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# Retort

**THE NEW RUSSIAN RESISTANCE**

HOLLEY CANTINE and DACHINE RAINER

**ART**

**PLAY AND ITS PERVERSIONS**

HOLLEY CANTINE

**MICHAEL BAKUNIN**

MICHAEL GRIEG

refugee from DALSTROI—IDA METT

english poets—ALEX COMFORT & GEORGE SIMS

u.s. poets—book reviews—

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# RETORT

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*Editors:* HOLLEY CANTINE and DACHINE RAINER

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EDITORIALS.....	2
ART: PLAY AND ITS PERVERSIONS... <i>Holley Cantine</i> .....	6
POEMS.....	16
MICHAEL BAKUNIN..... <i>Michael Grieg</i> .....	23
A REFUGEE FROM DALSTROI..... <i>Ida Mett</i> .....	35
BOOKS..... <i>Holley Cantine, Dachine Rainer, Alex Lang</i> .....	40
RECORDS.....	47

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## EDITORIALS

### THE NEW RESISTANCE IN RUSSIA: Part II

In the interview "A Refugee from Dalstroï" in this issue further light is thrown on the life of the ordinary person living in Russia. [See editorial in last issue.] One thing that emerges clearly from this narrative is that it is impossible to parody any situation in a totalitarian state. The adventures of this refugee are almost a parable on the relationship between the average individual and the total state. The reality is invariably more fantastic than the most lurid imagination: witness the tale of the old peasant who was incautious enough to recount his dream!

Our hero fleeing from one totalitarian menace, naively enters the clutches of another, expecting that he will not have to live in a way that is not especially different from the way to which he had been accustomed. [Considering the usual life of a lower class Jew in Poland this was a modest enough expectation.] However, even this hope proves fantastically optimistic. At first, he tries to earn his living by his trade, but is prevented from doing this by the obviously deliberate economic pressure of the state. Still retaining his innocence, he registers for the privilege of returning home! but is grabbed by the state and dumped into a wilderness where his labor is wanted.

But even this situation is too idyllic to last: despite his best efforts to conform to the regulations, he is railroaded into a concentration camp. It is perfectly clear that the Russian government has a deliberate policy of "recruiting" labor for these camps, manufacturing pretexts haphazardly to meet their continual need for slaves. These camps cannot be regarded as punitive institutions of the state's usual sort, where "law breakers" are confined as penalty for crime; rather they resemble the southern chain gangs, or the plantation system that prevails in the South Pacific, *in that charges are entirely fabricated as an essential aspect of the economy.*

## EDITORIALS

3

This arbitrary and indiscriminating way in which the Russian state secures its labor power provides an excellent political education for its inhabitants. In a country like Nazi Germany, or in the American South, where forced labor is recruited from racial minorities the impression is created that the forced labor policy is a by-product of racial persecution. But in Russia there is no racial discrimination. Hence there is no ambiguity, and each individual cannot fail to realize that when the State swoops down and seizes his labor power, that it is the State as such that is the bird of prey.

Thus when finally thru an accident of international politics, our hero is released from the camp, his political education has developed to a point where he knows the State as enemy; in order to exist, he must stay out of its clutches.

The most important aspect of his story, from the standpoint of social change inside Russia, is the fact that it gives concrete evidence—unfortunately much too fragmentary—that it is possible to function at intervals in conditions of comparative freedom despite the best efforts of the secret police. Whether this means that the NKVD is less efficient than is generally believed, or that they have reached a point where they do not care to ferret out every dissident element in the regime for reasons of their own, it is impossible to say.

In either case, it indicates that the regime is somewhat less total than most radicals have been led to believe. No police system has a high level of efficiency. And in a state like Russia that is so dependent on police terror that its NKVD number millions, we may be certain that a large percentage of these are inept. Furthermore, long experience in evasion has brought out the latent rabbit in their potential victims.

It may be argued, by those radicals who need to believe that the Stalinist regime is omnipotent, that if the NKVD lets anyone slip thru their fingers they do so as part of state policy, and that therefore there is no reason to be optimistic about the situation.

But it seems to us, on the contrary, that a careful examination of this interpretation leads to a promising conclusion: for if the NKVD is deliberately letting the free market flourish and is neglecting to conducting a thorough search for suspected malingerers, this can mean one of two things: first that the bureaucracy recognizes that it must permit an area of freedom to stave off unrest and collapse, or else that the men of the NKVD are of



themselves sufficiently disaffected to relax their scrutiny and allow a certain amount of illegal activity to function from which they can levy their own unofficial taxes in the manner of policemen the world over.

If the first is true, then it follows that the regime feels itself insecure. Whether this security is justified or imaginary is not important—in either case it constitutes a social neurosis of totalitarianism. The free market has no place in a controlled economy. Absolute control is the health of a totalitarian state. Any deviation from this—for any reason—signifies an area of vulnerability in the state. Whether the state can recoup any of this lost control as it partially did after the NEP remains to be seen. It would be more difficult to wipe out the free market for various reasons, not the least of which are the impact of the war, outside ideas, and an ever-increasing disaffection for the state and an ever-growing proficiency at illegal activity and evasion.

It is furthermore naive to assume that even what the state endorses it can invariably—or perhaps ever—control! For man is learning to live more and more in the interstices of controls. If it is so, that the free market exists for the people to let off steam—and incidentally to eat, then who can say how much pressure is being put behind the steam, or how much eating may become a new and exciting habit for the Russian people. Whatever combination of these factors represent the real situation we must bear in mind that a free market is *free* regardless of how it gets that way.

It is regrettable that the interviewer did not see fit to devote more time to the uncovering the precise details of her informants' way of life after his release from Dalstroi, since the implications of this section of the narrative have the most important political consequences. It is only here that one glimpses, however fleetingly, a perspective of possible change in the existing social system in Russia. The interviewer, like most anti-Stalinist radicals, is more interested in unsavory facts about the regime—presumably to convince herself and others that it is not, after all, a workers' state. But by now, so much evidence has been accumulated to this effect, that to add to it is somewhat gratuitous. It is about time that those radicals who are still seriously concerned with the principles that the radical movement has always recognized—freedom from all forms of oppression and exploitation, social and economic

equality, and the ownership of the means of production by those who operate them—should start taking it for granted that Bolshevik Russia has nothing whatever to do with these principles. The attitude of outraged betrayal that characterizes the writing of most anti-Stalinist radicals when they are discussing Russia is understandable enough, considering the high hopes most radicals once had for the Bolshevik Revolution, but after thirty years of uninterrupted onslaught against everything that that revolution was supposed to accomplish, we must be willing to concede that our earlier expectations were based on a misunderstanding of the nature of revolution.

The regime in Russia is apparently recognized for what it is by its own working class. Instead of perpetually regretting that it isn't what we thought it was, we should devote our energy to finding ways to undermine it.

While it is true that the Russian regime is more ruthless and oppressive than most States, *it is a difference of degree rather than of kind*. We have no reason to believe that other countries will not achieve the same degree of totalitarian horror, if the process of centralization and militarization is permitted to develop much longer. The duty of radicals in relation to a totalitarian State is to discover its weaknesses and how to make use of them for the sake of promoting social change in the direction of radical values. Simply deploring that conditions are as bad as they are contributes very little to this task. At the same time, this kind of muck-raking contributes a great deal to the war-propagandists who are working to prepare the American people for a war with Russia. We do not mean to imply that we favor suppressing the facts about the Russian regime, but that these facts should be treated as material to be worked with, instead of simply spreading them out to shock people.

## INDIA

### THE GREAT DAY

Hurrah for revolution and more cannon-shot!  
A beggar upon horseback lashes a beggar on foot.  
Hurrah for revolution and cannon come again!  
The beggars have changed places, but the lash goes on.

