

NOVEMBER 1954

Stephen Spender

by Nissim Ezekiel

SPENDER'S literary career has always been closely related to his political interests. In his autobiography, he has explained the Christian background of his basic philosophy. The roots of his later socialist ideals which, for a time, yielded to communism, were deep in the gospels rather than in any modern ideology. At Oxford, affected by the general climate of opinion, he adhered to the doctrine of art for art's sake, while retaining a profound but perpetually puzzled interest in political questions. In the company of Auden and C. Day Lewis, his poetry began to flourish, and gradually took on that marked political complexion which is a characteristic sign of literature in the thirties.

A correspondent in a recent issue of the *New Statesman and Nation* sneers at the fact that Spender, the revolutionary poet of the thirties, had become in his middle age the editor of a journal sponsored by the Congress for Cultural Freedom. The truth is that Spender's present politics is motivated by the same honest human urges, fundamentally ethical, which inspired the revolutionary poetry of his youth. His first *Poems* were published in 1933. Tracing his development from these, to the great flowering of his genius in *The Still Centre* and his outstanding collection, *Ruins and Visions*, one finds an obstinate poetic sincerity which triumphs over the exigencies of a rapidly changing era.

Commenting on his poems concerning the Spanish War, he explains why, though committed to the Republican side, he did not strike a more heroic note. "My reason is that a poet can only write about what is true to his own experience, not about what he would like



to be true to his experience." This simple act of sincerity, decisively rejecting what he called in the same context, "the utilitarian heroics of the moment", enabled Spender to avoid the excesses of the political temper of the thirties. It is this same sincerity which had led him from his revolutionary poetry to the editing of *Encounter*, which is also, whatever the cynics may say, an act of revolutionary faith. It is the belief in the ethical values of revolution which has caused a revolutionary like Spender, in the company of some of the noblest spirits of our time, to revolt against the Revolution. The sneer of the *New Statesman* correspondent is only the frustrated gesture of the isolated "revolutionary", who finds his best friends compelled to part company with him.

In *The Still Centre* there are some beautiful

poems in which Spender makes poetry out of his personal weaknesses:

"If I could accept
Myself in those in whose
Sweetness my life dissolves
And trust they could accept
Themselves in me; nor fear
Their expert quick disfavour
At the way I frown or hold my head
O, then my body would enter
Its island and its summer
The questions find their answer
And my head its resting place..."

In his political poetry, Spender reveals an extreme tenderness which is in marked contrast to the tough qualities usually associated with the thirties. The opening lines of a poem on a Spanish War casualty are typical of him:

"The guns spell money's ultimate reason
In letters of lead on the spring hillside
But the boy lying dead under the olive trees
Was too young and too silly
To have been notable to their important eye.
He was a better target for a kiss."

In *Ruins and Visions* his long poem, *The Fates*, which has been unduly neglected, is an excellent survey of life between the two wars. Addressing the mother in the poem, he writes:

"You rebuilt the Georgian house with the old
lawn

And the kitchen garden surrounded by a wall
And the servants in the servants' hall
Tidying the rooms downstairs at dawn;
And you bought a fishing rod, a pony and a gun
And gave these playthings to your son.
Your son grew up and thought it all quite real.
Hunting, the family, the business man's ideal.

This idyllic existence, culminated in the second World War,

"He is thrown out on to a field abroad.
A whip of lead
Strikes a strain of blood from his pure forehead.
Into the dust he falls
The virgin face, carved from a mother's kisses
As though from sensitive ivory
Staring up at the sun, the eyes at last made open."

One can see the link between this critical evaluation of the inter-war period and Spender's only directly political book, *Forward From Liberalism* which was published in 1947. In this systematic exposition of his political outlook, he analysed the weaknesses of the liberal conception of freedom. But his appreciation of the necessity of freedom was strengthened by the analysis. Spender wanted to go forward from liberalism, not back to some tyrannical form of society. He was not deceived by the technological modernism of the communist utopia or of its claims to eliminate the weakness of liberal society. He was always aware of how much more it wanted to eliminate.

It is certain that Spender's best poems will survive. It is equally certain that his political activities will be regarded, not as a wasteful indulgence, but as the quest of an honest poet to integrate his poetic vocation with the fate of humanity.

ENCOUNTER

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FREEDOM FIRST

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Notes

Premier Versus Sunderayya

P. SUNDERAYYA, the leader of the communist faction in Parliament, has "categorically denied" what is described as "the hoary slander" perpetrated by the Prime Minister Nehru in his speech in Parliament on September 29 that the Communist Party in India, as elsewhere, is "intellectually, emotionally and otherwise tied up with other groups in another country and that country might well utilise that for its advantage."

That grave charge had been made by Prime Minister Nehru when initiating an important parliamentary debate on foreign policy, in the course of which the Prime Minister gave expression to the fear entertained by the governments of South and South-East Asian countries of the threat posed by Russian and Chinese Communist Imperialism and its local fifth columns. "Most of these countries," the Prime Minister had said, "are afraid not of what Governments do officially but what they might do through the activities of the Communist Party in these countries."

It is natural that the communist leaders should squeal at this frank public statement of the truth by the Prime Minister. Their denial of facts which are known to themselves to be true will, of course, deceive nobody who remembers the various tergiversations of the C.P.I. from the moment of its establishment by foreign agents in the 20s, through the 'Peoples' War' phase of Quit India days, to its closed-door sessions at Madurai at the beginning of this year under the eagle eye of its Comintern mentor, Harry Pollitt.

Anyone who wishes to see a full documentation in support of the Prime Minister's charge and proof of the abject subservience of the C. P. I. to Moscow diktats will find them in a study prepared for the Institute of Pacific Relations (to which is affiliated the Indian Council of World Affairs) by Mr. M. R. Masani, which has recently been published in London under the title *The Communist Party of India—A Short History*.

