

JANUARY 1955

'A June Night And No War'

by Charles Morgan

[Presidential Address delivered at the XXVI International P.E.N. Congress in Amsterdam.]

FOR several years you have been relieved of the burden of a presidential address. Mine shall be brief. First I would thank you all for the opportunity you have given me to occupy this place. I shall occupy it as far as possible silently, intervening only to increase the speed and preserve the amenities of your discussion. In this I would ask your help, particularly the help of those whom I may call our formal speakers. If they were able to take rather less than their allotted time they would give more opportunity for the short and informal intervention of others, and so preserve the liveliness of debate. They would also relieve me of the unpleasant duty of converting myself into a clock. I dislike interrupting my friends; I hope, therefore, they will generously interrupt themselves.

Next, I would say to our hosts how proud and glad I am that, having first come to their country as a prisoner-of-war I now return to it as your President and their Guest. Perhaps prisoner is not the right word. I used it because I did not wish to abuse the language of Holland. Nothing in that language is more difficult than pronunciation of the letter G. If you pronounce it in your throat you are a vulgarian; if you pronounce it in your teeth - well, you are English or French. You will understand then why I prefer to describe myself as prisoner rather than attempt to say that at Groningen, at Badegraven, at Gouda, and in the gemeente Rosendaal bij Velp I was *geïnterneerd*. I hope that our Dutch friends will forgive the errors of a bad pupil. The truth is that they spoke my language so well that they gave me little opportunity to learn their own. But this I can

say from long and happy experience; to be a prisoner in the Netherlands is to be a guest, and to be a guest is to be a prisoner of their beauty and hospitality. There is no country in which, as evening falls, it is pleasanter to sit with one's friends and say: "A June night and no war;" It is a phrase of gratitude and wonder which I have used more than once in my writings and which came into my mind again last night as I looked out from my window over this great city of Amsterdam. To my father and grandfather war was an exceptional disaster. To men and women of my generation peace has been a rare gift. The thirty years between the ages of twenty and fifty are the core of any man's working life. Of these years, in my case and in the case of many others taking part in this Congress, one third were spent in total war. This alone is enough to warn us not to take peace for granted but to live each hour of it fully and without fear. Above all let us not allow the name of peace to be taken in vain and perverted to the uses of terror. If its sands are running out, so are the sands of our lives. That is not a reason to allow our faith to disintegrate or our pens to tremble in our hands.

The early Christians believed that the material world would end in their lifetime: science has given to us a new reason for that belief. They were the more steadfast. To them the shortness of the time was a means of grace; so may it be to us. It deprives materialism of its profit and tyranny of its power. It is a reason to love and to be at peace. It is an amnesty to all the imprisonments of the mind; It empties out all the philosophies of disintegration. To say: "A June night and no war!" is to count our benefits, not to despair.

Of what has happened since the last great armistice of 1945 I will say nothing except to remind you that, among the many national centres which together make up the international organisation of writers called P.E.N., there is one which, in accordance with our charter commands our especial respect and care—I mean that which is called the Centre of Writers in Exile. If we are asked what P.E.N. is, I believe that the simplest and truest of all answers is this: "We

exist in order that no such organisation as that of the Writers in Exile may have need to exist. We labour in order that there may be no more writers in exile and that the very phrase which describes them may be purged from the vocabulary of mankind."

Certainly it was in this spirit of self-dedication to the liberties of the mind that I accepted the great honour you have done me in choosing me to succeed Benedetto Croce as your International President. It is in the same spirit that I shall try to serve you with an impartiality which is perhaps natural in a man who is not given to committees and councils and congresses, who is at heart a solitary writer with an active distaste for coteries and conspiracies, who cares much more that a book be well written than that it provoke any mob to shout under any window, and who, in brief, is I hope, a friendly but not a collective animal.

Other writers take a different view of their responsibilities in the contemporary world. They feel it to be their duty to persuade others to shout applause under what they believe to be the right window and to throw stones at the wrong one. The difference between them and me is a difference of emphasis and temperament and timing rather than of final principle. Each of us, as a man, is bound to bear witness to the truth that is in him, and if his instrument is a pen he is entitled to use it as Voltaire did in France and Swift in England. In other words, pamphleteering and political satire are legitimate activities in writers who have a taste for them, and even those of us who have no such taste may sometimes be compelled into the arena by some injustice that our conscience bids us resist.

Nevertheless, the difference of timing and temperament remains, and it is a difference which, in such an assembly as this, we ought peacefully to recognise as a fact of nature, not as a cause of self-righteousness in ourselves or of contempt for writers who differ from us. Some are more militant than others; some are more detached. Tolstoy was each in turn: Turgenev, a dedicated artist if ever there was one, liked to believe that the importance of his *Sportman's Sketches* was less in their aesthetic merit than in their influence upon the emancipation of the serfs; and yet it was Turgenev who, upon his deathbed, entreated Tolstoy to abandon his social and religious propaganda and return to story-telling. We writers are strange creatures who have always found it hard to live together intellectually and find it harder than ever now.

The remedy is not in a vague appeal for tolerance or compromise. The remedy is in our trying, at this Congress and in all our contacts with our fellow-writers, to ask ourselves the right questions. For example: "This man, whom I think of as a coward and an escapist because he will not fight my battle side by side with me, is he not perhaps engaged in the quest of a reality different from my own but no less real?" Or from the other point of view: "This man, whom I think of as a militant materialist who has surrendered his individuality and become the mouth-piece of a party or a sect, is not he also perhaps dedicated in conscience, though on a level of conscience

different from my own?" Or from both points of view: "Does not this stranger suffer as I suffer? Was not this enemy once a child?"

If, for saying that, I am to be condemned as sentimental, I can endure it. I care desperately that the opportunity for good offered by this Congress be not wasted in lobbying for votes, in manoeuvring for position, in the proud and rigid bitterness of partisan minds. Whoever has come here as a recruiting sergeant, he alone is an enemy; let him depart. Whoever has come here to learn and imagine, let him be our friend. We are not to be afraid of feeling and vision; they are the lifeblood of reason. That is why for me personally art is more important than opinion or judgement; it is anterior to them; it is of the spirit, they are of the flesh. But I am not here to express myself, but to listen to your debates. One thing only I pray for; that when, at the end of each day's work, we look from our windows upon this peaceful city and say once more, while we may, "A June night and no war," we remember those who died for that freedom which we are permitted to enjoy, and those who, being prisoners and captives, have not been granted the mercy of death.

