to need all the maturity, all the wisdom and restraint that they are capable of.

To a visitor returning after twenty-five years the outward aspect of Britain is pleasing. The standard of life of the ordinary people is higher, health seems to be better, towns and roads are better kept and cleaner; I fancied the social atmosphere was less snobbish; there is a good deal of evidence in architecture of a break with stuffy old ideas. The state of Britain is certainly testimony to the advantages of change by agreement.

But to the Englishman returning from India, the contrast with this country is enough to cause an attack of bad conscience. I could not suppress the feeling that all this prosperity is precarious. It is true, I believe, that the prosperity of the West is due only in a minor degree to exploitation of the colonies. But that the West does owe something to colonial exploitation is a fact, and what is of more practical importance, the colonial peoples know it, exaggerate it, and resent it. I took such opportunities as came my way, in speeches and otherwise, to remind people in France and Britain of this fact, and to warn them that their new colonial policies are still far from adequate to the situation of the 1950s, and that they will have to make further serious sacrifices if they are to win the friendship of the Asian and African peoples.

FREEDOM FIRST

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Notes

HOW NOT TO KEEP FRIENDS

ETERNAL vigilance is the price of liberty. Writing in a country where one sees Cominform agents moving in and out of the country without let or hindrance, one wishes more adequate measures were taken to guard the security of the country and its freedom. The U.S. Congress, in pursuit of its own national security, has enacted the MacCurran Act which prevents the admission into the United States of all those who are or have at any time been members of the Communist Party in any part of the world, though the U.S. Attorney-General is authorised to make exceptions in suitable cases. While the aim of the Act is legitimate, this appears to be a somewhat rough and ready measure which will not always serve its purpose. There are many dangerous Soviet agents who have never held a Party membership card. On the other hand, there are many men and women in India as elsewhere, who have been members of the Communist Party at one time or another in their lives who are today among the foremost of the fighters for freedom.

These observations are prompted by the case of an Indian trade union organiser, who is the General Secretary of the Mill Mazdoor Sabha (Textile Labour Union) in Bombay affiliated to the Socialist-controlled Hind Mazdoor Sabha, who recently received an invitation from Harvard University to attend an International Seminar on the Trade Union Movement. The invitee, Mr. Raja Kulkarni, happened, however, to have been a member of the Communist Party of India during the years 1930, 1940 and 1941. In the years that have since elapsed, he has proved the measure of his repudiation of that unfortunate association by his participation in the 'Quit India' Movement of 1942-43, his membership of the Socialist Party of India since 1946 and active trade union work on behalf of the Hind Mazdoor Sabha, which has brought on his head a fair share of Communist invective and vilification.

It is understood that Mr. Kulkarni's application for a visa to enter the United States for the purposes of attending this Seminar received the support of the U.S. Consular officials at this end. But, though this reference to Washington was made as far back as June 11, as of this writing Mr. Kulkarni is still in Bombay awaiting a reply. Meanwhile, half the period of the Seminar has already passed!

While there is no lack of appreciation of the fact that hard cases make bad law and that governmental machinery must inevitably take time to perform its functions, the psychological implications and consequences of such a situation leave a great deal to be desired. In an atmosphere as charged with anti-American emotionalism as exists in India today, we would like to think that it is not beyond the ingenuity of those concerned to see that, in a case of this nature, an answer to an application for a visa could be obtained in less than the seven weeks which have now elapsed.

Could it be that this failure to keep friends on the part of Dale Carnegie's compatriots stems from a pre-occupation with courting unfriendly people as currently exemplified by the exclusive interview given by the American Ambassador to a crypto-communist journal?

PROOF OF SLAVE LABOUR IN CHINA

MR. V. K. KRISHNA MENON capped his tenure of office as India's High Commissioner in London with a statement that must have brought a blush of shame to many an Indian cheek. Asked by a press correspondent in London on July 11 about forced labour in Communist China, *PTI-Reuter* reports Mr. Menon to have said in reply:

"Why are we all so concerned about forced labour? Under British rule in India there were large parts of the territory using forced labour I am not the Government of China nor are you. It is their business. If there is a violation of human rights, then the best thing is to bring it before the United Nations."

Now, Mr. Krishna Menon was probably too busy just then rushing about between London and New Delhi trying to organise an Indo-British united front against the U.S. and U.N. policy in Korea to notice it, but his concluding suggestion was already being given effect to at U.N. Headquarters in New York.

There the Committee to investigate charges of Forced Labour appointed by the Economic and Social Council of the U.N. was in session with a much more distinguished Indian diplomat, Sir A. Ramaswamy Mudaliar, in the chair.

A spokesman of the I.C.F.T.U. testified before the Committee that Communist China ranks second only to the USSR as a slave-owning power, with more than a million victims of this system. But there is no need to quote American, British or even anti-communist Chinese sources to establish the existence of forced labour in Communist China. Out of its own mouth can the Chinese dictatorship be convicted.