W. B. YEATS



## ART: PLAY AND ITS PERVERSIONS

HOLLEY CANTINE

Nearly all of the higher animals, especially when they are young, prefer to occupy themselves a good part of the time with activity that has no direct practical value. In all save man, this activity is of a purely physical nature—jumping, racing, frisking about, or pretending to fight with one another. Man, as a result of his more highly developed intellect, and the accumulated culture produced by it, has built up a complex range of play. In some of its forms, human play resembles that of the other animals to a large extent, but other forms have become so refined and altered that it is frequently difficult to recognize that they belong in the same category.

Probably the most widely misunderstood of the forms of human play are those fields of activity which are classified as the fine arts—music, poetry, painting and so forth. So much has been written attempting to prove that art possesses some 'higher' or at least functional significance, that it is only by observing the behavior of small children, who not yet become fully conscious of their social rôle, and who spontaneously alternate singing, dancing and plastic art with the playful actions of other species, that one can see it in its proper perspective.

It is generally recognized that play is natural and necessary for small children, but it is widely held that it is somehow inappropriate and beneath the dignity of adults. In many societies, particularly those that are based on class or status stratification, adult play is actively discouraged. At a certain age, which varies somewhat depending on culture, class and historical period, but which roughly coincides with puberty, the individuals desire for play is rather abruptly subjected to a concerted campaign of ridicule and repression. He is now no longer a child and should cease to behave like one. The time has come when he must assume the responsibilities and dignity of adult status.

It is the purpose of this article to attempt to demonstrate that the repression of the play impulse in adults is an arbitrary and largely harmful process, which results from the compulsions imposed by class stratification. The play impulse should be recognized as an important part of man's fundamental nature, and provided with adequate outlets, free from guilt and shame. Moreover, the separation between childhood and maturity is not imposed by nature as a sharp break. The process of human maturation is naturally smooth and gradual, and the naturally matured individual differs from a child only in the extent of his knowledge, the subtlety of his perceptions, and his greater physical strength, coordination and patience.

### II

In most societies that have developed beyond the level of simple hunting or agriculture, there exists a differentiation of the status of individuals in terms of social power, prestige, and consequently, in many instances, of economic privilege. The concept of status differentiation can arise in a society in a number of ways: from religion, as in Polynesia and certain African kingdoms; as a result of the conquest and subjugation of one group by another; or simply from the growth of distinctions between different occupational groups within a society. Even within a simple equalitarian society, like the Andaman Islanders or the Plains Indians, status differentiation, on the basis of age and achievement may occur. Once a system of status has been established, in whatever manner, it develops a life of its own, and persists with extraordinary tenacity from one generation to the next.

The ascription of higher status to adults than to children possesses a certain elementary logic especially within the framework of primitive economics, where success in the quest for food depends on a fairly high degree of coordination and experience. However, even this natural basis for differentiation tends to produce unfortunate psychological consequences. It gives rise to a continual pressure on the younger members of the community to grow out of their inferior status as quickly as possible and to regard everything associated with that status as contemptible and unworthy. Where the rise in status is directly linked with physical maturation, and the achievement of higher status is virtually automatic once one reaches a certain level of physical prowess, this emphasis is not entirely harmful, although the emphasis on status achievement



frequently tends to speed up the process of social maturation until it is out of harmony with its physical basis, and rush the individual into adult status before he is really ready for it—thus giving rise to unnecessary anxieties and tensions. But when advancement in status is not directly a consequence of maturation, and where, as in most class societies, the achievement of adult status does not present the individual with a wider range of possible activity, but the reverse, its psychological consequences are thoroughly deplorable.

For the lower levels of status in a class society, the amount of advancement possible is usually very little—practically speaking, the only certain way the unprivileged individual can advance himself in status is by growing up. In a class society, advancement in status is almost invariably one of the major preoccupations of the people, so the pressure on children, both internal and external, to relinquish their 'inferior' childlike ways and become adults is enormous, even when there is no immediate economic need for it.

Unfortunately, however, adult status in a class society permits greater scope for the individual's potentialities only in the realm of sexual adventures. In virtually every other respect, he is much more circumscribed than he was as a child, both by the pressure of economic necessity and that of social taboos. Especially on the lower levels of status, adulthood is defined in largely negative terms—the things one can no longer do without losing face are many, while the number of things he can now do that he was prevented from doing as a child are fairly negligible. He is free to take a job—in fact compelled to—but the possibility of exercising his faculties in his work is infinitesimal in comparison with the creative outlets that even a slum-child possesses, and he is strongly discouraged from doing anything creative when he is not working, by the fear of being considered childish.

The lower one goes in the social hierarchy, the earlier the age of social maturity manifests itself. On the bottom, where the only social advance is from childhood to 'maturity', boys in their early teens are already scornful of childishness and arbitrarily limit their play to such 'adult' pastimes as smoking, drinking, gambling and fornicating.

In the higher levels of the hierarchy, the pressure on children to grow up is somewhat less intense. Childhood lasts somewhat longer, and the transition is more gradual, but the process is not remarkably different and the end-result is almost as limited and

circumscribed.

The desire for play is considerably stronger than any efforts that can be made to destroy it by social pressure, but when it is prevented from manifesting itself naturally and spontaneously it tends to become furtive and twisted. Adult play, in a class society, except for the few fields which are denied to children—chiefly sex and the indulgence in strong drink—must disguise itself as useful work in order to be socially acceptable. In most pre-capitalist class societies, the arts are identified with religion; dancing, the plastic art, music and poetry all tend to become incorporated into the religious rituals of the society, and thus become worthy occupation for adults.

In capitalist society, since religion has declined in importance, other justifications must be found. For the majority of adults, virtually the only socially sanctioned form of play is attending spectacles. These are usually disguised as business transactions by charging admission; the performers, since they are paid for practising their art, are, according to the peculiar logic of capitalism, workers, and therefore responsible members of society—baseball players, band leaders and musicians, movie actors are all workers. Card-playing, which is one of the few other kinds of play that a 'responsible' adult may indulge in, must also be done for money, thus conveying the illusion that it is a form of business enterprise.

Under capitalism, work is broadly defined as any activity that can command a price on the market. It can be no more than time spent sitting around and doing nothing at all—not even watching or waiting for something to happen that requires attention. Thus, during the late war it was a not uncommon practice for factories working on government contracts to hire more men than they could use and pay the extra ones wages without giving them anything to do, since they were paid for their services to the government in proportion to the number of men they employed. These men, although conspicuously idle, were considered workers. They had to report for 'work' every day and remain on the premises until quitting time, just as if there was something for them to do. This is a rather extreme example, but the same basic idea is present in all jobs under capitalism. The activity can be entirely meaningless, but it is work if it is paid for.

Under capitalism, therefore, art is considered work when it is saleable, either as a commodity—a painting, for instance—or as a



skill. An artist who cannot sell his art is not considered a full adult, unless, as sometimes happens, he is retroactively converted into a worker by finding a market for his hitherto worthless products. This phenomenon is frequently to be observed in the fate of the paintings of a so-called primitive painter, who paints as a hobby, with no thought of the market—and is generally considered a crazy eccentric by his neighbors—when they chance to fall into the hands of a professional art dealer and are sold by him for fabulous prices.

Those artists whose art is not saleable, but who for one reason or another persist in it—refusing to acquiesce in the socially accepted definition of worker—are in a difficult position in the matter of status. They are, in the main, jeered at as childish, and since only a very strong person can withstand this kind of pressure without being affected by it in some way, most of them tend to work out various rationalizations for their art, which, while they rarely satisfy the more 'responsible' members of the community, at least afford the artists themselves a partial relief from feelings of guilt.

These rationalizations fall into two broad categories. Both of them are clearly derived from the association of art with religion in most pre-capitalist societies, but they have both been somewhat secularized, and they are bitterly antagonistic to each other.

The first category defines art in rather mystical terms, as an exalted profession, and considers the artist to be a sort of consecrated person, whose values and accomplishments are too refined to be appreciated by the vulgar, philistine majority. This group looks on commercial success as unworthy of the 'true' values of the artist, and to disparage those artists whose art is saleable—although they seldom refuse to sell their own, if and when an opportunity presents itself.