Let us remember particularly the dead of this heroic country which, in learning and valour, has, throughout her history, paid so great a ransom for the liberties of the mind. We offer our homage to her Majesty the Queen of the Netherlands and, through her, to her people who, for so long, in joy and suffering, have kept their pledge: "Je maintiendrai." And yet, in this hour of the history of the world, it is not to them only that we kneel, but, in the phrase of a great Russian, to suffering humanity in their person.

FREEDOM FIRST

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Notes

Why Freedom First?

AMONG wide circles of the Indian intelligentsia the false dichotomy of "Bread or Freedom?" is regretfully in evidence. The prevalence of this false choice in unexpected quarters was evidenced not long ago by a statement made in Parliament where "Freedom Firsters" were accused of wishing to subordinate the claims of social advance to those of liberty.

An excellent answer to such inconsequential thinking is provided by Ignazio Silone, the Italian socialist writer, in an article entitled *The Choice of Comrades* in the December issue of *Encounter*.

"To judge men," writes Silone, "it is no longer enough to see if they have calloused hands; one must look into their eyes. There is no mistaking the look of Cain. Do we side with the inmates of the slave labour camps or with their gaolers? This dilemma we can no longer evade, because the executioners themselves are forcing it on us. Threateningly they demand: "Are you with us or against us?" We must call a spade a spade. We are certainly not going to sacrifice the poor to the cause of freedom, nor freedom to the poor, or rather to the usurping bureaucrats who have climbed on the shoulders of the poor."

It will be a happy day for this country when the conviction goes deep into our hearts that neither social advance nor social justice nor an equalitarian society can possibly exist unless they are rooted in the fullest freedom. Not bread or freedom, but bread by and through freedom is the only reality.

A Gandhian Experiment

A novel experiment of quelling a rebellion through non-violent means, was tried this month in Tunisia. A party of forty-four unarmed men consisting of an equal number of Tunisians and Frenchmen was sent out by the French and the Tunisian authorities to win over 2500 Fellaghas, who are in open revolt against the Government and to persuade them to put down their arms and take back their old place in the Tunisian community. The step followed the declaration of an amnesty. Reports indicate that the step is meeting with some success. This action of the French and Tunisian Governments may lead other Governments to think of similar steps with regard to similar difficulties in their countries. It may be suggested that the same method may be tried in connection with the Mau Mau struggle in Kenya. All this reminds one of Gandhiji and his peace mission in Calcutta and East Bengal when he set out unarmed and alone to quell the communal disturbances. Gandhiji is no longer with us, but his ideas live and they may inspire action on the lines practised by him in countries which may have never heard of him.

'Undesirable' and 'Objectionable'

WHILE the film industry is complaining against the rigours of existing censorship, there are some moral zealots in the country who want it to be intensified in order to prevent the production and exhibition of "undesirable" films. The zealots had a field day in the Rajya Sabha when it discussed Mrs. Munshi's non-official resolution recommending to the Government action by legislation or otherwise to prohibit the exhibition of undesirable films.

It is unfortunate that the Minister for Information and Broadcasting also joined the chorus and lent the weight of his authority to the cry for the banning of "undesirable" films. Curiously enough neither the Minister nor the other supporters of the resolution specified in clear terms what according to them was an "undesirable" film.

It is this difficulty to define what is "undesirable"—and the definition is bound to vary from individual to individual—that places arbitrary power in the hands of bureaucrats, once they are invested with the authority of prohibiting anything that they consider "undesirable." Tastes, standards of propriety and ideas regarding moral or immoral behaviour differ so widely from person to person and time to time that any arbitrary rules that may be laid down are bound to affect the freedom of the artiste, the director and the producer and lead to a serious deterioration in quality.

The argument put forward in support of the resolution was that "undesirable" films corrupt the morals of youth. This is an eternal argument urged by elderly men and women against enjoyments and diversions fancied by the young. If the argument is accepted, all enjoyment will have to be banished and life converted into a dreary routine of work and sleep.

While the Rajya Sabha was discussing this resolution, the Madras State Assembly was considering a drastic measure introduced by the State Government for exercising control over theatres. The ostensible purpose of the legislation is to prohibit the staging of "objectionable" dramas. The word "objectionable" is defined to some extent in the proposed legislation. But to the official it will be capable of as wide a meaning as the indefinable word "undesirable."

The fact of the matter is that laws and executive orders will not stop the production or exhibition of undesirable or objectionable films and dramas. Refinement of public taste is the only remedy against them and public taste cannot be refined by legislation or the activities of censors.

Defamation of Public Servants

IN spite of the widespread opposition that it had evoked the Government of India have enacted the clause in the Criminal Procedure Code Amendment Bill making special provisions for the prosecution of journalists defaming public servants. It is true that the clause as finally adopted is an improvement on the original proposal which contemplated making defamation of public servants a cognisable offence. The assurances given by the Home Minister will also go a

long way towards mitigating the rigour of the clause. And yet the provision does not cease to be objectionable. The clause has constituted public servants into a special privileged class and rendered it more difficult for the Press to subject them to public criticism. Public criticism of the actions and policies of the Government and Ministers and other public servants is essential for the proper functioning of democracy. Public servants need not be afraid of it if they are honest and efficient. To stifle it by throwing around them the protective armour of a State prosecution is a grave disservice to the cause of democracy.

A Scholar Honoured

IT is not often that a particularly rugged intellectual is offered a Premier's role. The unanimous election to leadership of the Congress Party in the U.P. and to the position of Chief Minister of Dr. Sampurnanand has therefore a unique quality. India has many great scholars but few combine the learning and knowledge that he does of such remote fields of scholarship as the Shastras on the one side and Marxism on the other. Few have the same mastery that he possesses in Sanskrit, Hindi and English alike. Perhaps the quality that marks him out from most politicians is courage. Nobody has known of Dr. Sampurnanand saying one thing in private and another in public. Of how many of our leading politicians today can this be said?