Thus, on October 11, 1951, the leading Chinese communist newspaper *Sen Min Jih Pao* carried this statement by the Minister for Public Security, Lo Sin-ch'ing, the Chinese Beria:

"The subjection of counter-revolutionaries to forced labour is an indispensable means for the liquidation of the counter revolutionary class"

Two days later, on October 13, the Hankow newspaper *Ch'ang Chiang Jih Pao* carried a speech confirming this from another leading Party Spokesman Teng Tzn-hui:

"When the masses had been mobilized and the counter-revolutionary flames quenched, it was the most enlightened policy (1) to seek reform through labour of lesser elements... (2) to suspend death sentences for two years."

According to *Ta Kung Pao*, the system of slave labour "has brought economic wealth to the nation" and on December 15, 1951, this paper proceeded to detail the production of this system in Canton Area alone as being "50,000 bricks, 90,000 tiles and 750 tons of lime each month."

According to another despatch from Peking on October 18, 1951, at Ch'ing Ho Farm, a kind of experimental slave camp run by the Peking Security Bureau since March 1950, slave labour had already built eight new villages, excavated one and one-half million cubic meters of ditches, and erected two power-driven pumping stations.

The Peiping report then goes on to boast about the inhuman callousness of the methods used:

"When the ditches were being dug last Spring the water froze, but some labourers stood digging barefooted on the ice and moving as much as 34 cubic meters a day."

Finally, to bring this story of primitive barbarism on to this year of grace 1952, the *Jih Pao* of Kwangsi of January 9, 1952, writes that the Camp Authorities should

- (1) "Point out to the labourers that they should bow and confess their misdeeds and guilt in the face of the people and that 'reform' through labour is their only path;
- (2) Mobilize the culprits to criticize and supervise each other."

Would Mr. Krishna Menon and the others who talk incessantly of the great "achievements" of Communist China like any more proof of the methods by which these results, such as they are, have been achieved? And why, if we may venture to ask, has *PTI-Reuter* failed to report the hearings before the

U.N. Committee on Forced Labour so that the truth might be known to the people of India?

AID TO TUNISIA

IT is now clear that those who sponsored the move for a special session of the U.N. General Assembly to consider the Tunisian question have failed to get the support of thirty-one member States as required by the Charter.

Here is an issue that is crystal clear, of the right to self-determination of a people well within the bounds of the free world. There are no complicating factors here as in Indo-China where the baleful presence of the Soviet agent Ho Chi Minh distorts and delays the advent of Indo-Chinese freedom. M. Bourgiba and his Destour Party have expelled communist infiltrators into their ranks and liberated the Tunisian trade unions (now affiliated to the I.C.F.T.U.) from the grip of the W.F.T.U. and its local agents. Public opinion in America and in Britain is behind the Tunisian demand.

The French are seeking to bully their U.S. allies in NATO to withhold support to the Tunisians by threatening to disrupt the unity of the Democracies in the face of the totalitarian threat. French irresponsibility tends here, as elsewhere, to be the rock on which the unity of the free world founders. It is to be hoped that by the time the U.N. General Assembly meets in October, U.S. patience with the French attitude will have been exhausted and a more forthcoming attitude will be adopted such as the one by which a few years back American pressure helped to force the Dutch out of Indonesia.

It is characteristic of the true alignment of forces that it was at a public meeting in Bombay held under the auspices of the Democratic Research Service, with M. R. Masani in the chair, that Margaret Pope, the accredited representative of the Destour Party, launched the "Aid Tunisia" campaign in this country and Asoka Mehta, a member of the Executive of the Indian Committee for Cultural Freedom, announced the proposal to set up a joint committee to promote the campaign. Anti-totalitarians in India as elsewhere are sought to be smeared by the communists and their fellow-travellers as "stooges of Western Imperialism". Queer stooges, these!

THE RIGHT TO MAKE FILMS

D R. KESKAR raised quite a little flutter of excitement and indignation in the Indian Film World when he recently addressed the Film Federation of India. While no one can quarrel with his implied

criticism that the general standard of Indian films is depressingly low, many will deplore his "friendly" threat that, unless producers improve their production materially, Government would be obliged to impose a stricter censorship. This comes as a blow at a time when the film world is rejoicing over the recent judgment of the United States Supreme Court in the *Miracle* case in the course of which the Court proclaimed that the term "freedom of speech" includes the freedom of making films.

Stricter censorship might perhaps stop the most vulgar parts of a film from reaching the public, but it will not be conducive to a better class of films being made. Besides, too much censorship might have the effect of paralysing the industry altogether, as would appear to have happened in Poland, where the Government issued a series of "suggestions" about what kinds of film were thought to be suitable for showing in that country. Among acceptable plots were mentioned those which showed that the "help and friendship of the U. S. S. R. were the foundations of the victory" and those which showed "the victory of mechanized agriculture".

The example of Poland is particularly noteworthy because of the ill-conceived proposal which has been mooted that the Film Divisions of the Indian Govern-

ment should commence producing full-length feature pictures. Mr. J. B. H. Wadia, one of the pioneers of the Indian talkie, who has been twice President of the Indian Motion Picture Producers' Association, has some very pertinent things to say about all this in a recent article of his in *Screen*.