The other category considers the artist a sort of evangelist in the cause of the oppressed, whose function is to create propaganda for the revolution. Formerly confined to a handful of radical philosophers, this view has been coming into its own during the past twenty years, and has become the official State doctrine in Russia. While it is as emphatic in its repudiation of commercial success as is the first category, it rejects it not from an elevated esthetic evaluation, but because it is counter-revolutionary; in fact, it tends to lump the artists of the first category with those who work for the market, since they are not particularly concerned about

the fate of the masses.

Those artists whose rationalization falls in the first category are at least not necessarily prevented by it from following their own inclinations—although the very esoteric character of their approach tends to promote cliquism—and in some cases are able to create in almost complete freedom from pressure of an esthetic nature. The second category, however, naturally tends to dogmatism and rigidity—frequently exceeding the commercial standards in inflexibility and coerciveness.

The plight of the artist in capitalist society is thus far from enviable. If he is to practice his profession at all, he is faced by three almost equally unenticing alternatives: He can accept the values of the system and work with an eye to the market—which means that he must turn out the sort of work that is marketable, regardless of his personal taste or inclination. This kind of art is seldom more satisfying than any other job in a capitalist enterprise. Secondly, he can join the self-conscious esthetes, where he will at least be permitted a certain amount of freedom to follow his own bent, but at the price of being despised by the majority, economically insecure, and, to some extent subject to the dicta of cults. In the third place, he can put himself into the hands of the self-appointed art-commissars, and dedicate his art to the cause of the oppressed. This means, in practice, that he must conform to the judgements of the commissars and curb his impulses almost as if he were working for the market.

In none of these three categories is the artist really free. When he repudiates the socially accepted concept of his rôle, he is still influenced by it to the extent that he accepts the premise that his art is a form of useful work and as such must be measured by a more or less fixed standard of acceptability, and is tormented by the fear that his art will be found wanting by whatever critics whose judgement he respects. Only a relative handful of spontaneous artists, who give no thought to any standards but their own satisfaction, can be said to function in the realm of pure art. They pursue their medium with the same lack of concern for external pressure that is characteristic of small children. In short, before the arts can become free, they must first be liberated from the idea that they are 'useful' in the sense that, say, carpentry is useful, and be considered from the standpoint of psychological criteria that are appropriate to their function.



## III

It is necessary, before we can draw any conclusions about the relative value of play and useful work, to define precisely what we mean by useful work. Clearly the capitalistic definition is of no value to us, since it not only takes in far too much territory, but is based on a criterion that is only very remotely connected with genuine utility. The mere fact that something can be sold tells nothing of its actual value, as it is well known that there are plenty of people in existing society who can be induced to buy anything at all, or to part with their money for nothing.

Most concepts of utility that go beyond the simple capitalist definition still tend to be influenced by it to some extent. They usually define anything that goes to make up the standard of living of a middle-class family as useful—an entirely arbitrary procedure. From a strictly biological standpoint, the only work that can properly be considered useful is that which provides for actual bodily requirements—food, shelter. Since it is possible for man to remain healthy on a level not appreciably higher than the general living standard of other domestic animals, genuinely useful work clearly requires but a very small amount of time—even with quite primitive methods of production. All else, biologically speaking, is luxury—including privacy, more than a simple balanced diet, artificial light and practically everything else that is part of 'civilized living'.

The desire for more than a bare subsistence is virtually a universal phenomenon in human society, of course, but so is the desire for play. It is absurd to consider that luxury is any more important than play, or that the production of items of luxury is any more meaningful than playing. It is even highly probable that the desire for more than a few modest luxuries is a form of compensation for the frustration of the play impulse or some other instinct when it is not simply a product of the requirements of status achievement—higher status being frequently indicated by an increase in material possessions.

In a society where there is no status stratification and thus no pressure on the individual to attempt to rise in the social hierarchy, the sharp distinction between children and adults that exists in status societies—and consequently the deprecating of play in favor of 'useful' activity—is not drawn. There may be, especially in difficult economic conditions, such as prevail among the Eskimos, for example, a purely economic pressure on everyone to contribute

as much as possible to the food supply but this does not make for condescension toward children or a rigid differentiation between the rôles of children and adults. On the contrary, the two rôles tend to merge imperceptibly into one another. Children are treated with respect, as responsible members of the community, as soon as they can walk; their wishes and opinions are considered as seriously as those of anyone else. Likewise, in such a society, play is regarded as natural for everyone, whenever the immediate pressure of the environment permits. In non-status societies, like the Pueblo Indians, where the demands of the food quest are somewhat less severe, the amount of time devoted to non-utilitarian pursuits—decorating pots, story-telling—is at least as great as that consumed by practical work; and since even very small children perform some kind of useful function, the distinction between children and adults can hardly be said to exist. Everyone works, according to his capacity, when there is work to do, and everyone plays the rest of the time.

It seems to me that any really free society would be like this. Children would be encouraged to enter the workshops and participate in whatever work was going on, according to their capacity. However, since the major emphasis of the society would not be on production for its own sake, everyone would be free to devote a considerable part of their time to playful pursuits.

It is argued by some that in a society where man is free to pick his occupation without compulsion and to determine his own hours and working conditions, useful work would be sufficiently satisfying and enjoyable to take care of all creative needs. This argument, however, seems to me self-defeating, since if everyone were to devote his spare time to 'useful' work, so much stuff would be produced that it could no longer be considered useful. I can't imagine why an oversupply of clothes, food, houses and the like would provide greater satisfaction than if the surplus time was devoted to playful pursuits like art.

Moreover, there seems to be some factor in the makeup of humanity, to say nothing of other animals, which rebels against an excessive concentration on 'practical' activities, perhaps because these activities are, of necessity, too stereotyped to permit sufficient scope to individual ingenuity and caprice. The ways of performing practical tasks are rigidly limited by the end to be achieved, whereas in the arts it does not really matter what one does—the work is an end in itself, and need meet no tests of durability, balance or



form unless its creator arbitrarily so decides. Each practising artist determines for himself the rules he intends to follow and the effects he wants to achieve, and the success or failure of his achievement is ultimately a matter for him alone to decide.

Individual contributions naturally vary considerably, depending on the amount of time, emotional intensity and energy each individual devotes to his particular art form. However, whether or not certain individuals possess a natural superiority in their special field is impossible to determine, since the criteria that can be used to judge such superiority are invariably too vague and subjective. It is fairly simple to set up standards to grade the skill of individuals in practical work, since there is general agreement about the ends to be achieved in such work. But in the arts, every man can legitimately claim that he is attempting something entirely unique, and therefore his work cannot be measured by existing standards. The advantage of this from the standpoint of ego security is enormous.

The rules of art can best be viewed as the rules of a game—a game that is played by each artist alone—which are capable of infinite variation. A group of artists in a particular field may agree among themselves to follow the same set of rules, but any one of them is always free to break with them if he wants to, and set up new rules for himself. Why then, should there be any rules at all? Why not adopt the simple principle that art is the free expression of the individual and disregard technical questions?

For those whose minds are sufficiently simple to be satisfied with sheer self-expression, obviously this principle is adequate; there are plenty of practising artists who could be cited as examples—artists to whom technique is of no importance, who approach art almost as small children do. But in most cases the human mind is too complex an organ to be content with such simple rules of the game—a fact which can be observed even in the art of children who have passed the age of five or six.

The human intellect is so constructed that it likes to solve problems, and when it is not confronted with enough problems in its daily experience, it tends to set up arbitrary ones and solve them. This tendency is not infrequently deplored as decadent and precious by those simple souls who are content with the raw outpourings of their psyches, but this seems to me an unwarranted assumption. Man, throughout the past several hundred thousand

years, and his simian ancestors for countless millenia before that, have been constantly confronted by problems which they had to solve in order to survive. Therefore, it seems natural enough that the ability and desire to solve problems should have become part of the psychological heritage of humanity—a faculty which may ultimately be no longer particularly necessary for survival but which is still certainly of the greatest importance. Since this faculty exists, it is also natural that it should be used, and if the daily environment does not present enough difficulties to exercise it properly, as I passionately hope will someday be the case for everyone, it must be exercised in some arbitrary way, just as individuals who lead a sedentary existence require more or less arbitrary physical exercise in order to be healthy.