To the Indian Committee for Cultural Freedom, the recognition and opportunity for service that has come to Dr. Sampurnanand is a matter for special pride and gratification because of his membership of its Executive Committee. Presiding in September 1953 over the Annual Conference of the Indian Committee for Cultural Freedom in Madras, Dr. Sampurnanand delivered an address that set many minds thinking. His theme was *The Neuroses of the Indian Intelligentsia*. "Honest doubt," Dr. Sampurnanand had then observed, "is no doubt better than half the creeds and there is a place in society even for the cynic, but the prospect of a whole nation, or what comes to the same thing, its intellectual elite, turning cynic cannot be contemplated with equanimity. The best efforts at nation-building will founder on this rock. It must be realised that there is solid truth in Sri Krishna's words: 'The man who is perpetually beset with doubts is destroyed.' Utter lack of faith is the culmination of the Indian intellectual's neurosis."

Fast & Win

FOR sheer originality it would be difficult to beat the Calcutta police. Only last month they were busy finding employment for amateur rowdies and now they have proved that non-violence has its victories no less than violence. In order to achieve their demands of increased pay and better service conditions, thousands of policemen went on hunger-strike; their colleagues in the Howrah section, not to be outdone, also joined in, but continued to do their daily work. These actions should settle for good all

controversy about armies marching on their stomach. Faced with such gross indiscipline, the West Bengal Government acted with its customary vigour—it immediately granted all demands.

This episode should convince everyone in Calcutta that in order to achieve any demand it is not really necessary to burn tramcars and throw acid-bulbs. We can now look forward to large scale hunger strikes and the Calcutta police will doubtless beat their swords into plough shares, their rifles into rattles and their batons into bangles. The paths of glory in Calcutta will no longer lead to the grave. Peace will descend upon an oft-troubled city which will overflow with food and for the slogan-hungry there will be two more, namely, "Keep your transport and achieve your demands!" "Don't eat your cake and get some more!"

Jibanand Das

THE sudden death of Jibanand Das at the age of fifty-five closes a unique career in Bengali poetry. Essentially a poet of nature, his lyrics created pictures of beauty in which form, colour and scent become almost palpable. He achieved unity of the sensual and the transcendental and felt at one with eternity.

Yet he was no escapist. No less conscious of the ugly realities of our dark ages than the worst cynic and no less circumscribed by frustrations than any middle class intellectual, he brought to modern Bengali poetry courage and faith, love of freedom and a striving after fundamentals.

Kalki

THE death of Kalki (Sri R. Krishnamurthy) on 5th December at the age of 55 leaves a lacuna in the Indian literary and cultural scene. An enthusiastic friend of the movement for Cultural Freedom, only his ill-health prevented him from taking a more active interest. In nearly thirty five years of his career as a writer and an editor, (first of Sri Vasan's *Ananda Vikatan* and later of his own weekly *Kalki*), Kalki carved a niche for himself in almost every home in Tamilnad and wherever Tamilians live. A versatile and gifted man of letters, in addition to many novels and short stories, he has written art and music criticism, travelogues and personality sketches; political and economic and other essays. In everything that he wrote he aimed at the man in the street and was responsible to a great extent for the Congressmindedness of Tamil readers. Lately he had taken to expounding socialist principles to the man in the street. He can be said to have contributed the most, as a single writer, to making Tamil as adequate instrument of expression, both for purposes of entertainment and instruction. He began writing almost at the moment of the national poet Bharathiar's death in the year 1921 and ably carried on the Tamil renaissance initiated by him.

The Prime Minister And Communists

by V. B. Karnik

THE Prime Minister, Pandit Nehru, has never concealed his dislike of and contempt for the Indian communists. From time to time he has given free expression to those feelings and condemned in strong terms their actions and policies. One need not be surprised therefore by the attack that he lately delivered against them in a public speech in Delhi. Its only distinguishing feature was the sharpness of the language and the vigour of the blows.

The Prime Minister condemned Indian communists as anti-national elements "carrying on anti-national activities solely designed to promote unrest and disrupt national progress." "They are certainly not patriots," he said, "They are not interested in the well-being of the Indian people, whatever other cause they may be seeking to serve." "They," he said, "speak about the country in a derogatory manner abroad. They preach violence, which can only lead to a disastrous civil war. They seek to exploit all minor and major grievances of the people for partisan ends."

The Prime Minister then tore to shreds their claim to call themselves revolutionaries. They were "out of tune with the times," were "living in the past" and were wanting "to implement faithfully the lessons that they had learnt from the Russian Revolution 37 years ago and the writings of Karl Marx which were nearly 100 years old."

The Prime Minister also declared his conviction that the Indian communists had not changed their outlook. He asserted; "they are still wedded to violence. Though unable to enact another Telangana, they are keen to keep all manner of troubles brewing."

These forthright declarations of the Prime Minister should be welcome to all those who regard the communists and their activities as the gravest danger to the freedom and progress of the country. They are all the more welcome because they were made after his visit to China where the communist rulers of the land had taken great pains to please and flatter him. The fulsome praise and the abundant hospitality that they showered upon the Prime Minister did not blind him to the pernicious role that their comrades in India play in the politics of his country.

The Prime Minister knows that the Indian Communist Party is not an indigeneous political organisation arising out of the needs and requirements of any section of the Indian people. It is a foreign organisation planted on the soil of India and nurtured by foreigners in the interests of a foreign Power. It is because they draw their inspiration and guidance from a foreign source that Indian communists are not interested, as well stated by the Prime Minister, "in the well-being of Indian people" and carry on "anti-national activities solely designed to promote unrest and disrupt national progress."

This intimate causal connection between foreign guidance and the activities of Indian communists does not, however, appear to be sufficiently recognised by the Prime Minister.

The directing centre of communist activities in India and other countries is the international communist movement. For a number of years the centre was the Communist International and was located in Moscow. It has now taken the form of the Cominform and is now functioning from Moscow through Bucharest. The apparent shift of the centre from Moscow to Bucharest has not, however, made any difference to the control over the organisation of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union and therefore of the Soviet Government. It remains as before the supreme director of communist activities all over the world.

The international centre of the world communist movement is organised like the head-quarters of the general staff of an army. The army has its contingents in many countries. They are represented by communist parties of various countries. All contingents of the army located in various countries move according to a centrally directed plan. That is why the various contingents, that is, the communist parties of the respective countries, cannot take into consideration the peculiarities of their respective national situations and safeguard or advance the interests of the workers of their own countries. The requirements of the international movement, as they are seen by the leaders of the Russian Communist Party, determine the tactics and strategy of all.