"Because of its position of vantage", writes Mr. Wadia, "the Government is already exercising a virtual monopoly in the production of documentaries and newsreels. . . . One fine morning we may all wake up to find that the Government intends also to have a sort of indirect control over the production of all feature films in the country, again advancing the delightfully seductive argument to help the industry to produce better-class films. And from indirect control to direct control at some still future date will be the logical culmination of this apparently harmless first step."

"One can understand the justification" continues Mr. Wadia, "of the so-called feature films for public consumption of single-track educational value produced in Stalin's Russia or Mao Tse-tung's China. . . . But a feature film from the government for the time being in power in a democratic country, like Great Britain or the United States, is unheard-of. To the best of my knowledge there is not a single precedent in those countries."

The Poet and the Challenge of the Times

by TAMBIMUTTU

(Former Editor of *Poetry*, London)

THE crisis in the world of modern English verse is too well known to need emphasising. With a diminishing public and market many a poet has been either silenced and absorbed into the B.B.C. and British Council, or has become an advertising copy-writer.

The dabblers in historical materialism like David Daiches in America or Christopher Caudwell and George Orwell in England attribute this chiefly to the anti-social behaviour of the modern poet. He is anti-social since he is a bourgeois and opposes a highly individualistic, even anarchist assemblage of values to society. The capitalist world running to seed, or becoming violent, as ordained by Marx, the poet in the role of hero projects his enormous "I" and becomes Hamlet and Macbeth, Faust, Prufrock or Robinson Crusoe. This competitive and mutually destructive projection of individualism which is also the hall-mark of unfettered capitalism creates a world of chaos and

anarchy. The poet works apart from society and life in what critics have termed an ivory tower.

Following this thread of argument, Shakespeare (for them) moving within bourgeois illusion glorified the unfettered will of the individual in the character of the prince, in his Macbeth, Hamlet, or Romeo, breaking all outward forms, and expressing the individual. All Shakespeare's heroes are princely, with a round public life which is collective in appearance, and through which others can realize themselves. In the Elizabethan age the classes, we must remember, were not yet differentiated, which is the reason Christopher Caudwell in his "Illusion and Reality" finds Shakespeare's art "collective".

On the other hand, during the Jacobean age, which immediately followed, and which he compares to our own, the poet withdrew from the glittering court life that had become corrupt. The poetry is scented with

parchment, leather binding and midnight oil. A love song is so sprinkled up with conceits that it is inconceivable a swain could have quoted it to his maid; the poetry is not meant to be bandied about with relish in rollicking mixed company, but rather it is the scholar's poetry — poetry that is private and meant for silent reading in the musty libraries of an inner coterie. The period is certainly remarkably like our own.

According to the Marxist interpretation of literature, the poetry of the Jacobeans, and indeed of poets of all ages is the direct result of the economic and social conditions of the times. Thus the metaphysical poets (Jacobean) were a reaction against the growing anti-bourgeois feudalism of the king, whose will as an absolute monarch had previously been a creative force.

Historical materialists can similarly explain away all periods of English literature: England's first revolutionary poet was John Milton, the outcome of bourgeois revolt against the monarchy and privileged nobility; Dryden, Suckling, Lovelace are the amalgamation of the aristocracy and bourgeoisie against the people; the Romantic Revival is escape into Romance by Messrs. Byron, Wordsworth and Co., through disillusionment, when the militant bourgeoisie frightened by the French Revolution, identify their interests with the landed aristocracy; Swinburne, Tennyson, Browning are the pessimism or escapism due to the ruthless manner in which cut-throat competition reduced capitalists to the proletarian abyss! As for the Victorian poets — following the line of argument laid by Engels in *Anti-Duhring* — they only imitated the bourgeois capitalists in producing for "the market" instead of use. Poetry has become a "commodity-fetisch" or "art for art's sake" destined for "the market" which is in itself an illusory development of bourgeois economy. This meant that a wedge was successfully driven between the worlds of art and reality.

It is the unilateral, rational approach to reality, whether it be Surrealism, Imagism, Objective Reporting or Historical Materialism that is the enemy of poetry and that I have tried to point out for eleven years in my magazine *Poetry, London*. These attitudes savour of Cartesian *raison* where an abstract set of manufactured values are imposed on life and literature as absolute truth, and a fission occurs between theory and living, literature and life. Life cannot be lived to a formula, or literature reeled out according to the specifications of Objective Reporting, Surrealism or Historical Materialism, as that great modern philosopher Ortega Y Gasset has pointed out. For the objective truths of movements, those rationalizations,

real in a certain time, place and state and convenient spring boards for artists, are but partial apprehensions of reality. It is the round, circular view, the catholic view that adds to the richness of life and reflects it in all its realness and perplexity.