According to *Odysseus* writing in the *Eastern Economist*, the author has been "at pains to cite a documentary source for every statement that he makes, so that the reader can verify the facts from the original sources himself" and has thus "lifted his book out of the arena of party polemics into the realm of scholarship and intellectual honesty." No one who reads the nine factual chapters of this study with any objectivity will be able to resist the conclusion that the C.P.I. was conceived in Moscow; that the Indian communists receive intellectual and material help from abroad; that no major change in policy has been or can be carried out without a directive from the Kremlin; that, since M. N. Roy broke with the Comintern as far back as 1929, no communist of any importance has come out in the open in defiance of the subservient

role imposed on the Party; and that the Indian communists in practice, though not always in their professions, recognise and accept their dependence on Moscow.

Aping The Russians

Last month *Freedom First* had referred to the Chinese communist decision, fraught with increasing misery for the Chinese peasantry, to follow blindly the disastrous Soviet experiment of collective farming. Now comes news of similar aping of Soviet industrial policies of State Capitalism and Stakhanovism which have denied the consumer his needs and driven the Russian worker down to the status of a serf.

The *New China* news agency published on September 26 the full text of a revealing speech made by Chou-En-lai at the first meeting of the "National Peoples' Congress." In that speech the Chinese Premier made three basic assertions the grave implications of which the many naive friends of Communist China would do well to ponder:

1. To give everybody the same reward is "a backward *petty bourgeois* outlook."
2. The Government had to beware of the "mistaken tendency" to raise wages too quickly.
3. A nation-wide incentive wage system based on the principle of "to each according to his work" and not "to each according to his need" should be introduced.

Head Hunting In Nefa

THE Nagas have been very much in the news recently. A few days ago there was a report in the press which said that the Political Department of Nefa, by its benevolent and persuasive methods, abolished Head Hunting among the Naga tribes. This colourful pursuit has been prevalent for centuries and is intimately connected with the philosophy and social customs of the Manipur hill people. The simplest and most obvious form of Head Hunting is associated with the blood feud "where the duty of vengeance remains unsated until the tally of heads is numerically equal." The head of a woman or a child was in some cases valued even more than the head of an adult man; and for very good reason: the man who brought the head of a woman or a child from a hostile village, was deemed to have done a very heroic deed, because in such times the women never ventured far from their fields, and their slaughter proved that the brave man had penetrated right into the enemy's stronghold. No young man could persuade a girl to marry him unless he had qualified by, having taken a head, and won the right of a warriors kilt, or of the necklace of bears tusks and the wrist band of cowries. As a matter of fact unless a Naga has a head to his credit (apart from the one on his shoulders) he is not supposed to have crossed the stage of adolescence and is denied the privilege of marriage or the right to inheritance. The Political Department cannot be blamed for at-

tempting to abolish head hunting; but let us hope that they will introduce an equally adventurous, though a more humane test, for winning a lady's hand.

Forms And Substance

TIME was when Government was considered a necessary evil and an ideal state of affairs was one in which the citizens and the Government kept out of each other's way. But times have changed and the best government is no longer the least government. The Welfare State is omnipotent and omnipresent and regulates all activity whether material or spiritual. Today progress is no longer left to such inane vagaries as a social conscience and rising ethical standards but it is periodically announced by Government in attractively illustrated brochures.

All round us magnificent mansions go up for the bureaucracy to live and work in and private enterprise is gradually giving way to State corporations subject only to atmospheric pressure and the laws of gravity. Welfare in the modern world is in direct proportion to the size of the bureaucracy and the number of forms and leisure is merely a breathing space between filling forms, foot-ball pools and crossword puzzles.

In keeping with this spirit of the times the Government of India have announced, as part of the next Five Year Plan, the setting up at Nasik of a press which will concentrate exclusively on the printing of forms. Perhaps, as part of a future plan, a central organisation will be set up which will devote its energies to filling these forms.

Teachers And Their Condition

AN international team appointed by the Government of India and sponsored by the Ford Foundation has made valuable recommendations regarding the treatment to be accorded to teachers. Having come to the conclusion that the salaries paid to teachers are "intolerably low" the team has recommended the levelling up of those salaries to bring them in line with emoluments received by similarly qualified persons in other spheres and professions.

The team has also insisted upon giving teachers security of service. It has recommended that after confirmation a teacher should normally be continued in service till the age of retirement. At present teachers hardly enjoy any security of service. There was a deplorable case in Bombay some months back when a capable University teacher, with eight years service to his credit, was dismissed from service only because he happened to incur the wrath of the chairman of the society conducting the institution.

The team has appropriately pointed out that the most effective way of improving the social status of teachers is to give them "proper economic and working conditions" and to recognise "the importance and the creative nature" of the profession of teaching.

Public education is the very foundation of democracy. That foundation will not be truly laid unless those to whom the task is entrusted are enabled to perform it in conditions of reasonable comfort.

STEPHEN SPENDER IN INDIA

MR. STEPHEN SPENDER, the well-known British poet and the Editor of the *Encounter* arrived in Madras on 28th October. He was in Madras for four days, during the course of which he addressed several meetings of writers, journalists, poets and students held under the auspices of the ICCF and various academic, cultural and professional organisations.

Mr. Spender will be in India for a month and the following is his itinerary.

November 1 2	Travancore Cochin
November 3 4 5	Bangalore
November 6 7 8 9 10	Bombay
November 11	Poona
November 12 13 14 15	Bombay
November 16 17 18 19	Calcutta
November 20	Banaras
November 21 22	Lucknow
November 23 24 25 26 27 28	Delhi

Mr. Spender will leave India on 28th night from Delhi.