In the final analysis, it is the dictates of the Russian State which determine the activities of communist parties all over the world. Those dictates are based on the rigid dogmas of the teachings of Marx, Engels, Lenin and Stalin which are accepted by communists of all countries as the last word in human wisdom. According to those dogmas it is the aim of all communists to overthrow the established regime and establish in each country the dictatorship of the proletariat. The face of that dictatorship has now been made familiar by the history of the thirty-seven years of the Russian revolution. It is a regime of cruel terror and merciless exploitation and subjugation of the toiling masses.

The regime is to be established by all possible means, fair or foul. It may become necessary on occasions to lie low, to effect compromises, to enter into alliances, or to talk sweet words, but the ultimate aim is never given up, nor are the preparations, psychological or organisational, for the capture of power through a violent overthrow of the established regime ever slowed down. The communist parties which have accomplished the aim in their own countries help other communist parties through a variety of means so that they may reach the same goal.

It is this worldwide character of the communist movement which must be kept in mind while talking about the communist movement in any one country. The specific national movement is but a part and parcel of the international movement. If the national movement is anti-national, anti-people and subversive, it is because the directing authority of the international movement and its creed require it to adopt that line.

The source of the evil is therefore the international communist movement and its policy of subversion and violence. The poor Indian Communists are but the agents of that international authority and the instruments of that international policy. International communism has succeeded in some countries. The State power that it attains it utilises not merely for consolidating its dictatorship in the particular country but also for fomenting unrest and organising subversion in other countries so that they may also fall a prey to its machinations. It is this factor which places communist countries in a category of their own.

One cannot be sufficiently conscious of the danger that a communist party represents unless one realises this specific character of communist nations and takes steps to guard one's country against their insidious propaganda and activities. It is not possible to deny that communist nations indulge in that type of propaganda and activities, overtly as well as covertly. The Prime Minister does not appear to have taken

enough notice of this subversive influence exercised by communist States.

There is a certain measure of basic contradiction in the condemnation of indigenous communists and the approbation of their colleagues abroad. Success whitewashes many a sin, but it should not be allowed to cloud the moral judgement. Success alone need not convert the communist leaders of Russia and China into heroes and statesmen. It is wrong to belittle such achievements as they may have to show, but it is equally wrong to forget to count the cost, the cost in terms of human misery, in terms of physical liquidation, in terms of suppression of liberties, in terms of police terror, that the Russians and the Chinese are paying for those achievements.

The condemnation of Indian communists and their activities will not be fully effective unless this basic contradiction is removed. To remove the contradiction one need not necessarily adopt an attitude of hostility towards communist countries. To be critical of their achievements and more particularly of their methods does not mean that one is hostile towards them. One can be friendly and at the same time warn one's countrymen against their methods and their urge towards expansion. The country cannot be fully protected against communist subversion unless it is told of the danger that it faces from internal as well as external communism. The Prime Minister is very conscious of the former. He should be equally conscious of the latter.

Real Wages In Soviet Russia

THE bold statement made by Mr. Kasturbhai Lalbhai, the leader of Indian industrialist's delegation to Soviet Union, that the general standard of living of Russian workers is almost as low as that of Indian workers has surprised many. Mr. Kasturbhai made the statement at a press conference in Bombay when he gave on behalf of the delegation an account of the impressions formed after its visit to Soviet Russia.

Giving facts in support of his statement, Mr. Kasturbhai pointed out that the monthly wages of a worker in Russia was 800 roubles, consisting of 400 roubles as basic pay and 400 roubles as incentive bonus. The money wage, he pointed out, appeared to be high but the cost of living was equally high. A pound of butter cost in Russia 24 roubles. Even a subsidised meal in a factory cost 4 to 5 roubles per meal. Mr. Kasturbhai's conclusion therefore was: "The seemingly high wages are mopped up by the high cost of consumer goods."

These facts stated by Mr. Kasturbhai ought not to have caused much surprise. Disinterested students of Soviet economic affairs had known for quite some time that the condition of workers and peasants in Soviet Russia was not particularly good and that there had been no significant improvement in that condition since the revolution. In a comparative study of existing labour conditions in Soviet Russia, India, Britain and the U.S.A., published in Calcutta in 1953,

it had been demonstrated that the Soviet worker's purchasing power is considerably lower than that of his American, British or even Indian counterpart. For one kilogram of wheat bread, the Soviet worker must put in 111 minutes of work, the Indian worker 68, the British 12 and the American 14; for a dozen eggs the Soviet worker must put in 349 minutes of work, the Indian 294, the British 81, the American 33; for a suit of clothing the Soviet worker must toil for 24,047 hours, the Indian for 12,960, the British for 6,533 and the American for only 1,638. This conclusion was borne out in essential particulars by statements of Soviet leaders made from time to time. It was corroborated by the call for the "new course" made by Malenkov in August 1953. The call was based on the fact that there was a grave scarcity of consumer goods and that in view of the growing discontent it was necessary to produce more consumer goods. The "new course" would not have been necessary if the condition of workers had been improving and if there had been a plenty of goods and services available to the common people.

It is likely, however, that the observations made by Mr. Kasturbhai Lalbhai may be dismissed by many as the evidence of an interested party. Mr. Kasturbhai is no doubt an eminent industrialist and financier and some may regard his statements as an attempt to run down a 'socialist' State. There is, however, plenty of other independent evidence which more or

less bears out the conclusion reached by Mr. Kasturbhai. A very recent piece of evidence is provided by a study of a young American economist entitled "Real Wages in the Soviet Union, 1928-52" published in the May 1954 issue of *The Review of Economics and Statistics* (Boston).

Mrs. Janet G. Chapman, a young American economist, was studying the problem of real wages in the Soviet Union for over four years and has just published the results of her studies. Any study of living conditions and wages in Soviet Russia is handicapped by the fact that the Soviet Union does not publish information about movement of prices and wages and the cost of living as is done by all civilized countries. Since 1929 the Soviet Government has banned the publication of the cost of living data. The information has therefore to be obtained in an indirect manner from government decrees, observations of visitors, etc. Mrs. Chapman has relied for her data on price hand books distributed to the retail trade, on public price decrees and on observations of visitors to the Soviet Union.