When I arrived in England in 1937 the poetic landscape was split into warring factions that were mutually destructive. There were the retrenchers of Georgian extraction in their country hide-outs, who while warbling of peat and heather, Chimborazo and Cotopaxi, ignored the city and what was happening to humanity in the present. This attitude was thoroughly condemned by other groups, though it is typical, in any age, of rural life, rural peace, and rural imagination, which must always be. It produces such magnificent poets as Walter de la Mare, the poet of innocence and childhood; Kathleen Raine and Norman Nicholson in Cumberland; and the interesting work of Adam Drinan of the Celtic bogs; and the tramp W. H. Davies (in the ideal State of course there will be no wanderlust and no tramps!). There were the heirs of Celtic mysticism and metaphysics — notably Dylan Thomas, the mystic of nature and sex, surely one of the prodigies of our times, who was renewing and re-vivifying the English language. There was also T. S. Eliot, the poet of disillusion and of regeneration, who was a good mirror of the times. The list can be increased, but the present one will serve my purpose.

Opposed to all these poets was a Marxist group with the magazine *New Verse* for spokesman. Auden, Spender, MacNeice supported the magazine and called themselves Objective Reporters who were only concerned with "the real world of objects and events" which they were to report faithfully. Consequently, in Objective Reporting, a unilateral, mechanistic and rational approach to literature was the fashion of the day. All the previous poets mentioned were condemned in *New Verse*. Poetry became precise and dry and "sensuous" factors smacking of the emotions like word-music, and imagery that was rich as in Dylan Thomas or George Barker were strictly curtailed. The resulting poetry was a type of poetic journalism.

This movement was necessary as an antidote to Georgian inflation, but it did not justify the almost Fascist indifference to other types of writing and experience. It was a totalitarian attitude, as one-sided as the Marxian analysis of literature, and it ignored Eliot's theorem that in an age different literatures with different viewpoints can exist that are as interesting and genuine. The totalitarians, or Objective Reporters were against the freedom of expression.

Marxists would say of course that the bourgeois idea of freedom is no freedom at all since it only meant freedom from social responsibilities for the poet who had cast himself in the role of a hero and had become anti-social — Marxian freedom for the artist, on the other hand, it has been made clear, is only non-freedom of expression, harnessed to propaganda for social forces that make up the newly erected State, and to glorify those forces considered socially useful.

It was therefore to encourage free speech in verse, to put forward the catholic point of view, that *Poetry, London* was founded. It encouraged Marxists like Maurice Carpenter and Paul since they wrote interestingly; ex-fascists like Roy Campbell since he was the best translator of Lorca and one of the most robust of modern poets; catholics like David Gascoyne and Kathleen Raine; Objective Reporters like Bernard Spencer, Keith Douglas, James Reeves; romantic myth-makers of the Dylan Thomas tradition like W. S. Graham; Georgians like Herbert Palmer and Charles Williams; American continuers of an out-of-fashion European tradition like Conrad Aiken; conservatives like Lawrence Durrell. I published books by all these antagonistic poets with differing approaches to reality, a function which would have been impossible in a totalitarian state. One remembers what happened to creative activity in totalitarian societies. One thinks of Lorca in Spain, and Yessenin and Mayakovsky in post-revolutionary Russia. The last two were victims of the state curtailing the freedom of the artist. Communist sympathisers blamed it on their bourgeois upbringing that was unable to cope with the new consciousness. The way we look at it, what they lacked was the freedom to develop their own potentialities because of pressure from the State.

To return to the diminishing public of the poet: why is it while the State-subsidised poets of the U.S.S.R. enjoy a circulation of two to three million copies, modern English poets are considered lucky if they sell five hundred of a collection? It all depends on what one means by poetry. Patience Strong of the *Daily Mirror* for instance has enjoyed a readership of more than three million souls and unloaded on us her books of jingles by the spadeful. Miss Duer Miller's *White Cliffs of Dover* too, full of phoney sentiments, achieved a fabulous circulation. The song sheets from Tin Pan Alley are as popular as ever. But this is not the type of writing that concerns the modern poet. Quite deliberately he has set about limiting his public and has chiefly dedicated himself to solving technical problems like renewing the lan-

guage, enlarging the scope of symbolic meaning, and exploring the new fields of sensation and experience that have been suddenly opened to him by the progress in the sciences — for instance psychology. He has deliberately, by free choice, limited the scope of his canvas. He has been busy perfecting his technique which is now beginning to bear fruit in writers like Eliot and Christopher Fry who have a larger public than most poets — the modern poet knows his future is in the theatre.

Should a poet desire the kind of popularity enjoyed by Patience Strong or by Cole Porter he knows he has but to change the field of his appeal, but at the moment he is quite satisfied writing the kind of poems he does. What does it matter if he sells only fifty copies of a book since he already does another job breadwinning and poetry is only his hobby? Far from the Victorians being commodity-fetichists, it is those people who judge poetry by the size of its circulation who are the real victims of producing for "the market". This is the inherent paradox in the Marxists' outlook.

These critics, whose approach to poetry is as if it were merchandize to be turned off the assembly line, according to specifications laid by the Commune in the successful working of a five-year plan, declare that the poet has become personal and private, only because he is disillusioned with bourgeois conditions. The same thing happened they say in the 17th Century. It is, however, the height of folly to interpret poetry in this manner, solely through economics. It is almost as bad trying to measure an elephant with a pair of laboratory callipers!