The following are some of the important functions arranged for Mr. Spender at some of the places to be visited by him:

Bombay	Nov. 8	6 p.m. Public meeting under the auspices of the ICCF.
	Nov. 9	6-15 p.m. Public meeting under the auspices of the PEN.
	Nov. 10	6 p.m. ICCF Reception at the Taj.
Poona	Nov. 11	Lecture under the auspices of the Poona University.
Bombay	Nov. 12	5-30 p.m. Meeting for Students under the auspices of Bombay University.
	Nov. 15	6 p.m. Theatre Centre Reception.
Calcutta	Nov. 16	5 p.m. Lecture at Rama-Krishna Mission Inst. of Culture.
	Nov. 17	5-30 p.m. Lecture under the auspices of the Calcutta University English Society.
	Nov. 18	6-30 p.m. Lecture at British Council.
Lucknow	Nov. 22	Lecture under the auspices of the Lucknow University.
Delhi	Nov. 25	Lecture under the auspices of the ICCF.
	Nov. 26	Address to students.

Strange Case Of Diego Rivera

by Bertram D. Wolfe

AFTER rejecting him three times the Communist Party of Mexico announced on September 26 that it had readmitted to its ranks the Mexican painter Diego Rivera. With this announcement, Rivera's relations with the Communist party completed a full circle.

When I first met Diego Rivera in 1922, he was just joining the party. Mexico had not yet quieted down from the vague revolutionism inspired by its own indigenous revolution of 1910-1920. Many native political leaders, like Governor Carrillo Puerto of Yucatan and Governor Mujica of Michoacán had briefly passed through the party. Then, as they dropped out, the painters of the budding Mexican artistic renaissance suddenly moved in.

Early in 1922, the painters formed a "union," the *Sindicato Revolucionario de Obreros Técnicos y Plásticos*. Within the year, almost the entire union moved into the Communist party. Their organ, *El Machete*, became the official organ of the party. It was vast, bright and gory, an oversized bedsheet of a newspaper, its masthead a huge woodcut of a machete, 16½ inches by 5 deep, printed in black and overprinted in blood red. It was filled with unrealistic slogans, incitements to immediate direct action, fantastic analyses by artist-politicians whose art, fortunately, was better than their politics. Each issue carried a number of wonderful propaganda cartoons, cut directly on wood or linoleum or etched on metal by the artists themselves. Today, the copies of *El Machete* are an art collector's item. Its editors were Xavier Guerrero, Alfaro Siqueiros and Diego Rivera.

From a party of vaguely revolutionary politicians, the Mexican Communist party was now converted into a party of vaguely revolutionary painters. At its 1923 convention, the three editors of *El Machete* were elected to the Executive Committee; they lacked one of making a majority of the body!

The writer was at that time a Communist and a member of the Mexican party. The convention also elected me to the Executive. Its sessions were fantastic. The two worker members and the representative of the Communist Youth were totally unable to stand up against the fantastic imagination and torrential invention of Diego Rivera. He was as swift to compose imaginary political pictures of the realities around him, and to invent a wealth of supporting detail to fill in the pictures, as he was to cover walls with his frescoes. Moreover, he was a poor Executive Committee member, for he was constantly forgetting what hour of the day and what day of the week it was. While the plaster was wet and the fantasy flowing from his brain to his hand to the wall, time would stand still. He was forever in danger of being expelled for non-attendance at the regulation "three successive meetings."

But when he attended, his vivid imagination, his

creative fantasy simply overwhelmed the others. No one on the Committee seemed to know anything about the economic and political realities of the land, nor—with the exception of the one non-Mexican member—did anyone seem to care. The picture he painted in words—and what a master of words he was!—never failed to capture the imagination of the Committee. The Committee's decisions, springing from his eloquent verisimilitude, were so far from reality that they might as well have been laying plans for work in another country or on another planet.

After a year of opposing, with my halting Spanish and my incomplete and imperfect vision of Mexican reality, Rivera's perfect, complete and coherent fantasies, I strained our friendship nearly to the breaking point by urging him to resign from the party. I explained to him as tactfully as I could the dangers to an inexperienced committee of his overpowering mind and imagination. But, as the reader may well understand, I shied away as speedily as possible from that delicate topic to emphasize another order of reasons no less cogent.

"Look, Diego," I pleaded in summary, "you are today the greatest revolutionary painter in Mexico, probably in the world. Just as one man specializes in teaching, another in speaking, a third in writing, a fourth in organizing among unions or peasantry, so you should do. No matter how well you do other things for the movement, they are not as useful to it as your paintings. It is a shame to waste a day or an hour of such an exceptional talent on meetings, manifestoes and resolutions. And, besides, you are always missing meetings, being threatened with expulsions. Don't you see that as a sympathizer you are the most valued, as a member one of the worst?"

We walked for a long time without either of us saying a word while Diego revolved the thing in his mind and the plaster dried on the wall. At last, he pressed my hand warmly and we went to his home together to draft his letter of resignation. I had another battle to persuade the members of the Committee to accept it.

As soon as I left Mexico—in the summer of 1925—both Diego and the Central Committee, by mutual agreement, hastened to undo my efforts. In 1926 he was readmitted, only to be expelled in 1929 when a holocaust of heresy trials was ordered by the Stalinized Communist International in every country in the world. The Mexican Communist party, being devoid of Trotskyites, Bukharinites, opportunists, exceptionalists and other assorted thought-crime heretics, picked on Diego Rivera in an effort to show its zeal and fulfil its quota.

Neither he nor the party leaders were able to give a coherent account of the causes of the expulsion, for Diego had merely been caught in a worldwide "purge" emanating from the factional politics of the Soviet

Union. The specific causes given in Rivera's case were hastily trumped up and so palpably inadequate that the party later busied itself inventing better ones. They were degrading to Diego's sense of his own importance, so that he, too, was concerned to invent reasons of a larger and more dignified scope. Both the painter and the party were glad to let it appear later that the real cause had been "Trotskyism." In point of fact, this was not thought of or mentioned in his heresy trial, nor did Diego develop any interest in Trotsky until after his expulsion. Thus, while "Trotskyism" brought others their expulsion, expulsion brought Rivera his "Trotskyism."