It is one of the primary errors of the nature-fetishers to assume that the mind and its faculties are not part of nature, but a peculiar excrescence grafted onto man by civilization, which will wither away once the Good Life has been achieved. Man is an animal, of course, but he differs from all other species primarily in the size and complexity of his brain, which is just as much a part of his natural endowment as the powerful legs of the horse or the sensitive nose of a dog are part of theirs. It is certainly a serious misunderstanding of the Darwinian hypothesis to assume that if and when a natural faculty is no longer absolutely necessary for survival (a condition which is clearly a long way from being fulfilled in the case of the human mind) it tends to disappear. The theory of survival simply indicates that those who possess the qualities necessary for survival will survive; there is no natural mechanism for eliminating unnecessary qualities unless they are actually detrimental to survival.

It might be considered that identifying the arts as play robs them of all dignity and significance. In my opinion, the exact opposite is the case. The forced attempt to make art into a species of useful work has only subordinated it to either the church, the state or business, unless it was prepared to live a hole-in-corner existence, despised by the majority—who instinctively recognize its playful character, but are prevented from accepting it for reasons of status. If the play impulse is recognized for what it is—one of the fundamental needs of mankind—art is not depreciated but truly liberated when it is understood as a manifestation of this impulse.



## TWO ENGLISH POETS

### GEORGE SIMS

Abelard remembered Heloise always,  
even, at times against his will  
and I have had that malady.  
She is like a cold white swan,  
an undisturbed reflection of desire,  
or yet something of a lone sea bird  
that swings far from cluttered verge.  
She has a kind of perfection and  
moves down solitary ways;  
yet it is ever her arms  
that are taken from me at the day's  
disclosure—and talking  
in crowded rooms, walking  
city streets I feel once more  
yielding sands beneath my feet  
and run, calling uselessly  
upon her unloved name.

### ALEX COMFORT

The moon fills up its hollow bowl of milk  
bodies grow blue like pebbles in a stream  
and light falls like a wind in summer stripping  
girls into statues, showing their round limbs  
moving but frozen under the watery cloth:  
tonight I watch her mask move into sleep  
her breathing like a bee on a wood's floor  
coming and going, to and from the light

She is my field, and in her furrows run  
my ways like rain, and the crops of her shadows  
are pools, are a wild sea. And she has mountains  
stranger than feathers, hard as fishes. There  
fall in her hollows shadows of orchard trees  
that follow the moon's circle like a tide  
grassy nets that move on the dropped apples.

Body, white continent  
on all whose beaches break the seas of years  
this is the surf they say the dying hear.  
We both are islands, and our grassy edge  
creeps inwards, like the healing of a wound.  
And the windy edge is time, a limitless water,  
a white sea lying restless as a hand

where no rock rests the gull, and no tree stands,  
ever, forever—moving, lifeless, alone.



# DACHINE RAINER

## SESTINA

(from *Existence Outside Time*)

belonging to man is difficult, another lost  
art, the species evil and distraught waxes green  
and burdened as the tribe of wheeling words  
that jolt and drive the wandering beyond good  
or 'meanful' wrong; how we ride upon our knees  
and scrape our minds on brutal edges of remorse.

never carved in stone, elusive remorse  
as Burden alters grief that man lost  
to guilt; o rock now our glued knees  
with renewed witchdom of prayer, make green  
our moral devastation for the good  
is colored over, centers fall apart, the wheels turn words.

man's wintry history is weathered by words  
that foul the single act into a remorse-  
ful seige as tho by 'lesser' and 'greater' good  
drove an 'inevitable' course; yet *evil* is not lost  
tho the redeemed Love for man painted green  
origins again, sang psalms upon the knees:

## POEMS

19

*countless cicadas and angle bent knees  
of insects in crawling worlds, the whirring words  
of wings, on inert petals the green  
aphids milked by master ants, the remorse  
of drooping lilies; these are never lost  
tho stones cease breathing, and all good*

*islands alter like patches of sun's good-  
ness; change is the demon; grovelling knees  
are stalked by monster ants thru our lost  
wills; flesh perishes. our worlds are words:  
'evil', just such a word, looks on remorse  
unblinkingly. reflect: meanings turn green.*

*shades: man gone, and shades of man here, green  
earth, and shades of man's reconstructed good.  
the wandering years like spirits: o cease, remorse!  
chanting of broken stones that bled the knees  
on this unusual earth, renounced words  
that brew magic, the cauldroned curse is lost!*

lost green words, see how they run, now  
cold and wicked men see good in every Man,  
suspect of cringing knees, who chose remorse.



## PEARL BOND

### PARABLE

Doubtlessly it will be told of her—  
Those who knew it only by chance marvelled  
At this creature and waited,  
Thought time would tell and marked the hour  
Of her failure; gaged the doom  
Of their every effort in her single person,  
And pulled pocket watches with a sly wink  
Though it was not a matter for their approval.

The need for success was strictly her own,  
A ruthless glory had to be compelled from self;  
Namely the narrow truth from one  
Who arrived at it after so many terrors,  
Whose aftermath like a sort of physical accord—  
Forced her to think it out and thereby act.

## JACKSON MAC LOW

Men are sheep today, savage as tigers,  
destroying at command, loosing unwilling vengeance,  
repudiating themselves, repudiating nature,  
not repudiating their masters!

inward turned never, but neither do they see the Outward,  
knotted in distractions more involved than a French court,  
phlegmatic to the point of disgust,  
ready to blow the world up at a command.

Sheeps! Tigers! I damn the whole lot of you,  
not worth the disgust of any honest murderer;  
let some spiritual thing swim into my vision  
—Radiance!—even the least!—

I immediately forget you & everything about you,  
even the power you have over my body!

## MARTIN DWORKIN

The chamber of a rifle is a door,  
a portal opened to the more  
oblivious self, diffuse satiety  
enframed in sight, as tubular  
and mete, though spirals whirl  
in motion incomplete. The flame  
of force directioned to the earth,  
despite the cloudling hope, the shrill  
trajectory emburdened of the weight  
of all the earthbound, creates  
of color all its store of gelded heat,  
the slender slavery of steel  
serving shackles still discreet.



The word is liar, living without flesh, meaning  
in the mind what mind would mean, a buried overlord,  
enthroned instead of dream, secreting in a moot facade  
an agony of seem. What worthier gift bestow instead  
of self, aborting recognition in the raw rare air  
where meanings meet, emblazoning the pelf of person  
with hoary heraldry, as piteous a fane in jeopardy,  
as marmoreal mountains empty of the people's hope,  
crumbling into sorrowed sanctity. And then,  
is meaning more in classic genitive, than in  
the tiptouch greeting of antennae in jungles  
under dead leaves canopied on earth? The thing  
and all its words are gleaned in different harvests,  
seen in different eyes, mouthed to different purpose,  
so futile to compete with thrust love into a sheath  
of fear, dispelling it in frictive ecstasy; or look  
in woman's eyes, when, encompassed in her hand,  
her lover's manhood lies.

## MICHAEL BAKUNIN

*A Pioneer of Anarchist Resistance*

MICHAEL GRIEG

Unlike Proudhon or Marx, the two other great radical figures of his time, Michael Bakunin, characterized by none other than Peter Kropotkin as the founder of modern anarchism, never bequeathed to his followers a more or less systematic body of ideas; indeed, it was Kropotkin himself who, drawing on his extensive reading and scientific training, established the principles of the anarchist movement of today. However, what Bakunin did was of no trifling nature: fragments of theory, inspired orations and letters of gargantuan length helped spread anarchism throughout Europe. Even more important perhaps was the example of his life, a life which, in the words of Otto Ruhle, the biographer of Marx, marked him as "one of the most brilliant, heroic and fascinating of revolutionists the world has ever known."