Mrs. Chapman has in the first place prepared two separate but parallel indices based respectively on the consumption patterns of 1928 and 1937. She selected the two years as they have a special importance in Soviet economic life. 1928 was the last year preceding the first Five Year Plan. 1937 was the terminal year of the second Five Year Plan and it was about that time that Stalin declared that socialism had been achieved in the U.S.S.R.

There are significant variations in the consumption patterns of the two years 1928 and 1937, as will be seen from the following table prepared by Mrs. Chapman giving the proportions out of the total budget expended on different commodities and services.

	1928	1937
Food ..	52.0	64.4
Manufactured goods ..	35.0	27.6
Services ..	13.0	8.0

Mrs. Chapman has then constructed a retail price index using 1928 as the basic year and applying 1928 weights. According to the index Mrs. Chapman finds that the prices for all goods were seven times higher in 1937, twenty-two times higher in 1948 and fifteen times higher in 1952. The retail price index prepared by Mrs. Chapman for some of the important commodities is given below:

Retail Price Index Numbers, Official Prices
Moscow, 1937, 1948, 1952.
1928 = 100

	1937	1948	1952
Grain products and legumes	1180	3257	1558
Meat and poultry	949	3749	1822
Sugar and confectionery	599	2007	1539
Milk and milk products (excl. butter)	738	1926	1365
Vegetables and fruit	458	1383	1095
All Foods	892	2961	1722
Textiles	836	2734	2274
Shoes	751	1742	1404
Soap, drugs, etc.	806	3184	1652

Housewares	397	1203	905
Cultural and sports goods	177	602	409
All manufactured goods	688	1995	1555
Rent	296	506	506
Utilities	106	255	280
Transportation	169	213	282
Entertainment	333	1000	1000
All services	251	487	512
All goods and services	737	2204	1518

Mrs. Chapman has prepared a similar index on the basis of 1937 weights. That index runs approximately 25 to 30% below the index based on 1928 weights. According to that index, the index figure for all goods and services in 1937 was 533, in 1948 it was 1636 and 1082 in 1952, which for all practical purposes bears out the conclusion reached by the former index.

Mrs. Chapman has next analysed the changes in the wage picture over the same period. There was no doubt a substantial rise in wages but it by no means matched the rise in prices. Mrs. Chapman also found that there was over the same period a continuous increase in the direct taxes that the workers have to pay and in the compulsory purchases of Government bonds. These two have been taking an increasing slice out of the workers' income available for consumption according to studies undertaken by other economists. Direct taxes paid by Soviet households in 1928 amounted to 2.2% and purchases of Government bonds to 1% of the total nonfarm money income. Direct taxes rose to 2.6% in 1937; 8.5% in 1948 and 10% in 1952. Government bond purchases increased to 1.4% in 1937, 4.3% in 1948 and 5.7% in 1952. On the basis of all this data, Mrs. Chapman has prepared a table of real wages in the U.S.S.R. for four years 1928, 1937, 1948 and 1952. The table summarises the chief conclusions of Mrs. Chapman's study. The table is given below:

	1928	1937	1948	1952
1. Cost of living index 1928=100 weighted according to 1928 expenditure pattern	100	701	2152	1444
weighted according to 1937 expenditure pattern	100	495	1559	1005
2. Money wages, gross:				
Roubles per year	775	3140	7450	8050
Index, 1928=100	100	405	961	1039
3. Money wages after taxes and bond purchases:				
Roubles per year	750	3015	6500	6790
Index, 1928=100	100	402	867	905
4. Real wages before taxes & bond purchases 1928=100				
Based on cost of living index using 1928 weights	100	58	45	72
Based on cost of living index using 1937 weights	100	82	62	103
5. Real wages after taxes and bond purchases 1928=100				
Based on cost of living index using 1928 weights	100	57	40	63
Based on cost of living index using 1937 weights	100	81	56	90

It should be noted that Mrs. Chapman's study covers only urban workers, the favourites of the
(Continued on page 11)

The Writer And Freedom

by Stephen Spender

THE Writer is not just a writer. Nine-tenths of his time is spent in neither working nor being an artist but in existing like anyone else. Yet it is out of this "Living" that he gets experience for his writing. "Living" is the writer's connection with society.

The fruitfulness or the sterility of this intercourse with society will show in his writing. The writer consciously or unconsciously knows this, and hence his attitude to his own work will affect his attitude towards society. He will praise or blame his social environment by the measure of results which he reads in what he writes.

He will look back with envy to those past ages where he imagines the contact between the writer and the then contemporary society to have been most fruitful. The English writer will see in the Elizabethan Age a time when the lived poetry of history (Gloriana-Queen Elizabeth: pearls and savages brought to the Queen by Raleigh) had only to be written down by the courtier poets—(those poets, he forgets, who walked through the court in fear of their lives).

When he is not feeling nostalgic, the modern writer will postulate another state of society in which his work could be the result of a more fruitful inter-relationship between talent and environment.

There is no use pretending that the bourgeois-hating modern writer is happy in a materialist society. The relationship of poet to his world in Western Europe or America today is neither sensual nor platonic. It is marriage to a bitch who goes whoring after values that have little or nothing to do with literature. The bitch—indeed—would rather be married to a scientist, a manufacturer, or even a dictator than to a poet.

So the writer feels excluded from this society which in productivity, in scientific specialization, in analytic ideas, turns always towards what is material or cerebral, away from the synthesizing power of the imagination.

What he wants, then, is a divorce. Perhaps he will work better—he thinks—if he is alone. Or perhaps the trouble about this marriage is that it was not consecrated in Church. Next time, he will marry a lady who lives on the plane of Eternity, outside time, and a Bishop (Anglican? Roman?) will be there to bless the match.

Or, perhaps, after all, his mistake was simply to marry into the wrong social class. It is comforting to think that the European or transatlantic bitch to whom he was married is, after all, doomed. If, before entering into the contract which was decided for him by his own bourgeois birth, he had gone to a scientifically run Marxist Marriage bureau, and asked History, he would have learned that the real trouble about his proposed bride was not so much that she would deceive him about other men as that

she would deceive him about her Birth Certificate. Charming in Paris, London and New York really she was old as the hills and had a very nasty disease. The result of living with her would be a decay showing in his work and a premature grave among the ruins of a civilization.