Only after Diego had been solemnly excommunicated did it occur to his erstwhile comrades that the best way to attack an artist is through his art. He was accused of working on the public buildings of a bourgeois government. Diego answered that he was painting on the walls of public buildings to reach the masses. Here the party eventually bore him out by carrying on a campaign for more public walls for its artists.

The principle was applied which has been so succinctly proclaimed by the Communist poet-critic, Johannes Becher: "We build up the reputations of writers whom we think useful; we destroy the writers whom we consider harmful; esthetic considerations are *petit-bourgeois* prejudices."

Rivera's old comrade-in-arms, Siqueiros, began what passed for an esthetic analysis: Rivera's murals glorified the "bourgeois Mexican Revolution." He used medieval and retrogressive fresco techniques in an age of duco and spray-gun painting. He painted in patios of public buildings, whereas he should be painting on street corners where the masses could not escape his work. People had to stop to look at his paintings, but he should really paint in such a way that, as people moved past his paintings without stopping, the images would take on ever new forms with each change of position and angle.

To this higher nonsense was added the charge of Paris sophistication and a systematic campaign to build up the reputation of other Mexican painters, notably Siqueiros and Orozco. Orozco had no use for factional quarrels or for the Communist incitement of splits and class hatred. On the walls of the *Preparatoria*, he had depicted workers quarreling with each other while the rich and well-fed laughed at them. In the center of this mural there was a worker whose eyes were blinded by a red banner that wrapped itself around his head as he fought against his brothers. But so blind are party commissars in the arts that they do not feel the impact of plastic statement, only of political formulas expressed in familiar parrot language. So they built up Orozco (who was, to be sure, a very great painter in his own right) in order to diminish Rivera.

In the autumn of 1936, Leon Trotsky, who had vainly been seeking refuge in Europe since he was deported by the government he had helped raise to power, was ordered out of Norway. There seemed no place on the face of the earth for

him to go. Under the pressure of the Soviet colossus, country after country refused him a visa. Friends turned to the platonic Trotskyite, Rivera, to see if asylum could not be secured for him in Mexico. The painter went to interview President Cardenas, and, to his astonishment, permission was granted.

Leon Trotsky became a guest of Diego Rivera and his wife, Frida Kahlo. He lived in the home she owned and in which she had been born. But both were men of intense self-confidence and great personal pride. Each had something in him of the *caudillo*. Moreover, Trotsky was soon quarreling with Rivera's fantastic political word-pictures of Mexico and of the world. Trotsky, so to speak, expelled Rivera from Trotskyism, and Rivera expelled Trotsky from the home in which he had offered the wanderer hospitality.

While their quarrels were growing toward open break, the long arm of the GPU reached out for Leon Trotsky in his Mexican refuge. Agents brought orders, money, gifts, weapons, killers. Trotsky's home became a beleaguered fortress. The police guarding it were suborned by beautiful woman spies. Trotsky's American guard, Sheldon Harte, was kidnapped and murdered. At midnight, men in stolen police uniforms surrounded and attacked his home, machine-gunned his bedroom, wounded his grandson Seva in the leg. At least two of the gunmen were Communist artists—Arenal and Diego's old lieutenant, David Alfaro Siqueiros.

Siqueiros never concealed his part in the attempted murder, yet he walks freely around Mexico today. Having quarrelled with Trotsky before the latter's final assassination, Diego Rivera did not shrink from once more exalting Trotsky's murderer, Joseph Stalin, and grasping the hand of his would-be assassin, Siqueiros. The time came when Rivera entered joint exhibitions with the gunman-painter. He asked Frida Kahlo to lend him the fountain pen Trotsky had given her with his name inscribed on it—so that he might use that very pen to make a humble application for readmission to the Communist party.

Three times he condemned his past "sins," denounced Trotskyists, Titoists, Socialists. One of his murals, painted in the New Workers School and now hanging in the Recreation Center of the International Ladies' Garment Workers Union (it was painted on movable walls), pictures Stalin baleful, red-eyed, the Cain who murdered all his brothers in the blood purges. Another mural, on the walls of the Palace of Fine Arts in Mexico City, glorifies Trotsky.

"This fresco of mine," wrote Rivera in a statement which he himself printed and distributed in November 1952, "is the best example of the degeneration into which a Marxist artist can fall when, after having failed to remain in the ranks of his party, he also fails to discipline himself to its line from outside. . . . The time when I produced this work of degeneration corresponds to the weakest period in the plastic quality of my painting."

He went on to call himself "a coward, traitor, counter-revolutionary and abject degenerate"—which,

by some delirious logic, seemed to fit him to become once more a member of the Communist party. He pledged himself to continue making such "self-criticism" and applying to the party "until my readmission becomes acceptable." And now, in the fourth public attempt, he has been readmitted. But his glorification of Leon Trotsky and his red-eyed Stalin are still on the walls.

In December, Diego Rivera will be 68. Two more years, and the world Communist movement will be "celebrating" his 70th birthday (if he lasts that long as a member in good standing). People who have seen his more recent works say that he is repeating himself increasingly, that there is more and more of hollow poster propaganda and less and less intensity of conviction in his work. I have not seen his paintings since 1946 and cannot say. He has never been an intense and powerful painter, but I imagine he remains, as he always was, an enormously talented and fecund one. He is one of those monsters of fecundity that occur at rare intervals in the history of mankind. He is for painting what Lope de Vega is for drama. Even if he is too complaisant with his own work, he turns out more really good works a year with amazing ease than many another who discreetly limits himself to a handful of paintings in a lifetime. He has never taken himself seriously as a politician, or in personal human relations, but he will always remain one of the great painters of his time.

Rivera's almost biological urge to paint, as a tree begets ever fresh leaves, is matched by an insatiable hunger for publicity at whatever cost. For a headline he will do the most bizarre things, invent the most preposterous stories or theories, paint the silliest caricature, even betray those who love him most dearly.