Before entering into the details of Bakunin's life, it is necessary to cut through the undergrowth of prejudice and slander cultivated by his political enemies, especially Marx, and perpetuated by unsympathetic biographers drawing on highly dubious Soviet scholarship. In the *History of Anarchism in Russia*, written by the Stalinist hack, E. Yaroslavsky, one finds in abundance, with a paucity of fact, such epithets as a Pan-Slav nationalist ready "to become the servant and loyal subject of the tsar", a "repentant aristocrat" who "regarded every highway robber as a mature revolutionary" and, furthermore, "an anti-Semite" who looked on "all Jews as parasites and exploiters and treated them with unconcealed contempt". To all this could be added (from such varied sources as Marx, Engels, the bourgeois journals of his time and Max Nomad of our own): embezzler, tsarist police agent, a monster bent on world destruction and anarchist dictator. Suffice it to say now that the slander, for the most part, is as baseless as that which was recently exposed by Nicola Chiaromonte in his *Politics* review of *Proudhon, Prophet of Fascism*, the work of a City College professor, J. Selwyn Shapiro.



The target of this arsenal of abuse was born May 30, 1814, the year the victorious allies, Alexander I of Russia among them, were occupying Paris and the defeated leader of the Grand Army, Napoleon, was licking his wounds at Elba. Those who are content with a vulgar view of history, who forget that Marx himself said that he was an anarchist in the final analysis, and who look on anarchism as a primitive conception belonging to a feudal age, will see the determining factor of Bakunin's future in his aristocratic lineage: his family, which at the time of his birth owned an estate 'of five hundred souls', had long held a respected, if negligible, place in the annals of the Moscow nobility. Other character analysts, with a psychoanalytic bent, might stress as the cause of his subsequent development his immediate family, a household which comprised his nobleman father who had waited until middle-age before marrying, his mother who was less than half her husband's age (it seems to have been a marriage of convenience) and their ten children who showed little love for their vain, egoistical mother and for whom Michael, the eldest son, showed none at all. Psychoanalysts might have it that this lack of maternal love was the direct cause of his later sexual impotence, of which there seems to be conclusive biographical evidence, and that his boundless energy, denied the usual outlet, expressed itself in his stormy career as a revolutionist. However, we might ask those who try to explain such things solely in terms of neurosis, why Bakunin's impotence led him along the revolutionary road to anarchism, while others, in a similar plight, have gone in an authoritarian direction.

Whatever the causes may be, there is little doubt about the effects.

As a child Bakunin received a liberal education from his father and tutors, who were guided by the precepts of Rousseau's *Emile*. but in 1825, after the death of Alexander I, the Decembrist uprising took place in Petersburg, and the elderly landowner, frightened at the reaction which followed, sought to dispel dangerous ideas from his son's mind by enrolling him in the Tsar's Artillery School. Young Michael finally gained a commission though he had shown little interest for military studies and had spent most of the time writing long letters home trying to counteract parental authority over his brothers and sisters. At this time, soon after he had found a way to abandon his military career, he became initiated into the young intellectual circles of Moscow and fell under the spell of Fichte and Hegel, the reigning German gods of Russian romanticism.

Bakunin, in this stage of his development, has been described by a friend, Vissarion Belinsky, later the conservative critic, in adjectives which were always to fit: "Strength, undisciplined power, unquiet, excitable, deep-seated spiritual unrest, incessant striving for some distant goal, dissatisfaction with the present..." Such a person could not but find it impossible to breathe freely in the stagnating atmosphere of Russian feudalism, so, in 1840, with the consent of his father who had finally given up all hope of his son settling down to a respectable oblivion, Bakunin departed for Berlin to court the Hegelian system at its source.

Under the spell still of orthodox Hegelianism, flying the banner of philosophical reaction: "That which is rational is real, and that which is real is rational" Bakunin had not yet changed intellectually from being anything but a loyal subject of the Tsar. In his subconscious, though, he had broken with his traditions, and the breach was furthered consciously by the materialist thought of the Left Hegelians. It was under the influence of Strauss and Feuerbach that Bakunin wrote his first important essay, *Reaction in Germany*, with its uncompromising view of reality: "The Left say 'Two and two are four'; the Right say 'Two and two are six'; and the juste milieu says 'Two and two are five'". This essay also contained the famous phrase, "The passion for destruction is also a creative passion", which was later seized on by his enemies and misinterpreted to slander him as a creature with a sadistic urge for mere destruction. By the phrase Bakunin meant that the old corrupt society must first be done away with before we can achieve the new. The so-called Apostle of Destruction added on more than one occasion, as George Woodcock has pointed out, "Bloody revolutions are often necessary, thanks to human stupidity; yet they are always an evil, a monstrous evil and a great disaster, not only with regard to the victims, but also for the sake of the purity and perfection of the purpose in whose name they take place".

Added to his own inclinations and the speculations of the Left Hegelians, *Reaction in Germany* helped complete Bakunin's break with his past, and soon the authorities of several countries were filling dossiers on his activities. Before Bakunin's life was over, they were going to need more than one filing cabinet for him.

In 1843 his intellectual flight into radicalism became physically pressing, and he left Germany for Switzerland where he made the acquaintance of Wilhelm Weitling, an authoritarian communist,



who had somewhat inconsistently written in his book, *Guarantees of Harmony and Freedom*, this harbinger of Bakunin's future view: "The perfect society has no government, but only an administration, no laws, but only obligations, no punishments, but means of correction". Anticipating Stalin, Weitling also believed it right to "shoot without mercy all enemies of communism", and in discussions with him Bakunin shaped his own revolutionary beliefs. This association was short-lived, however, for Weitling was arrested for stepping on the religious beliefs of the Swiss burghers, and when Bakunin's name was found among the prisoner's papers, the Russian scarcely had time to elude the police. But they had contacted the authorities in Russia, and when Bakunin refused to obey a call to return home, he was condemned in absence to a loss of his inheritance and exile to Siberia, a sentence which Tsar Nicholas would carry out, with a vengeance, some ten years later.

Paris was Bakunin's next restless resting-place, and there he brought his worldly possessions of a single trunk, a folding bed and a zinc wash-basin, relying for funds on teaching, translations from the German and like many revolutionists of his time and some of ours, on liberal loans from grumbling friends. In Paris Bakunin's anarchist ideas began fermenting as he came in contact with George Sand, Pierre Leroux, Considerand, the leader of the Fourierists, and attended meetings of French workingmen. But it was two others he met whose influence was to be more decisive—Pierre-Joseph Proudhon and Karl Marx. Marx, the resolute centralist, and Bakunin, already a believer in direct action, clashed almost immediately. "He called me a sentimental idealist," said Bakunin later, "and he was right; I called him gloomy, unreliable and vain, and I was right too". And elsewhere Bakunin has said: "Marx is carrying on the same sort of futile activities as of old, corrupting the workers by making them argumentative." However, this dislike for the tactics and character of Marx, whose domineering attitude was in time to be instrumental in wrecking the forces of socialism, did not blind Bakunin to his merits: "At that time I understood nothing of political economy, and my socialism was purely instinctive. He, though he was younger than I, was already an atheist, an instructed materialist, and a conscious socialist." His meetings with Proudhon were more congenial and resulted in a mutual influence with Bakunin introducing the French master to Hegel and others. "Yet despite these substantial obligations," writes E.H. Carr in his generally barren biography

of Bakunin, "Bakunin in later years always spoke of his debt to Proudhon, never of Proudhon's debt to him. Proudhon, he wrote many years later, was 'a hundred times more of a revolutionary in his actions and instincts than the doctrinaire bourgeois socialists.' Proudhon had blown sky-high the sentimental optimism and fantastic day-dreams of the Saint-Simonists and the Fourierists. He had boldly attacked the three main pillars of the existing order: God, the State and private property...it was Proudhon more than any other man who was responsible for transforming Bakunin's instinctive revolt against authority into a regular anarchist creed. It was more than twenty years before that creed was finally formulated. But twenty years after their meeting, Bakunin still hailed Proudhon as his teacher and forerunner."