For we know, many more factors go into the making of a poem, than the economics at the time of its creation. For instance there is the small matter of the individuality of the poet and the state of the use of language when the poet lived. There is also the insignificant detail of what the other art forms in current use like the novel, the film, the radio-play were capable of achieving. The poet would not be expected to duplicate them. There is also the problem of refining and renewing language — the type of poem written today depends on all the poems that have gone before for its genesis. That is why in history there are so-called barren periods which are periods of stocktaking and experiment.

The Marxists' view of literature is in this way confused, and it is therefore no wonder *Pravda* has misunderstood Eliot, Lawrence, Joyce. Marxism is all very well, but its uncompromising critical attitude to literature as solely the dominant emotional, economic and collective complex of the times is truly terrifying, unreal and intolerable.

To the Editor

Sir,

The first article "The Open Society" in your first issue pleased me more than anything I have read in recent months — magnificent. Please send the next copy by V.P.P.

Years ago, Justice Madgavkar spoke for only a few minutes on A.I.R. to state his proposition that Hindu society has survived these centuries not because of its static social organization but because it permitted a series of great Acharyas to lead revolts and administer periodic shocks to a lethargic body. He argued that it is the resilience of a society to its critics, even revolutionaries, that determines its capacity of survival and not its hide bound rigid structure.

It seems so obvious that the tender sapling of freedom should grow in the sun, be buffeted if necessary by winds from all directions, so that in time it can reach the skies strong alike to stand all storms and earthquakes as well to shelter the people around the region it grows in. Sounds reasonable? But how many people in this country believe in Reason, which has been defined to include not merely logic but sound impulse? If your paper published a column "This is India" and quoted the sayings even of Ministers, you would gather a mass of intellectual garbage such as would alarm even a monk of the 12th Century A.D. in Europe.

Homeopathy and Ayurvedic medicines have been recognized by the State because, if you please, the members of the Legislature and general public clamour for such recognition. The statement that Birth Control by the Rhythmic Method would be advised at half a dozen centres under State auspices because that method meets the religious susceptibilities of the people is another example. It is stated that the decision is of the Cabinet after considering all factors. What factors—scientific or Church prejudices? Hindu society has never interfered in researches in the spirit or in the material field; it certainly led in the research in matters of sexual behaviour in the frankest manner, untrammelled by theories of God and his ribs. In a secular State why am I foisted with Church dogma on a vital problem, and how does the Cabinet headed by a freethinker tolerate it?

Inflexible law and rigid order preferred over the seeming disorder of liberty, intuition and faith opposed to rational thought, the function of society over-riding the instincts and needs of the individual as opposed to its true function as means for the realisation of the "dignity and worth of the individual

man" (Wordsworth, I believe), these forces are contending even amongst the most enlightened minds. I was talking the other day to a lady from abroad and when I mentioned that often poets and artists let themselves go in sheer fun without purpose, she objected strongly, everything must have a purpose, and art for its own sake or for the sake of artists' release of exuberant heart was all wrong. You see, she was a Roman Catholic. So when I read this paper of your society and its criticism of the Soviet Art Exhibition I laughed. Long ago I read an article in Penguin New Writing on Malinowsky, the Russian poet—supposed to be among the greatest. It was written by a warm admirer, but Malinowsky's statements on poetry were sheer rollicking farce: poetry must serve social purpose, it is true and valid only if the poet can inspire the worker to step up production, make him socially conscious of his responsibility to his comrades, etc., etc. Malinowsky, threw himself down from an upper storey of a Paris apartment, and I do not wonder.

We have a lot of cultural obscurantists to release and to be released from. I hope your society will not concentrate only on political tyranny or dictatorship but think as well of the numerous small channels through which the soul of man can be eaten into.

Yours, etc.

Calcutta.

Raman K. Desai

INTERNATIONAL CONGRESS OF JURISTS

Mr. Purshottam Trikamdas, a leading lawyer of Bombay and a member of the Indian Committee for Cultural Freedom, has been representing India at the World Congress of Jurists, meeting in West Berlin from 25th to 31st July, which has been convened by the Investigating Committee of Free Jurists, of which Dr. Theo Friedenau is Chairman, with the assistance of the German Federal Government and Dr. Ernst Reuter, the Lord Mayor of Berlin.

Taking stock of various branches of Law which are mainly concerned with what are described in our Constitution as Fundamental Rights and Penal Law, the Congress will also consider the state of law in various countries, with particular reference to Iron Curtain countries, and try to test them on the touchstone of Fundamental Human Rights and Freedoms.

NEW SECRETARY OF I.C.C.F.

Mr. Ka. Naa. Subramaniam, the well-known Tamil writer, has been co-opted as a member of the Executive of the Indian Committee for Cultural Freedom and nominated as one of the Secretaries of the Committee.