When I was completing his biography in 1939, I wrote of his marriage with Frida Kahlo: "This is the tenth year of their marriage, and Diego grows more and more dependent on his wife's judgment and comradeship. If he should lose her now, the solitude which besets him would be much heavier than it is." A few months later, he arranged a big party, where he loudly proclaimed to a friend: "Tell Bert that I am divorcing Frida to prove that my biographer is wrong." Yet another year and he remarried her. Could it have been to prove that his biographer was right?

On July 13 of this year, Frida, a lovely and lovable person and a great painter in her own right, died at the age of 44. At her funeral in the Palace of Fine Arts, the mourners, personal or political, included ex-President Lazaro Cardenas, who gave Trotsky asylum in Mexico, and David Alfaro Siqueiros, the painter-with-a-pistol who violated the right of asylum and tried to murder Trotsky. Friends told me that Rivera had persuaded his wife to leave all her property to the Communist party. I do not know whether this is so. At any rate, the Communist party created a political scandal by covering her bier with the Russian flag. The next day, Dr. Andres Bello, poet, scholar and Director of the Institute of Fine Arts, was fired. He is not a Communist, and could

hardly have been expected to fight with the Communist guards at the funeral. But he was made the scapegoat. Two months later, the Communist party announced that it had accepted the self-styled "coward, traitor, counter-revolutionary and abject degenerate" back into its ranks.

How long a man with his temperament and his love of headlines and public controversy will remain in the party is hard to say. But one thing is sure: In the Soviet Union, a painter with his esthetic sophistication, his mastery of modern impressionist, cubist and post-cubist techniques, and his incorporation of these techniques into his murals and easel paintings, would not be permitted to paint. Even in 1927, when Lunacharsky invited him to Moscow to do a mural, the growing reaction in the arts prevented him from executing his mission. In his heart, Diego knows this. He knows that many of the fellow painters of his Paris days returned to Russia only to be denied the right to paint and to end in a concentration camp or with a bullet in the neck.

When a friend went to Picasso after one of his pro-Communist statements and reminded him that his works were banned in the Soviet Union and that any Russian who painted like him was hounded into sterility and prison, he answered: "If they threw me into jail, I would sever the artery of my left arm and with my last drop of blood, on the floor of my cell, I would paint one more Picasso."

What then induces a Picasso or a Rivera—or, for that matter, a Siqueiros—to serve the party which, if it were to win, would destroy the one freedom that really matters to them? To this question Marx has no answer. Nor do Lenin and Stalin. Perhaps Freud does; he called it—"the death wish."

I. C. C. F. NEWS

The Committee in Madras observed "Gandhi Jayanthi Day" on October 7. A Poet's-Meeting "Kavi Arangam" was arranged. The Chief Minister Mr. Kamaraj Nadar presided. The poets composed poems on the life and teachings of Gandhiji specially for the occasion and recited them before a large gathering which included Tamil writers, and poets. Some of the popular poets in Tamilnad such as Sri Kothamangalam Subbu, Sri S. D. S. Yogi, Sri M. S. Chellam, Sri. S. K. Ganapathy, Sri Al. Valliappa and Sri K. Devanarayanan (artiste) participated in the meet.

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A reception was accorded in Bombay on 28th September to Tarkateertha Laxmanshastri Joshi, a member of the Committee on his election as the President of the Marathi Literary Conference. Mr. V. B. Karnik presided over the function and Miss Durga Bhagwat and Prof. G. D. Parikh spoke on the occasion.

A Parliamentary Report From Moscow

by M. K. Argus

THE British Parliament has accepted an invitation from the Supreme Soviet of the USSR to visit Moscow this fall. The invitation was sent to Lord Simonds, Speaker of the House of Lords, and W. S. Morrison, Speaker of the House of Commons, by that distinguished parliamentarian, Marshal Klimenti Voroshilov. Quite a few of the British lawmakers are just raring to go to Moscow, and I am afraid some of their reports from the land of the Soviets will run as follows:

"Moscow is quite an impressive city. It has a number of beautiful boulevards and streets, and improvements are constantly being made throughout the capital. We were shown plans that would make Moscow the most beautiful city in the world by 1984. One must give credit where credit is due; nothing of this sort had ever been planned before the October Revolution.

"The streets are full of citizens going about their own business. If there are any Russians who, as some people claim, go about other Russians' business, we haven't noticed them. Some Muscovites travel in autos, others in trams, quite a few in the underground. For some reason, the Russians don't like the name 'underground' and call it the Metropolitan. We've had a few misunderstandings on account of that.

"We have found the Russians to be exceedingly hospitable and friendly, although on the unofficial level they still seem to shun foreigners. That, it was explained, is because of the Russians' inherent distrust of foreigners. The Russian people have a long memory and still remember our invasion of the Crimea in 1854, which they consider an inexcusable attempt on our part to set up imperialist rule over the Soviet Union.

"In spite of this, however, we have had a wonderful time in Moscow. The Russians have actually spread out the red carpet before us. (No pun intended.) Every night, there was a banquet in our honour, each time in a different place. The most memorable of all, of course, was the banquet in the Kremlin. We found Mr. Malenkov a very affable and courteous man. When one of us passed out after the 29th toast (it was, if memory serves me right, in honour of the Soviet armed forces, which guard their beloved country against capitalist encirclement), Mr. Malenkov had two Deputy Foreign Ministers take him to his hotel.

"Throughout our stay in Moscow, we have not seen or met a single member of the secret police. It seems to us that the talk about them is highly exaggerated.

We asked the guides and interpreters assigned to us point-blank whether they were members of the secret police. They were so offended that we had to apologize.