1848 was a year of decision for Bakunin just as it was in the life of Europe. In February a revolution had broken out in France against Louis-Phillippe, and soon Bakunin was in the thick of it and in the hair of the new authorities. This was the first actual contact the veteran of revolution had made with an uprising, and, as he wrote, never had he found anywhere "such noble self-sacrifice, such a touching sense of honor, so much natural delicacy of behavior, so much friendly gaiety combined with so much heroism, as among these simple uneducated people." He left no account of his own activities, but Caussidiere, the revolutionary Prefect of Police, is said to have exclaimed: "What a man! On the first day of a revolution he is a perfect treasure; on the second, he ought to be shot." And Flocon said: "If there were three hundred Bakunins, it would be impossible to govern France." It is not surprising that the French authorities gave Bakunin permission to leave the country when, seeing that the Europe established by the Congress of Vienna was tottering, he sought to spread the message of revolution elsewhere. The next year found him aiding the Polish insurrection, fighting on the barricades with Czech students and participating in the Dresden uprising where he met Richard Wagner, then a revolutionist, who later, according to Bernard Shaw, used Bakunin as the model for the Siegfried of his music dramas. It is from this period that those who accuse Bakunin of a narrow nationalism take their ammunition. But Bakunin himself has written: I took an active part in the Pan-Slav movement, and even now I still think that a Slavonic federation is the only thing possible for us, for it alone can in a new and perfectly free form satisfy the feeling of grandeur



which undoubtedly lives in our people, a feeling which has mistakenly taken or will take the treacherous road of empire." Bakunin was to change part of this view in the immediate years ahead, years spent in dungeons for the Dresden revolt had proved abortive and he was arrested, but who can say, now that Stalinism has taken the road of imperialism, that even then he was far wrong?

When Bakunin appeared in London more than twelve years later, such friends as Alexander Herzen, the famous Russian liberal, might have mistaken him for a ghost except that spirits were not supposed to be so massive in their build and so eloquent on the subject of materialism. He had spent eight years in the dungeons of four countries, handed about like some curious monster on exhibit, and then four years of Siberian exile; years of equal torture to his robust body and vigorous mind, days of depression and nights of sleeplessness, all so demoralizing that when he was handed over to the Russian authorities and buried alive in the infamous Peter-and-Paul fortress (which later was to 'lodge' Kropotkin), he penned—at the suggestion of the Tsar—his Confession, a document of dostoevskian self-abasement, which was to be made public by the Bolsheviks in 1921 and which Bakunin himself, in his correspondence, considered 'a great blunder'.<sup>♦</sup> There need be no apology, only understanding, for as Bakunin wrote in one of his few free utterances from prison: "You will never understand what it means to feel yourself buried alive, to say to yourself at every moment of day and night: I am a slave, I am annihilated, reduced to lifelong impotence. To hear even in your cell the rumblings of the coming struggle, which will decide the most vital interests of humanity, and to be forced to remain idle and silent. To be rich in ideas, of which some at least might be beautiful, and not to realise one of them; to feel love in your heart, yea love, despite this outward petrification, and not be able to expend it on anything or anyone. To feel yourself full of devotion and heroism to serve a sacred cause, and to see all your enthusiasm break against four bare walls, my only witnesses and my only confidants. That is my life! And even that is nothing in comparison with an idea far more terrible; that of the idiocy which is the predestined end of such an existence. Shut up the greatest genius in such a prison as mine, and you will see that after some years a Napoleon would become stupid and Jesus Christ himself wicked.

<sup>♦</sup> Part of the text of Bakunin's Confession has recently been translated into English as one of the selections in the anthology, 'The Great Prisoners.'

As for me, who am neither great like Napoleon nor infinitely good like Jesus Christ, I shall need much less time to become altogether brutish." But the time was withheld when his family's solicitations to the authorities had their effect, and Bakunin was given perpetual banishment to Siberia. After four years there, during which time he acquired a young wife, he staged an escape from Siberia by way of Japan, across the Pacific to the United States where he recorded in a letter that "the country had been brought by way of democracy to the same miserable results which we have achieved by despotism", and then from New York to London just as the new year of 1862 was dawning.

The years after imprisonment and exile found Bakunin becoming more and more a conscious anarchist though never in any sense of dull dogmatism, for as he put it: "No theory, no ready-made system, no book that has ever been written will save the world. I cleave to no system, I am a true seeker." That does not mean, though, that Bakunin had no radical moorings: he had come to realize after his relations with Continental uprisings that nationalist movements could not bring about the social revolution; that, going beyond Marx in his materialist interpretation of capitalist society, the State could become a ruling class above the existing capitalistic rulers, and that in the place of both must come the expropriation of land and the means of production to be worked collectively by workers' associations. With these views taking shape, Bakunin began to realize, too, that what was needed for its accomplishment was an international revolutionary movement. For a time he worked within the radical democratic organization, the League for Peace and Freedom, building a reputation as an orator and gaining numbers of adherents to his ideas, notably the brothers Elisée and Elie Reclus. But it was not long before Bakunin became disgusted with the essentially bourgeois nature of the League and founded his International Alliance of Social Democracy which soon gained, with the help of spirited bakounian letters (the phrase is Vanzetti's), thousands of followers in Switzerland, Italy and Spain. In 1868 Bakunin had joined the International Working Men's Association and he soon saw that it was foolish to divide the forces of labor by maintaining his own organization and, therefore, after petitioning the General Council, led by Marx, he was allowed to enter the Alliance into the International though only as separate branches. Marx already considered Bakunin as a menace to his own authority.



The proceedings of the International after Bakunin's entry are fraught with prophetic significance for the radical movement of today; it left us a heritage of radical watchwords, realized by the workers themselves, which are still vital now, but, unfortunately, it also left a sorry legacy of dirty tactics, involving slander, contrived voting and purges, which have all but ruined the socialist movements which followed. Even Franz Mehring and Otto Ruhle, the admiring biographers of Marx, have been forced to put the blame for what developed on their master's shoulders. After a number of ruses designed to counteract Bakunin's developing influence, first by ignoring his imprisonment and circulating the rumor that he was a tsarist spy and finally by moving the center of the International to New York far out of the reach of Bakuninists, Marx at length brought charges of embezzlement involving Bakunin's uncompleted Russian translation of *Das Kapital*. Otto Ruhle comments. "We have here a deplorable demonstration of the disastrous trait in his character which made him regard all the problems of politics, the labor movement, and the revolution, from the outlook of their bearing on his personal credit. A council of international revolutionaries whose main business in life is to blow to smithereens the world of private property and bourgeois morality, is induced by its leader to pass a sentence of expulsion on one of the most brilliant, heroic and fascinating of revolutionists the world has ever known, on the ground that this revolutionist has misappropriated bourgeois property. Is it possible to point to anything more painfully absurd in the story of the human race?"

However, it is wrong to believe that it was principally petty politics and character differences which caused the monumental clash between Marx and Bakunin. In his last years, for his death was near, Bakunin examined the real issues at stake in a letter to the Internationalists of Romagna which is worth quoting at length. He was able to say despite all the calumny: "Fortunately for the International there existed in London a group of men who were extremely devoted to the great association, and who were, in the true sense of the words, the real founders and initiators of that body. I speak of the small group of Germans whose leader is Karl Marx. These estimable persons regard me as an enemy, and maltreat me as such whenever and wherever they can. They are greatly mistaken. I am in no respect their enemy and it gives me on the contrary lively satisfaction when I am able to do them justice. I

have often an opportunity of doing so, for I regard them as genuinely important and estimable persons, in respect both of intelligence and knowledge, and also in respect of their passionate devotion to the cause of the proletariat and of a loyalty to that cause which has withstood every possible test—a devotion and a loyalty which has been proved by the achievements of twenty years. Marx is the supreme economic and socialist genius of our day. In the course of my life, I have come in contact with a great many learned men, but I know no one else who is so profoundly learned as he. Engels, who is now secretary for Italy and Spain, Marx's friend and pupil, is also a man of outstanding intelligence. As long ago as 1846 and 1848, working together, they founded the party of the German communists, and their activities in this direction have continued ever since. Marx edited the profound and admirable Preamble to the Provisional Rules of the International, and gave a body to the instinctively unanimous aspirations of the proletariat of nearly all countries of Europe, in that, during the years 1863-1864 he conceived the International and effected its establishment. These are great and splendid services, and it would be very ungrateful of us if we were reluctant to acknowledge their importance." Then why the clash? Bakunin goes on: Marx is an authoritarian and centralizing communist. He wants what we want: the complete triumph of economic and social equality, but he wants it in the State and through the State power, the dictatorship of a very strong and, so to say, despotic provisional government, that is, by the negation of liberty. His economic ideal is the State as sole owner of the land and of all kinds of capital, cultivating the land through well-paid agricultural associations under the management of State engineers, and controlling all industrial and commercial enterprises with State capital.