So he seeks a divorce and before entering into any other matrimonial experiments, he decides to live alone.

Now, he is the great individualist, the writer who has no links with the outside world, because in his work, he makes the world. To his works the reader may go to drink the whole of life. A reader complains to James Joyce that to understand *Finnegans Wake* would require the effort of his lifetime. "That is the least I expect of you", replies Joyce. And for Rilke his poetry is like Eurydice lamenting in his poem *Orpheus Eurydice Hermes*

and from lament a world was born in which
all was recreated: wood and valley,
road, habitation, field and river and beast.

But the effort to spin out a world from the inwards of interior life, which at first produces such a wonderful web, so dense and yet of a texture sensitive as gossamer, proves exhausting. Isolation grows ever more complex, more involved, the thread of life more attenuated. The divorce from society has turned the writer into bachelor or spinster.

He takes up George Lukacs' Marxist criticism and discovers what was wrong. After all, it was not marriage that mattered, but that he had married into the wrong class. Married to the bourgeoisie—Lukacs informs him—of course cut him off from life. As for his previous individualism, that was even worse, leading him to indulge in dreams which become more and more fantastic, isolated, unreal. And yet, stupid fellow—Professor Lukacs chides him—he wants to cling on to this precious individualism of his. How silly! Fancy being alarmed at being robbed of a trifle like his individuality. Are there any real grounds for this alarm, cries the Professor from Budapest, and he smiles over his spectacles: "If instead of Joyce's style, literature were to follow that of Tolstoy, if Shakespeare or Moliere were to take the place of Pirandello or Priestley, this would not mean a dangerous decline of standards". (quoted from an essay by George Lukacs in the Austrian Quarterly, *Meanyin*).

Strange words—perhaps with their own ironic twist not quite apparent to us—coming from that part of the world where the greatest poets bury their talents in translating Shakespeare and where the Tolstoyan Gandhi is denounced as an agent of British Imperialism.

Still, we would agree with Mr. Lukacs that if the writer instead of being confronted with the alternative of bourgeois marriage or individualist isolation, could draw strength and life from those thousands of indi-

viduals with whom he might have contact among the people in a socially just society: if this were offered him by the Marxist Professor with his wrinkled forehead and short-sighted gaze then we would be getting somewhere. However, the formula for turning J. B. Priestley into Shakespeare is not quite this. Instead of putting Priestley back among the chaps he knew when he was a Yorkshire lad—putting him back and offering him at the same time the chance to take part in a social renaissance—instead of this, the offer is to turn Mr. Priestley into an ideological school-teacher using his art to instruct not individuals, but 'the masses.' And, as Professor Lukacs well knows, in the country of Tolstoy—as in Hungary and Poland—the opportunity to become a Shakespeare or Moliere *on these terms* has been offered to the writers—with the result that literary genius of Eastern Europe has disintegrated into dust.

So the question is not whether Professor Lukacs can turn Priestley into Shakespeare but what would have happened to Shakespeare if he had the benefit of Professor Lukacs nudging his elbow. My own guess is that the most Lukacs would have been able to do is justify the Baconites: Shakespeare would really have been the political-minded analytic Bacon.

Still, Professor Lukacs, greatest of contemporary Marxist critics in Europe, has his idea. To him, bourgeois freedom is an illusion, because it is based on the fallacy of the independence of the individual. True freedom is the recognition of the necessity of the methods used to free the progressive, historically advancing side of society (i.e., the proletariat) from the reactionary ruling class which harbours the illusion of individualism.

We can agree that "complete individualism" the idea which makes the work of James Joyce appear more important than any other event in contemporary history—is certainly an illusion. Like other illusions it may for a time be productive and extremely fruitful: because at first it has a kind of social connection in that the artist is acting *against* society. But soon the achievements of completely independent and isolated individuals come to resemble a motor revving being connected to the machine it is supposed to drive.

All the same, we must argue, for the sake of the whole of human history, that literature is not just a machine driven by mechanically minded engineers directing the artists to transform the impulses of ideology into the gestures of poetry or the novel.

To repudiate the ideologists—whilst humbly accepting their criticism of the extremes of individualism—we need a new definition of the freedom of the writer or, indeed, of any kind of artist.

Freedom then—let me be bold—is that state of awareness in which the artist recognizes that while remaining a member of the society and culture which are his environment, he is also alone with his own perception of experience. When the artist produces a work which embodies this double condition of social consciousness and individual awareness—then he produces a work which is both an expression of contemporary society and also of an individual sense of his own being which is outside the contemporary and

which belongs to the whole of human history, then, from his freedom, he has created a work of art.

Let us take an example, which applies to literature, from the visual arts. A painter paints an apple. What he depicts is (a) the part-traditional part-contemporary, shared, human social concept of that which society, through education of the eye, has taught us to recognise as an apple. (b) the apple which he alone sees, the unique apple of Chardin or Cézanne.

It is this super-imposition of (b) the unique vision on (a) the concept made recognizable by habit and environment, which makes a work of art. Omit (b) and you have nothing but that stereo-type—so dull that when we have lost our eyes of childhood wonder we scarcely see it—the realistic or social-realistic apple.

And when we look back on the art of the past it is this double image which makes a painting in the Ajanta caves, or one of the deer in the caves of Lascaux, or a Greek vase painting drawn by a fifth century master, seem at once of their time, and yet, in another way, quite contemporary: so contemporary indeed that to look at any of these is to envisage the possibility of taking up a conversation with a master of the past at the point where it was broken off 2,000 years ago. Indeed, is this not exactly what the masters of modern art have done? Does not Picasso speak the language of Greek vase painters?

To be inside your time as social being, and outside it as individual with his individual vision is to be an artist.

Throw overboard the individualism which Professor Lukacs regards as a superfluous preciousness, and you have turned poet or novelist or painter or composer into a sensibility as mechanical as the sensitivity of a camera.

What dates more than a photograph? Why does a photograph date? Because a camera's freedom consists exclusively in the recognition of necessity.