"The Russians love their government, and they hate war. We have never met such peace-loving people. We were naturally anxious to speak to a Russian common man in the street, so our guide obligingly stopped one for us. The first thing the man in the street asked us was: 'Why are you so intent upon waging war against all the peaceful democratic nations of the world?' Then, without waiting for an answer, he added: 'What has our beloved government done to you that you always slander and malign it?' We were put to shame by that question and told the good man that we also wanted to live peacefully with other nations. His next question was: 'Is it true that England has become an American colony?' We made an effort to deny it.

"The man spoke to us in English. We were not a little surprised and asked him where he had learned it. 'All Soviet Citizens,' he replied, 'study English so that we can read William Shakespeare and Hewlett Johnson in the original.' Quite a people, these Russians, eh what?

"Needless to say, we also went to see the ballet at the famous Bolshoi Theatre. After the performance, we were invited backstage. As soon as the introductions were over, one of the ballerinas said to us: 'Won't you, please, try to persuade your own government as well as your American friends to stop their war preparations against us!' Peace, it appears, is uppermost in every Russian's mind. We left the theatre profoundly shaken.

"Most interesting and enlightening was our trip to a collective farm about fifty miles from Moscow. It was not a model farm, just an ordinary run-of-the-mill one. We've rarely seen a happier breed of men and women. We were treated to a most excellent and bountiful dinner. The roast chickens were especially delectable, and we asked the collective farmers about them. They told us that the birds were treated according to a new method, with atomic energy. 'We in the Soviet Union,' the farmers said, 'use atomic energy exclusively for peaceful purposes.' They showed us the building where atomic energy for chicken coops was being produced, but they would not let us inside. The method was a state secret, and the Russians, you see, are still suspicious of us.

"Only by a steady interchange of persons and information will we be able to dispel this suspicion."

—From *The New Leader*

Review

The Web of Subversion

by James Burnham, John Day, New York, p.248, \$3.75.

THE Web of Subversion' is a presentation of 'underground networks in the United States Government' to the extent to which they have been revealed in recent investigations.

Mr. Burnham's narrative is concerned with facts and the pattern underlying them. It is derived from a vast mass of records and documents and seeks to outline the career and activities of a few dozen individuals, composing three main 'cells' and occupying key positions from which they could influence the policies of the United States Government. Arranging to secure important high-salaried posts for each other, the group seems to have carried on its subversive activities for over a decade. "Influencing or attempting to influence actions and policies of the United States Government in such a manner as to injure United States interests and to serve Soviet (or International Communist) interests," they have been shifting centres of their activities, in the light of changing Russian requirements, from the Economic Agencies (1933-40) to the War Agencies (1940-44) and later, with the then approaching end of hostilities, to the International Agencies mainly financed by the United States. The Departments of State, Treasury and Defence, the White House, and the Atomic Project have all come in for their special attention and there is reason to believe that the Judicial and the Legislative Branches have also not been free from their influence. The guilt of some of the men is obvious; that of many others only thinly shrouded by the pleas under the Fifth Amendment. True, they have not been successful all along the line, but on balance have done plenty of damage, awareness of the totality of which constitutes a major justification of the methods adopted to track down and expose them. Mr. Burnham examines these methods and makes a number of suggestions for improving them for the obvious reason that what is known of the underground may be only a part of what actually exists. Of course the argument about the Fifth Amendment has already been partly dated as a result of the Presidential order, last October, making any federal employee invoking the Fifth Amendment to keep from testifying before a Congressional Committee liable to immediate dismissal.

Mr. Burnham's book has a limited scope and purpose. In choosing the underground activities in the governmental machinery and in confining himself to a factual narrative instead of trying to determine individual guilt, legal or moral, he treads on a safe and perhaps unexceptionable ground. One wishes he had consistently maintained that attitude. He is prepared

to admit cases of ignorance mitigating guilt or even those of innocence. But at the same time he also argues: "However that may be, it does not alter the objective, historical fact that all who collaborate in any measure with the underground, through ignorance or by design, from the best motives or the worst, in that same measure aid Soviet Communist interests and injure American interests." The merits of the argument apart, it need hardly have been brought in a work dealing with individual efforts at subversion. Is it difficult by the same logic to argue that McCarthy is one of the greatest tools of International Communism and has very successfully played that role? There is no reason why a democracy should walk into the trap of 'we' and 'they' and distinctions between errors of judgment or well-intentioned mistakes and conscious subversion do and ought to matter.

In limiting the scope of his narrative, Mr. Burnham may be said to have helped in putting the controversy over the larger issue of McCarthyism into its proper perspective and proportions. "If irresponsible exaggeration is the essence of McCarthyism, McCarthy is not the only one guilty of McCarthyism." The problem is not so much of values and principles but of the nature and limitations of defensive action on the part of a democracy in the context of a series of concrete situations. Such attention should in no way jeopardise what it seeks to defend; and the strategy of a defence cannot entirely be determined by the nature of the enemy, a course which amounts to conceding him moral victory. But at the same time since proper functioning of democratic governments is an essential element in the defence of democracy, and in so far as they occupy so many strategic points in the life of a society, attempts to examine and expose subversive elements therein may be viewed as warranted and justified. Perhaps that might constitute an important need, to be fulfilled, of course, in legitimate democratic ways.

G.D.P.

New Footprints of the Trojan Horse

by Herbert Carleton Mayer, Farrar, Straus, and Young, Inc. New York, \$1.75.

PEOPLE in India get impatient at the American "hysteria" against communists. To many it appears that the communist must be allowed the same freedom to propagate his views as is permitted to others. The activities of McCarthy and his ilk do not appear to be in keeping with the best democratic tradition. Unfortunately, when one party to a contest openly says that he will hit below the belt and that his sole concern is with winning the fight, it is high time that all who are not communists should adopt radical methods for stemming the advance of this unusual adversary. This is what the American people are faced with and this book, which is a brief history of the origin, the philosophy and the progress of communism, is an attempt to show up the communist menace in its comprehensive proportions and to alert the American people against this danger of a unique kind.