"We want the same triumph of economic and social equality through the abolition of the State, and of all that passes by the name of law (which, in our view, is the permanent negation of human rights). We want a reconstruction of society, and the unification of mankind, to be achieved, not from above downwards, by any sort of authority, or by socialist officials, engineers, and other accredited men of learning—but from below upwards, by the free federation of all kinds of workers' associations liberated from the yoke of the State.

"You see that two theories could hardly be more sharply opposed to one another than ours are. But there is another difference between us, a purely personal one.



"Marx has two odious faults: he is vain and jealous. He detested Proudhon, simply because Proudhon's great name and well-deserved reputation were prejudicial to him. There is no term of abuse that Marx failed to apply to Proudhon. Marx is egotistical to the pitch of insanity. He talks of 'my ideas', and cannot understand that ideas belong to no one in particular, but that, if we look very carefully, we shall always find that the best and greatest ideas are the product of the instinctive labor of all.."

Bakunin saw the struggle clearly, but after his expulsion from the International, his strength began to decline rapidly. He started but failed to complete several theoretical works, notably *The State Idea and Anarchy* and *The Knouto-Germanic Empire*, a document full of insights into what later developed into Nazism. He further saw the shape of the future in one of his last letters when, despairing over the defeat of the Paris Commune and the reaction that followed, he wrote to Elisée Reclus: "There remains another hope, the world war. Sooner or later these enormous military states will have to destroy and devour each other. But what an outlook!" On July 1st, 1876, he died in Berne, and overcautious Swiss followers, when asked by the police what the deceased's occupation or means of livelihood had been, replied that he had been the owner of a villa in Italian Switzerland. The police listed the dead man in the official records as "Michel de Bakounine, rentier."

Michael Bakunin's place in the company of great anarchists of the past has been based, in the seventy years since his death, more on the spirit of his personality than on the substance of his mind. This is especially so in the English-speaking world where his *God and the State*, now out of print, has been the only complete fragment (so to speak) translated. And it is true that Bakunin never had the socratic skill of Proudhon; Godwin was far his superior when it came to formal reason as Kropotkin was in the matter of scientific method, and he certainly did not possess the keen common sense of a Malatesta.

But it is wrong to assume that Bakunin was merely (the noun belongs to Marx) an unusual "bullock" in the revolutionary arena.

Some might say today, as E. H. Carr does, that Bakunin's personality was distinctly neurotic. That does not lessen the part he played in founding the revolutionary anarchist movement of Europe, especially in Spain where, during the Revolution of 1936, many of the anarchist ideas proved their practical value.

Nor does the term "neurotic" or his inferiority in the company of those more dialectically skilled dull his insights into the problem of achieving a just and free world. It is as though we were listening to a man still alive, commenting on an international conference, when we read: "It would be a fearful contradiction and absurd naiveté on our part to express, as has been done at the present Congress [Bakunin was speaking before the League for Peace and Freedom], the desire to establish international justice, freedom, and peace, and at the same time wish to retain the State. States cannot be made to change their nature, since it is in virtue of that they *are* States, and if they renounce it, they cease to exist. There cannot therefore be a good, just, and moral State. All States are bad in the sense that they constitute by their nature, i.e. by the conditions of the purpose for which they exist, the absolute negation of human justice, freedom and morality. And in this respect, whatever you may say, there is no great difference between the uncouth Russian Empire and the most civilized States of Europe. The Tsarist Empire [read Stalinist] does cynically what other States do under the mask of hypocrisy; it represents, in its open, despotic, contemptuous attitude to humanity, the secret ideal which is the aim and delight of all European statesmen and officials. All European States [and we might add those of other continents] do what it is doing insofar as they are not prevented by public opinion and, in particular, by the new but already powerful solidarity of the working classes, which carries in itself the seed of the destruction of the State. Only a weak State can be a virtuous State, and even it is wicked in its thoughts and its desires."

And further: "The State is force; nay, it is the silly parading of force. It does not propose to win love or make converts; if it puts its finger into anything, it does so only in an unfriendly way; for its essence consists not in persuasion, but in command and compulsion. However much pains it may take, it cannot conceal the fact that it is the legal maimer of our will, the constant negation of our liberty. Even when it commands the good, it makes this valueless by commanding it; for every command slaps liberty in the face; as soon as the good is commanded, it is transformed into the evil in the eyes of true (that is, human, by no means divine) morality, of the dignity of man, of liberty; for man's liberty, morality, and dignity consists precisely in doing the good not because it is commanded but because he recognizes it, wills it and loves it."



Or listen to Bakunin in these words, a possible inspiration for Kropotkin's *Mutual Aid*: "Man becomes man, and his humanity becomes conscious and real, only in society and by the joint activity of society. He frees himself from the yoke of external nature only by joint—that is, societary—labor; it alone is capable of making the surface of the earth fit for the evolution of mankind; but without such external liberation neither intellectual nor moral liberation is possible...Outside of society man would have remained forever a wild beast, or, what comes to about the same thing, a saint. Finally, in his isolation man cannot have the consciousness of liberty. What liberty means for man is that he is recognized as free, and treated as free, by those who surround him; liberty is not a matter of isolation, therefore, but of mutuality—not of separateness, but of combination; for every man it is only the mirroring of his humanity (that is, of his human rights) in the consciousness of his brothers."

And, finally, it is as an expert in revolution that Bakunin says: "Revolutions are never made either by individuals or by secret societies. They come about automatically, in a measure; the power of things, the current of events and facts, produces them. They are long preparing in the depth of the obscure consciousness of the masses—then they break out suddenly, not seldom on apparently slight occasion."

Bakunin's place in all this? Let him speak for himself: "You tell me [he wrote a correspondent] that I can become the Garibaldi of socialism? I care very little to become a Garibaldi and play a grotesque role. I shall die and the worms will eat me, but I want our idea to triumph. I want the masses of humanity to be really emancipated from all authorities and from all heroes present, and to come."

#### RETORTING

We've received several letters charging the article "Zionism: Return of the Chosen People" in the last issue with anti-semitism. Unfortunately, there is insufficient space to discuss the article in detail.

It should be obvious that we are no less sympathetic to the plight of the persecuted European Jews than we are to any oppressed people, but we fail to see any other connection between the Jews and Zionism than that of victim and exploiter. The identification of Zionism with the Jews is an inverse kind of Vansittartism, (the amalgamation of people with their rulers)—e.g. the German people with Hitler—a technique most commonly utilized by war propagandists, and one which radicals deplore.

## A REFUGEE FROM DALSTROI

*France; January, 1947.*

The story of this informant is only distinguished by a few minor details from that of other Polish Jews who have stayed in Russian camps...

Here, in brief is his story: Before the war he lived with his wife and their year-old baby in the province of Lublin. In 1939 he fled to near Bialystok, where he had relatives. "I never could have imagined," he explained, "that I, an excellent ladies' tailor and my wife, a first-class dressmaker, wouldn't be able to earn a living in Russia. However, that turned out to be the case. Soon after our arrival we set up our sewing machine and began working. But they imposed more levies on us than we earned. Those who knew the regime explained to us that if one succeeded in paying these taxes once, the next time they would be doubled.