Review

Books:

Revolution in China

by Robert Guillain — Hind Kitabs Ltd. As. 8/-

Brain Washing in Red China

by Edward Hunter — Vanguard Press. Rs. 3/-

IT is fashionable now in India to be pro-Chinese. From Prime Minister Nehru to our bookbinder Namamuni, everyone seems to expect it. China is Asiatic. So India should be on its side. We are now told that historically India and China have always stood together. I do not seem to have heard this bit of history in my school-going days. Because of Red China, quite a few scientists and politicians seem to assume undue importance and get a lot of publicity. One name is constantly in the papers and referred to as the "eminent Gandhian", by persons whom I for one would not have suspected of admiring Gandhi or Gandhism. Mrs. Pandit is reported as saying one thing for the Americans, and one for the Indians, and thirdly contradicting anonymous and semi-anonymous statements.

The overall picture of the present publicity and propaganda about China suggest that everything is not all right in that State. Something is rotten in the state of China and it is being whitewashed over and over with coats and coats of pleasing paint. Germ warfare hysteria complicates the picture. One would like to know what has happened in China and what is happening and what is likely to happen? For the earnest student of New China, I can recommend these two books under review.

Revolution in China is a series of five articles by Robert Guillain, the distinguished French publicist, strung together into a book. The book suffers a little from the fact that they were written originally for newspaper publication. This fact does not, however, vitiate the objectivity of the book nor does it detract from the value of the observations made. Guillain knows his East rather well. He was present in Shanghai when it was occupied by communist troops and he was blocked in communist China for over four months.

"The idea still survives", says Guillain, "that the Chinese communists are not true communists", and adds that in view of the observations made on the spot this view cannot stand serious scrutiny. "The way it destroys and pulverizes its enemies" is reminiscent of Moscow methods. Guillain offers in the book evidence "of the inhuman moral basis on which it

intends to rest its power, on the same and perhaps a greater scale than its Soviet model". Public confessions and executions are narrated with all the simplicity of a personal observer. Guillain describes in detail "a monster round-up of counter-revolutionaries, the biggest so far." From Chinese papers themselves figures of liquidation are made up. One could not disagree with Guillain when he concludes that the present terror is a policy of suppression decided on in cold blood "with the intention systematically to destroy certain social categories considered to be unassimilable". The people must participate actively in the suppression — refusal to participate becomes a crime. The people are invited to spy and denounce. "Denunciation is not only a right but a sacred duty", the people are educated to believe. China might become a great military power. "It is on the way to becoming an offensive power."

Brain Washing in Red China is reportage of another kind. For reading this book, one will need a strong stomach. It too speaks of realities—more personal and more psychological reality. Guillain's account of public executions and spyings was gruesome enough, but those in *Brain Washing* are more intimate details of how the minds of men of New China are conditioned by psychological methods hitherto used only in curing the insane. There is a ring of truth in the whole tale which Hunter tells. At every stage the reader sits up and thinks that this is what evidently has been happening in Soviet Russia in the past decade; only, these things are happening with a lot more of thoroughness and Chinese cynicism in China. George Orwell's '1984' was fictitious — mostly drawn from the imagination. In the same way as Jules Verne's romantic fiction became reality in the course of a century, Orwell's fiction seems to have become reality in a decade. Passage after passage in Hunter's book reminds the reader of Orwell's masterpiece. Edward Hunter has brought to the telling of these incidents a consummate artistry and sincerity that are convincing. Hunter adds nothing imaginative to his pictures; he only presents objectively the bare facts of a few personal existences in Red China.

The sub-title of the book explains the word Brain Washing—"the calculated destruction of men's minds". This process of destruction is scientifically studied and undertaken by men trained specially for this task. Hunter narrates incident after incident, mostly in the words of a few persons who were the helpless subjects of the terrible Brain Washing that is going on now in China — the China to which our cultural

and other delegations go and come back pleased with themselves and with what they saw. *Brain Washing in Red China* gives you a picture of what these delegates do not see — a true picture of the Chinese backstage today. In horrifying but fascinating detail the methods by which the communists try to pulverise and prevent men's minds to the party's needs.

Short of quoting the whole book, I feel I cannot do justice to it. No page of it is dull. It rises often to literary heights — as in the pages on the Malayan scene. The whole thing is very absorbing and very disturbing — somewhat like the nineteenth century Russian masterpieces.

I shall not instance more than one story — the story of Chi, a student idealistic and intensely patriotic is typical. As a student in Peking he had expressed "dangerous thoughts", raised the question of the motivation and the rightness of Moscow. He was sent to the North China People's Revolutionary University to

have his brain washed clean of all such pre-Mao Tse-tung cobwebs. An intimate picture of the life of the student destined for brain washing emerges under Hunter's skilled hands. The moving narrative is highlighted by the account of how the students being taught to be correct communists witnessed the stripping and tearing to pieces of a woman whose crime was that she had had a husband who had been a landlord.

As one authority has voiced it : "If every thinking person in the free world can read this book, no one could any longer cling to the illusion that we can contain communism by good works, economic progress, and the establishment of a more just social order on our side of the Iron Curtain."