Riddle: What examples of modern portraiture are today as completely out of date as any photograph taken ten years ago? Answer: a portrait of Stalin of that epoch, by a Stalin prize winner.

We owe to individualist art not only those works which represent the free comment of an unique spirit, but also the realisation it stirs that not *just the artist but also his reader or audience are individuals*. The artist who denies his own individuality denies that of the people who go up to make his public, and persuades them that they are cyphers. Yet the freedom not just of the artist but also of every member of the community rests in his ability to fly in and out—like a bird in and out of the nest—of society, from social consciousness to individuality.

What we have to fight for is not the idea of the completely free and independent individual: but of the absolutely vital margin which, in someone who is a responsible member of the community, yet separates him from society. This absolutely vital margin is what distinguishes man as existence, from a society made up of as many machines as there are members of the population.

Mr. Nabokov In India

THE Indian Committee for Cultural Freedom has been privileged, during the past two years or so, to welcome a number of distinguished visitors from Europe and America. But there was something special in its welcome to the noted composer and music critic, Mr. Nicolas Nabokov, for he is the Secretary-General of the Congress for Cultural Freedom. Hardly anyone could speak more authoritatively on the aims and spirit of the movement than Mr. Nabokov. His visit was therefore of particular significance to members of the Indian Committee, whose contact with him was not restricted to his public appearances and pronouncements.

Mr. Nabokov proved to be more than authoritative. He was provocative. Though his stay was confined to Bombay and Delhi and was of a rather short duration, his impact on the Indian intellectual scene was not less than if he had made an extensive lecture tour of the country. One reason for this was his forceful personality. "Mr. Nabokov's appearance and whole manner", Stephen Spender has said, "recall the world of the Diaghilev Russian Ballet". My personal impression was that his simple, direct and clear statements of the ideas in which he believed made him even more dominating than his singularly engaging appearance.

One of Mr. Nabokov's meetings in Bombay was a press conference. With characteristic broadmindedness, he took as his theme the "conformist tendency of modern intellectuals". This tendency, he said, existed all over the world. If in totalitarian countries intellectuals were dictated to, in democratic countries they had to conform to commercialism. He drew pointed attention to the economic conditions in India which increased the danger of intellectuals having to conform.

The press conference appeared to have made a great impression because it, addressed itself to the problem of the intellectuals' integrity in any kind of society. Those who expected a conventional attack on totalitarianism were pleasantly surprised at Mr. Nabokov's constructive approach to his favourite subject of cultural freedom.

The Indian Committee organised a public meeting for Mr. Nabokov on November 23 when he spoke at the Jai Hind College Hall on "Trends in Contemporary Music". In a Bombay daily his lecture was badly misreported (this is commoner than most readers of the daily papers are aware) and Mr. Nabokov had to correct the report in a letter from Delhi. His view was that it is wrong to use political terminology in musical aesthetics. In describing and contrasting Western and Indian music, therefore, one can only say that Western musical processes are of an evolutionary nature, i.e. time conscious or history-conscious, contrary to Eastern music which is by nature "static and cumulative", i.e. non-conscious of time and essentially unhistorical.

This was the very first programme in the field of music organised by the Indian Committee. It emphasised the fact that the Cultural Freedom Movement is primarily concerned not only with the relation of the arts to freedom but also directly and disinterestedly with the arts themselves.



On November 30, Mr. Nabokov addressed Bombay's Rotary Club on "Music—the universal language". At this lecture, Mr. Nabokov enlarged on his theme of the conformist danger. He spoke of it as the triple danger of the modern artist, the economic peril, the peril of commercialism and the peril of dictation by the State. The greatest danger, Mr. Nabokov thought, came from the need to conform to the dictates of a power through external compulsions. In modern times, such a danger assailed artists in Nazi Germany, Spain and Argentina and in the Soviet Union.

In Delhi, in addition to addressing several meetings, Mr. Nabokov met the Prime Minister and talked with him on cultural questions. Both in Bombay and in Delhi there was the usual round of social gatherings and parties. From the Indian Committee's point of view, the most important of these was a dinner given by Mr. H. R. Pardiwala, at which Mr. Nabokov shared with those present his views of the aims and work of the Congress for Cultural Freedom. At a bigger reception at the home of Mme. Sophia Wadia, Mrs. Shakuntala Masani gave a performance of Bharat Natyam to a delighted audience.

Mr. Nabokov is likely to visit India again in the near future. There is no doubt that when he does so he will meet again many people who now consider him their friend.

N.E.

Letters to the Editor

Mr. Spender's Visit

SIR,

In spite of Mr. Stephen Spender being recently lionised at numerous literary fetes in India, true to his Australian experience (ref. *Thoughts Arising from an Incident, Freedom First* No. 31), as far as could be gathered from Calcutta, the Congress for Cultural Freedom didn't win the poll. The C.C.F.'s bona fide is questioned as ever; the question still hangs whether the Congress is not a mere group of intellectual opportunists, nearly as Mr. Spender himself found out from the communist interruptions at the Melbourne dinner.

Under this condition you did well in publishing Mr. Spender's story. For it speaks of Mr. Spender's honesty of purpose as well as of his commendable strength of spirit.

I don't know how far it is practicable to assume totally that disagreeing intellectuals support causes out of good faith, but it is not a bad working principle; in fact, all our quests for truth and survival might degenerate into farcical rivalry without it. More of those of Mr. Spender's camp should have his feeling that not all those who sign peace manifestos and decry anti-communists do so in bad faith. And also it is quite silly to suggest that those who are not for me must necessarily be against me, as many powerful journals seem to take for granted. The anti-communist front must, before it succeeds, overcome this attitude and make moves without rancour and specially the intellectuals associated with the Congress should better realise that the freedom road is as sharp as the razor's edge.

Every attempt should be made to raise the activities of the Congress from suspicious propaganda level and to direct them towards stimulating and popularising creative vitality. Mr. Spender's visit from this point of view was successful, for his visit brought in its wake new interest in his poetry and criticisms and in the journal he so ably edits. It is to be hoped that *Quest*, the would be organ of the I. C. C. F., will follow footsteps of *Encounter* and *Preuves* and that we will have the festival of arts in the manner of those held in Paris and Rome, more visits from scientists, artists, journalists and thinkers.