From recent history we know that repeating a lie often and violently enough makes people believe it. Perhaps on the same principle the constant reiteration of the truth would get us somewhere, and here is where the value of a book of this kind lies. The author points out the difference between trials in a law court and trial by the MVD, between a Free Press and the Party line, between voting as you want to and voting as you are ordered to, and in general between compulsion and voluntary cooperation, that is, between the communist State and a democracy.

General Lucius Clay says in the introduction. "The struggle to capture the minds of men will continue unabated. The lie continually repeated and unchallenged tends to obscure the truth." It is imperative that the lie should be exposed before the damage is done.

The author refers to the story of Troy in the beginning. Everyone knows how Troy was destroyed—not by an invading army, but by infiltration from within. Twice in twenty-five years the U.S. has helped to defeat aggression by employing its armed forces in Europe and Asia. Now the problem is to conquer a power that bores from within, and it is only by exercising the maximum vigilance that it is possible to overcome a challenge of this type.

This small book in large letters should be read by all.

ZAFFAR FUTEHALLY

Baudelaire, A Study of His Poetry

by Martin Turnell, Hamish Hamilton, London 1953, sh 21/-

MANY books have been written about the life and works of Charles Pierre Baudelaire, and this book by Martin Turnell is a very detailed study of his work as a poet. The introductory chapter deals with Baudelaire's originality and truly notable impact on French poetry. Later the author discusses various problems such as the dating of the poems and the architecture of Baudelaire's first volume of poems "Les Fleurs du Mal," which he, along with recent French authorities, regards as a single opus. The study is completed by a long chapter on the poet's versification, language, and imagery.

Baudelaire is now recognised as one of the greatest of the poets of the later phase of the French romantic movement. His poetry is simple in form and rich in vocabulary, which sprang from a keen delight in the sensual and passionate aspects of life, but subject at the same time to a critical analysis combined with a mystical perception.

The description of a landscape might begin with the foreground, centre, left and right, and then go on successively to the background, the sky, the effect of

light etc. Such a description will depend upon the subject and many other variable factors leading to appreciation of the beauty envisaged.

The beauty of Baudelaire's poems depends very largely on the reader, who must have sympathy with him. While Mr. Turnell's book may be of great interest to the bibliographer, it will add little to the previous books on Baudelaire because the writer is obviously out of sympathy with the poet.

The attempt to sterilise Baudelaire by analysing in cold blood lines, written in the euphoria either of passionate pleasure or of passionate despair, adds nothing to the poet. It is merely an attempt by one individual to give vicarious pleasure to himself as well as to the many readers who are content to enjoy at second hand an intense life of which they know nothing.

Since this book will delight the majority who, from the safety of their armchairs can criticise the style of one who moved in the world of feeling, and so consider themselves in a paltry way superior, it is worth the money it costs.

MARGARET JOHNSON

Poems

by Nasim Hikmet translated from the Turkish by Ali Yunus, Masses & Mainstream Inc. New York, 1954, pp. 64.

PRESUMABLY, Mr Samuel Sillen who wrote the introduction to these "poems" knew as little Turkish as the reviewer, which is nil, and that Mr. Sillen's encomiums are based purely on the translation. Judging, therefore, the "poems" as they stand, and knowing vaguely that what Shakespeare wrote was poetry while what Bacon wrote was not, it is as difficult to withhold praise for Mr. Sillen's loyalty to his comrade as to avoid pitying him on the paucity of his poetic sense.

It is possible that Mr. Hikmet is a great fighter for freedom, however misguided; that Turkey is not a democracy; that in the cold war the Russians, Mr. Sillen and Mr Hikmet are in the right and the Yanks and the Turkish Government in the wrong; it is possible, too, though not very probable, that a very great poet can have opinions on such matters which he will succeed in voicing poetically. But the reviewer is afraid that Mr Hikmet is not that poet.

Mr. Sillen starts by saying that he "felt an immediate kinship with the poet who.....wrote.....:

They are scared, Negro brother,
Our songs scare them, Robeson.

Doubtless, if a chimpanzee had made a rude noise at President Eisenhower Mr Sillen would have taken the chimpanzee to his bosom as a brother. Here is one of those examples of "consummate artistry" with which, according to Mr Sillen, the poet "has achieved

that synthesis of the fighter and the creator . . . which is the hallmark of greatness in our time.”:

Just because you did not give up your hopes
for the world, for your country, and for humanity,
they either send you to the gallows,
or put you in jail,
for ten years, for fifteen years
or, who cares, for even longer.

People who write and attempt to pass off such stupidities as poetry deserve to be imprisoned for ten years, for fifteen years or even longer.

BENEDICK

BOOKS IN BRIEF

THE marked individuality of Vernon Watkins, his sense of the luminous and his rhythmical vitality once again come in full play in *The Death Bell: Poems And Ballads* (Faber, sh 10/6). Subtly alliterative and rich in imagery, Watkins' poetry is an exhilarating experience of a contact with a fresh mind.

*

The Principal Upanisads, edited with introduction, Text, Translation and Notes by Dr. S. Radhakrishnan (Allen and Unwin, sh 50/-) keeps close to the original, but often with such a lack of idiomatic grace that what Dr. Radhakrishnan calls the “nobility of sound and the feeling of the luminous,” present in the texts, is almost absent. But unlike most modern translations, which are confined to ten or even only four or five Upanisads, this one gives in full the eighteen commented on or mentioned by Sankara.

*

A paragon of atmosphere and construction, Emlyn Williams' latest contribution for theatre, *Someone Waiting* (Heinemann sh 6/-) is a thriller of skilful characterisation managed with extreme economy.

*

There was certainly nothing pretty or supple about Petrus Borel, yet without him there would have been, as Baudelaire says, a lacuna in the history of romanticism. His story was worth telling and Dr. Enid Starkie in her *Petrus Borel, The Lycanthrope* (Faber, sh 21/-) has told it very well.