Ka. Naa. Subramaniam

(*Brainwashing in Red China* is obtainable from Messrs. Thacker & Co., Bombay, and the office of the Indian Committee for Cultural Freedom.)

Films:

Yukiwarisoo

THE great number of foreign films now congregated in Bombay is enough to turn the heads and spoil the eyesight of all cinema-goers. This critic is not made of the stuff that can stand two pictures a day; consequently the number of films which I am in a position to discuss is very limited; but among these few films the one that made the sharpest impression on me was the Japanese film "Yukiwarisoo".

I will tell you the story before saying anything about the picture. Since there are no English captions it must, at times, have been somewhat obscure to most of the audience. A left-over smattering of Japanese enabled me to follow it.

A happy young wife is preparing for the return of her husband, who has been away on a business trip. The bell rings — it must be him — but it turns out to be a small boy, who says this is his father's home, and his mother has sent him here to live. He brings a letter from her begging that since she cannot provide for him the child might be brought up here, for the man is his father.

It is easy to understand the wife's feelings when she is thus forced to take in this living proof of her husband's infidelity. The husband's return is postponed. The wife, bitterly as she has resented the child, finds herself becoming fond of him; and in the days when they are alone, waiting for the husband, a deep attachment grows up between the child and the woman. When the husband returns, however, the

wife's anger once more breaks out.

The little boy, sensing that all this trouble is on his account, tries to solve it by running away himself. The chase after the child and the snatching him from almost under the wheels of the suburban train is dramatic, but real and credible. As the three of them lie fallen on the bank after hurling themselves out of the train's way, the boy weeps for the first time. And a new, deep understanding of life and all humanity comes to the woman; as she decides that from now on *his* son shall also be hers.

Told badly, the story is simple, even ordinary. What makes it so infinitely moving is the restraint, the subtlety, and the exquisite good taste in its telling. It holds your attention from the first moment.

It is a proof of the Japanese virtue of restraint that, in a story which depends for effect entirely on the emotional conflicts of the characters, there is not one "scene" — neither a passionate love scene nor an angry quarrel. Again, for a film that does not have a great deal of activity or shifting scenery, (for most of the action takes place in one small suburban house) there is surprisingly little speech. You would think that the director would seek to create all his effects by speech.

Not at all — speech is vulgar; and it is restricted to the minimum. It is the angle of the camera, the shadows, the lightest movements of the actors which are made to tell the story.

L.F.

With Many Voices

'The deep
Moans round with many voices. Come, my friends,
'Tis not too late to seek a newer world.'

—Tennyson.

A famous English 17th-century divine, seeing a man on his way to be hanged, said fervently: "There, but for the grace of God, go I". Any Communist contemplating the fall of Ana Pauker must be tempted to murmur: "There, at any moment, by some whim of Stalin, may go I".

—W. N. EWER,

Diplomatic Correspondent of
the *Daily Herald*, London.

The Government of Pakistan has permitted women in the Central Superior Services to marry or remarry. So far, the rules laid down that women members of the Central Superior Services had to resign if they married or remarried.

—*Times of India*, 20th June, 1952.

The well known U.S. novelist, John Steinbeck, was asked here by the Italian Communist newspaper *L'Unita* on how he, as a Liberal, felt about what *L'Unita* called "American germ warfare" in Korea. He replied: "The only germs the U.N. are dropping in Korea are little pamphlets. These papers contain the most dangerous and communicable germs in the world—the truth. This is the germ that Russia fears more than any single thing."

—*Hindustan Times*, 2nd July, 1952.

The Senate Judiciary Committee said yesterday that Owen Lattimore has been an "articulate instrument of Soviet conspiracy" and has testified "untruthfully" before its sub-committee five times The Justice Department, although it has not yet received a copy of the report, said it would be given "prompt consideration".

—*Free Press Bulletin*, 3rd July, 1952.

[This was two days after the July issue of *Freedom First* had warned against the dangerous possibility of Lattimore being invited to lecture at Delhi University]

Shri Pyarelal writes :

"The method of fasting has more often been abused than rightly used since Gandhiji. To a certain extent, it was so even during his lifetime. Shri Jai Prakash's fast is an instance of its right use in its purest form. It is directed against nobody. It is essentially for self-correction

At a time when chaos and confusion is overtaking the thinking of even those who claim to follow Gandhiji, it is good to see a person like Jai Prakash setting an example in the practice in its purest form of a method that is essentially identified with Gandhiji's philosophy of Satyagraha.

—*Hindustan Times*, 9th July, 1952.

The Chief Justice of Bombay, Mr. M. C. Chagla, denounced on Sunday a reported Government directive to professors and lecturers in Government colleges that they should express no opinion in public on the topic of the medium of instruction in Bombay University.

While sincerely hoping that the report was not true, Mr. Chagla who is a former Vice-Chancellor of Bombay University, said: "How can we expect to think in terms of academic freedom in this country, if academicians are not allowed to express their opinion on the most important subject which concerns them and the educational world?"

—*Times of India*, 30th June, 1952.