Calcutta

SAILESH K. ROY

[We agree with the correspondent that the activities of the Committee should be directed towards stimulating creative vitality. We invite him and others like him to join the Committee and help it develop activities of the type suggested by him.

The Indian Committee is not a mere anti-communist front. It is wedded to the ideal of freedom and culture. The Committee is also aware of the fact that stimulation of creative activity in all spheres of art and culture is the most effective way of counteracting that threat and developing the free society

which alone can guarantee the freedom of culture. The Committee can do more useful work if it receives the enthusiastic co-operation of all men of culture.—

Editor]

A Sectarian Outlook?

SIR,

Principal Dalvi's review of Mr. Masani's book *Communist Party of India* suffers from a sectarian outlook. I agree with him in his emphasis on humanism as a force capable of counteracting communism, but I cannot see why he should be so contemptuous of Gandhism, Bhoodan Movement, etc, as forces opposing communism. It is pardonable to be overenthusiastic about one particular remedy, but it is unpardonable to run down all others with just a stroke of the pen. Principal Dalvi has not bothered to give even one argument in support of the summary judgement that he has pronounced on Bhoodan and other movements. Humanism, I thought, bred a tolerant and cosmopolitan outlook, which unfortunately is conspicuous by its absence in Principal Dalvi's review. Gandhism and Bhoodan may have their own shortcomings but the way that Principal Dalvi has dealt with them is both unfair and unjust.

Calcutta

S. N. TRIPATHI.

REAL WAGES IN SOVIET RUSSIA (Continued from page 7)

communist revolution. It is possible that free health and educational services, social insurance benefits and other extra payments may make some additions to the real wages. They will not, however, substantially alter the picture.

It is clear, therefore, from Mrs. Chapman's study that there has been no increase in the standard of living of Soviet workers over the one that they had reached in 1928. As a matter of fact, there has been a substantial fall on the basis of 1928 weights and a ten percent fall on the basis of 1937 weights. It has been established that the 1928 level was about the same as the 1913 level.

The conclusion is inevitable therefore, on the basis of the facts collected by Mrs. Chapman, that 35 years after the revolution the Russian worker stands exactly where he was four years before the revolution. The successive Five Year Plans with their emphasis on heavy industry and the corresponding neglect of consumer goods industries are mainly responsible for this dismal picture of the conditions of Soviet workers. The policy of forced collectivization of agriculture also contributed its share as it brought disaster to millions of peasants and left urban workers on the brink of starvation. Alarmed by the growing discontent in the country, Soviet leaders, it seems, are now waking up to the necessity of trying to remedy the situation. It is time those in India hitherto deluded by the Soviet myth awakened also to these harsh realities.

With Many Voices

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

—Tennyson.

✓ Told that his ideas added up to communism minus violence he (Vinoba) gave a cryptic smile: "Perhaps. But then you may say that two people were identical — except for the fact that one breathed and the other was a corpse."

—Hallam Tennyson in
Encounter, December 1954.

I make one exception in favour of the Communist Party because I do not expect any sense or responsibility from them because even according to their own proclamations elsewhere, they do not believe in democracy and the democratic set up.

Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, *Statesman*,
December 19, 1954.

There is a general feeling in Turkey that our foreign policy placated Moscow and Peking.

—Mrs. Sucheta Kripalani, *The Times of India*,
December 7, 1954.

One can have diplomatic relations with Cannibals—
if one guards against being eaten.

—*New Leader*, December 6, 1954.

Mr. Nehru has spoken of his heavy burden. The burden he carries is indeed heavy, but much of it is self-inflicted. Mr. Nehru, it appears, dislikes shedding power.

—Political Correspondent, *Times of India*,
December 9, 1954.

Misconception is often the mother of misfortune.

—Vivek in *Mysindia*, December 19, 1954.

It is high time that Mr. Menon ceased to counsel any further flexibility to the free world since he has failed to persuade the communists to show even a particle of flexibility on their part, for further flexibility from the free world without reciprocating flexibility from the communists would be incompatible with its survival.

—Mr. Y. T. Pyun, Foreign Minister of South Korea,
Times of India, December 9, 1954.

INDIAN COMMITTEE FOR CULTURAL FREEDOM

127, Mahatma Gandhi Road,
BOMBAY 1.

Please enrol me as a member of the Indian Committee for Cultural Freedom. I remit the annual membership fee of Rs. 3/- by.....

Name :

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Statesmen who talk about the desirability of relaxing world tensions often overlook the basic cause of these tensions, the concentration of a third of the world's population and a fifth of its resources under single dictatorial authority, committed to the indefinite expansion of its power by force and subversion.

—Mr. Wm. Henry Chamberlin in the *New Leader*,
November 29, 1954.

My plea is that he (Jayaprakash Narayan) should add *Sattadan* (gift of power or authority) to his quartet of *Bhoodan*, *Sampatidan*, *Shramdan* (gift of labour) and *Samayadan* (gift of time) and approach many of the autocratic Ministers, whose hunger for power over other people's lives is insatiable.

—Rover in *Commerce*, November 27, 1954.

If the Communists are bad, they are bad everywhere. If internally they need the Preventive Detention Act, in the international field they need the atom bomb.

—Acharya Kripalani,
Current, December 22, 1954.

The Constitution of the United States of America has been amended not more than 22 times during all these 150 years and more of its operation, in spite of the vast changes that have taken place in that country's economy and way of life, but, here in India, our Constitution has hardly been in operation for five years when it has already been amended three times and more amendments are said to be in the offing.

—Mr. M. Patanjali Sastri, Former Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of India, *Sunday Standard*, December 12, 1954.

The Overseas Chinese are still being included in China's official statistics. After Mr. Nehru's departure, the Bureau of Statistics in Peiping issued a census communique listing 11,743,320 Overseas Chinese among what Peiping called China's total population of 601,938,035.

—Henry Liberman,
New York Times, Nov. 7, 1954.

The communists undoubtedly will step up their activities in Asia. Even in Japan, right now the communists have plans for aggression. I know that. They also have such plans in Korea.

—Mr. Ichiro Hatoyama, the new Prime Minister of Japan, *The Times of India*, December 12, 1954.

Having been to China, I am more, and very much, impressed by my own country.

—Prime Minister Nehru to the Congress Parliamentary Party, December 2, 1954.