*

Frought with unending doom in a truly Sophoclean manner, yet tempered by infinite compassion *Perdu, And His Father* (Rupert Hart-Davis, sh 10/6) is a rustic tale of a child's search for values as embodied in establishing his patrimony. Awarded Grazia Deledda prize, this first novel by Signor Paride Rombi, admirably translated by Henry Reed, is a must reading of the month.

R.H.

Letter to the Editor

“All India Association Of Democratic Lawyers”

Dear Sir,

It is reported that an “All India Association of Democratic Lawyers” was formed in Calcutta a few days ago.

The All India Association of Democratic Lawyers is only one more front like the Peace Movement and the Indo-Soviet and Indo-China Friendship Associations set up by the International Communist Movement. These Associations deliberately masquerade as non-political organisations with a view to decoying well-meaning but uninformed people into the web of communist machinations.

The International Association of Democratic Lawyers was founded in Paris in October 1946, with Mr. D. N. Pritt, as President.

Although the Association professes to be primarily concerned with legal matters and problems, throughout its existence its main pronouncements have been on subjects which were the current themes of Soviet propaganda and its efforts in the main have been to use the group of Lawyers to give prestige of the Law to international communist-talk intended to develop the myth of communism's identification with democracy. According to the communists only those are democratic who participate in the “peace” movements, support Soviet Russia's foreign policy and wittingly or unwittingly follow the communist line.

In the Rome Congress of the Association held in 1949, the Yugoslav Section of the Association was expelled on the ground that “it was a tool of the imperialistic policy of the Tito clique.”

In March 1952, a “Commission” of the Association visited North Korea. The Soviet News Agency, TASS, which reported the arrival of the Commission in Korea announced that it had been sent to conduct investigations and to “establish the crimes committed by the interventionists in Korea.” Subsequently, the Commission published a report, in which, no wonder, it was alleged that evidence of the use of germ-warfare by the United Nations' troops had been discovered in Korea and China.

On the 31st July 1952 the Home Secretary of the United Kingdom described the Association in the House of Commons as an Association “which carried on Soviet propaganda under the guise of concern with legal matters.”

In 1953 the National Executive of the British Labour Party declared that membership of the Association would be incompatible with the membership of the Labour Party. The Secretary of the British Labour Party, Mr. Morgan Phillips, described the aim of the Association as being to act as a “controlling and co-ordinating center for the affiliation of parallel national organisations in selected countries and thus be a valuable satellite of the Cominform.”

Yours Sincerely
SHANKAR SHETTY

With Many Voices

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

—Tennyson.

The basic thing now is to go fast as if, as they say, the devil is on our heels. To hell with the man who cannot keep pace.

—Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, *Free Press Journal*,
October 14, 1954.

China should break away from the Soviet 'yoke' first before seeking rapprochement with Japan.

—Mr. Inejiro Asanuma, Japanese Socialist Leader,
Bombay Chronicle, October 14, 1954.

✓ Communism was the enemy of individual liberty and treated human beings as mere cattle to be well looked after, of course, but without any soul.

—Pandit Govind Ballabh Pant, *Times of India*,
October 8, 1954.

India and other Asian nations were able to enjoy the luxury of neutrality in the cold war only because of the certainty that the U.S.A. was containing Communism around the world.

—Prof. H. Fisher, U.S. Delegate to Institute of Pacific Relations Conference, *The Statesman*,
October 6, 1954.

There are more toadies to the square mile in New Delhi today than at any other place in our poor India.

—Mr. H. V. Kamath, *The Current*,
October, 6, 1954.

Asked what, in his opinion, was an alternative to SEATO, Mr. Nehru retorted: "What is the alternative to hitting a man in the face? I say, don't hit."

—A report in *Times of India*, October 16, 1954.

Confront the Communists with Christian love - and you may be surprised by what happens.

—Rajkumari Amrit Kaur, *Times of India*,
October 9, 1954.

INDIAN COMMITTEE FOR CULTURAL FREEDOM

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

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The Soviet new look, as expressed in the so-called policy of "coexistence," has one objective: the distintegration of coexistence among and between the free nations of the world.

—Mr. Irving Brown in the *New Leader*,
October 4, 1954.

"Suffering and sorrow shared is suffering and sorrow halved."

—Mr. Shantilal Shah, *Times of India*,
October 18, 1954.

It was rather unkind of Mao Tse-tung to launch—exactly twenty-four hours before the Labour delegation landed at Peking—a highly dangerous campaign for a new communist "war of liberation."

—*Socialist Commentary* (London), September, 1954.

Our main effort between 1944 and 1953 was to activate a public opinion on Soviet Communism which always seemed two or three years behind political necessity, and, in some cases, twenty years behind historical reality.

—*New Leader*, October 11, 1954.

✓ Hitler claimed all of German descent as members of the Reich, even when citizens of other States and was willing to grant them German passports. China goes one better. Its new Constitution enables overseas Chinese to be elected to the National Assembly. Thirty deputies have already been "elected," or rather, nominated, from Siam, Indonesia, Singapore, Sarawak, Amoy, Africa and Sydney.

—"Viator" in the *Sunday Times*, September 19, 1954.

The existence of the Communist Party is a warning to us, and that warning is enough.

—Mr T. T. Krishnamachari, *Times of India*,
September 29, 1954.

Mao Tse-tung, indeed, has shown a Hitlerian technique in tackling one objective at a time, in leaving Indo-China till Korea had been dealt with, and in stepping up the pressure on Formosa only when Indo-China had reached a lull.

—*The Economist* (London), September 11, 1954.

Mr. Menon's "myopia" had done no service to the cause of peace or to the cause of his country.

—*New York Times*, as reported in *Times of India*,
October 9, 1954.

There can be no doubt that in the conditions of South East Asia subversion poses as great a threat as aggression.

—"Surveyor," *Times of India*, October 11, 1954.