Peking, June 8 — Stalin Prizes were awarded yesterday to Chinese writers Ting Ling, author of the novel 'The Sun Shines on the Sangkan River' and Chou Li-po, author of the novel 'Storm'. The presentations were made by the Soviet Embassy on behalf of the Stalin Prize Committee Presiding over the meeting, Chou-Yang, Vice-Chairman of the All China Federation of Literary and Art Circles, stated that the winning of the Stalin Prizes by these works is the highest honor for Chinese literary and art circles

In reply, prize winner Ting Ling said: "We think of our works being discussed at the Council of Ministers of the U.S.S.R., of Comrade Stalin's knowing us. When we think of such things, our elation and excitement are beyond description."

—*New China News Agency Broadcast* in English
morse to Europe & North America,
June 8 & 9, 1952.

A plea for a brick-and-mortar theatre worthy of Bombay, for the use of amateurs and professionals alike, was made by Mr. M. R. Masani, Chairman of

the Indian National Theatre, Bombay, presiding at its Annual General Meeting. Mr. Masani appealed to the Government to exempt bona-fide amateur theatre groups in the State from entertainment tax.

—*Hindustan Times*, 16th June, 1952.

A deputation on behalf of the Delhi Natya Sangh, led by Mrs. Kamladevi Chattopadhyaya, met Mr. Brahm Perkash, Chief Minister, Delhi, yesterday, and urged upon him the necessity of legislation exempting entertainment tax from all amateur dramatic performances in the State.

—*Hindustan Times*, 3rd July, 1952.

With the exception of only a handful, out of approximately a thousand paintings that are on show, all the exhibits seem to be either tutored or aided. Several paintings from Russia, including the Gold Medal winning piece, and Indonesia are beyond the shadow of a doubt, anything but sincere expressions of pure juvenile outlook. What is more astounding is the highest award, the President's Gold Medal, should have been given to an exhibit which is obviously by a person who has already acquired some skill and sophistication through training and practice and thereby has ceased to have a child's vision. Incidentally the winner is Marina Voskaniyaz, a 16-year old Russian girl.

—Review of Shanker's Exhibition of Child Arts.

—*Times of India*, 20th July 1952.

[Why "incidentally?"]

The Chinese philosopher-novelist, Lin Yutang has invented a normal size typewriter which types 90,000 Chinese characters at 50 characters a minute. The novelist, who lives in retirement at Cannes, has refused his invention to the Chinese Government until it pays American patent rights.

—*Times of India*, 19th July 1952

Carl Gerhard, a cabaret star in Stockholm, brought down the house at a performance last night when he said: "The most welcome woman tourist to visit Sweden would be Stalin's widow."

—*Free Press Bulletin*, 2nd July, 1952.

ARTISTS' AID FUND

THE Artists' Aid Fund was started in May 1948 by the wellknown Leyden family who pooled their creative efforts to give an Exhibition of painting and sculpture, the sale proceeds of which was constituted into a fund for giving financial assistance to needy artists. Out of this nucleus has now grown the Artists' Aid Fund. It fulfills one of the long felt-needs in the art life of Bombay.

The Artists' Aid Fund, as it is now constituted, is a selfhelp body. Its aims and objects are to give studio facilities to needy artists at a nominal hire, to provide a sale centre for the works of painters and sculptors and to act as a meeting place for artists in Bombay where they may discuss new ideas. A number of people have contributed beautiful art books which are not easily available in this country to form a well-stocked library. The Fund will be financed from membership fees which are very nominal, Rs. 12 for outsiders and Rs. 6 for members of the Bombay Art Society; from twenty per cent of the sales of artists' work at the centre, and from voluntary donations. If, as is hoped, two hundred members join, the centre can be a self-supporting one.

Artists in Bombay have responded very generously to this Fund and those who could not give help in cash have given their aid in kind. It is institutions like these, where the emphasis is on self-help, that spread the spirit of co-operative and democratic endeavour in the country.

F. S. M.

THE GREEN DEAN

"I spy with my little eye
Something that starts with G,
And my proof confirms G stands for germs,"
Says the Dean, "as all can see.
"No proof I lack of spiders black,
Mosquitoes and rats in the snow,
All kinds of thing with noxious stings,
As my documents will show."
"But why try a rat or a fly
For bacteriological war?"
His hearers ask, "when for this task
A bomb could do much more?"
"Mosquitoes, mice, rats, flies on ice
We must presume are dead;
Might not disease among Chinese
By China's flies be spread?"
"Bugs, lice and fleas the free Chinese
Have purged," the Dean replies—
"These insect swarms in lethal forms
Germs-planes have dropped from the skies.
"A bible oath I would be loath
To question or to doubt—
God-fearing men around Mukden
Have searched these carriers out."
His hearers all for a mission call
By a supra-national team
But this request in vain is pressed
On Peking's Red regime.
The Chinese know they cannot show
What never was there to be seen—
It may be said that the Dean is Red,
But what makes the Red Dean green?

SAGITTARIUS

(In the New Statesman and Nation)