"I considered for a long time what to do next. There were three possibilities: to become Soviet citizens; to move to Vilna, from which, according to rumour, one could get passage to America (this was 1940); or to register for return to Lublin. We decided to return home.

"There were very many of us who registered in Western White Russia. On June 28, 1940, we were all ordered to settle our affairs in 15 minutes. As deported emigrants we were sent to the town of Totma in the Vologda region, and installed in the lumbering industry. We were quartered in a village which had been constructed by Ukrainian peasants, who were considered former kulaks.

"Upon our arrival, the majority of these were sent elsewhere; only a few remained to teach us the work. They told us that we were lucky, since on our arrival we found quarters already built, whereas those who had arrived in their time had found virgin forest; they had to cut trees and build the houses themselves. For this wood cutting we were only paid a few miserable sous, and we had to pay for our rations..."

A nursery was organized in this village, so the women could also be put to work, and our informant's wife soon started working. But our informant did not work for long. With eight other deportees



he was denounced as an enemy of the people and condemned to eight years in a concentration camp. "But I must tell you that I was condemned thru no fault of mine. For my part when I saw the order that was set up there, I took care never to resist, for I considered that it was useless. There it is necessary to adapt oneself if you want to stay alive. They had sent us by twos to saw trees. My partner had a fat belly, which he hadn't yet had time to lose on the diet there; it was difficult for him to bend over and cut the trees close to the ground—the height of the stump was officially fixed. Also, he used to say: 'I should bow down? They should only bow down themselves.' The trees were thus cut higher than was ordered. We were denounced.

"Moreover the man who had slept next to me in the barracks had said in the mess-hall: 'Back in Warsaw we wouldn't give a meal like this to a pig!' He was accused of being an anti-Soviet propagandist and it was noticed that I was his nearest neighbor.

"Another Jew had succeeded in earning his living a little better than most. He had cut down five tall trees, and the next day had cut each in half, thus increasing his daily output"...

Thus our informant stayed for some time in a transit-prison at Novossibirsk and made many new acquaintances. There were numerous soldiers, officers and aviators who had taken part in the Polish campaign. Most of them had been imprisoned for writing letters to their families in which they had seemed to praise the foreign country.

At this prison he also met a young mechanic from Moscow who explained that he and his fellow workers had been arrested for turning out work of too high a quality. Our informant was given to understand that this high quality had caused a slowing down of the speed of production and was considered sabotage...

Our informant recalled a fabulous old character, a former collective farmer who told everyone why he had been imprisoned. One night he dreamed that war with Germany had broken out and it was difficult to get supplies. When he awakened, he was joyful that it was only a dream, but decided that it wouldn't be a bad idea to lay in a supply of necessities. He hastened to the cooperative, where he bought some kerosene, matches and salt. On his way home he met a woman whom he knew. "Where are you going, Uncle Efim," she asked. The old man told her his dream and added, "Who knows, someday it might happen." The neighbor denounced him, he was accused of spreading false rumours harmful to the State and condemned

to ten years.

In the same penitentiary, in the death cell was another old man, also a collective farmer. He was a believer who had read the Gospel to the inhabitants of his village. He was accused of counter-revolution and condemned to death. Kalinin, to whom the case was appealed commuted his sentence to 10 years in a concentration camp. He was 66 years old.

At Novossibirsk an enormous convoy of prisoners was formed (our informant included) which was sent by sea to the bay of Okhotsk, and from there to a camp near the capital of Dalstroi: Magadane, which was a modern city constructed almost entirely by prisoners. There was a street bearing the name of Stalin, such as one would find in any European city.

For a short time our informant worked at the construction of a new terrace on which would be erected a secret radio station, but then he happened upon a tailor shop and set about clothing the women of the local officials.

The director of this workshop was a Romanian Jew—a Communist refugee from Romania who had lived in Russia as a commissar of the NKVD. Because he had continued to write to his family in Romania he had been deported to Dalstroi.

In summer the ordinary prisoner set out for work at 5 o'clock in the morning and in winter at 7. The winter lasted from August to May. The ground was deeply frozen, and it was this ground—the earth was gold-bearing sand—that the prisoners had to break up with picks so that it could be passed thru special cradles. In the morning before leaving for work, the prisoners received some soup and their bread ration. They consumed part of it then, and took the rest with them. They worked until dark in snow storms and ice. It didn't matter what the weather was like. They worked whether they were sick or well. The doctors, who were also prisoners, only excused them from work when sickness took a particularly acute form. The older inmates of the camp said that the mortality was nearly 60 percent to judge by those they had survived. However to keep a mortality rate wasn't useful for the government, our informant remarked, for there were plenty of men. From every part of the country more and more new victims poured in. There were men of every category.....In spite of everything, those who had forced themselves to work without stopping and without complaint, without the least gesture of resisting their fate managed to survive



Some even succeed in becoming chiefs—for exemplary conduct.

Do the prisoners at Dalstroi hope to see any change in Russia? "No", replied our informant, "I could never see in their eyes any hope. They considered themselves as sacrificed. They had no contact at all with the "free" world..."

The military prisoners hoped that they would be sent to the front, and that there they would be able to save themselves somehow. In fact they were soon sent to the front, but were locked inside special disciplinary wagons...In general, the inhabitants of the USSR consider the camps as a constant phenomenon, and live in the constant expectation that today or tomorrow every citizen will have to go.

In the sector to which our informant was attached, 18,000 men were working. This was only a small sector of Dalstroi. At Magaden the officials lived in luxury, and, it seemed to our informant, were not subject to any control. Dalstroi had its own rules and laws. The local authorities had the right to liquidate prisoners. Very many men disappeared thus from the camp. Those who perished of disease and weakness among the Polish intellectuals were also very numerous, since they couldn't adapt and accept their fate. When the news of the Accord of Sikorski arrived, during the night one of his neighbors in the barracks crawled next to him and whispered: when you leave the country, do not forget to tell what our life is like.

...They began by liberating the Poles who were not guilty of violating article 58. I can tell you that in Russia we had all become lawyers. We knew by heart all sorts of articles. As for article 58 it was the worst. We thought that this category of prisoner would never be freed...When now I consider what I have seen, it seems to me that I never met a real criminal. They imprison completely innocent people.....

After having been freed from the camp our informant set out on the road back to Totma to look for his family. He found that in his absence his wife had died, and that the child had been taken in the care of charitable neighbors—also Polish Jews. Well, he set out to find his child. For a year he wandered in Siberia, in Uzbekistan and Kazakistan before he finally found him.... This child is now 9 years old, and has told me himself of his life in Russia.

Would you like to return to Russia?

Oh no, I didn't like living there.

Perhaps you were hungry?

No, I wasn't hungry. My father went every day to the market and brought back all sorts of food, even fish, because my father worked as a tailor on his sewing machine and earned a good living. But, on the other hand, we often had to hide in a hole when the NKVDists came with their dogs to look for him—to send him to work in a collective farm or in the coal mines.

In what hole did he hide? How could he hide in a hole?

Well, in our yard was a big hole which had been dug to store all kinds of food in. And it was there that my father hid. This hole was covered with boards, on top of which were put old tubs and sealed up so that no one could notice anything. But we were always afraid that the dogs would find it by smelling. My father didn't hide there alone; other neighbors, also Polish Jews came to this same hole. They all worked at home—one cured leather and the other was a shoemaker; as soon as they saw the NKVDists in the distance they jumped in the hole.

But did you know about this? You were still too little?

I knew about everything. Once my father was hid in the hole and my mother (our informant had remarried) had fled into the fields. The NKVD's came to ask where my father was. I told them that he was at work. Where does he work? In the food trust, I replied. They looked at the sewing machine and asked who it belonged to. The landlady I replied.

How did you know all that? Who taught you what you should say?

I taught myself.....

Later the father confirmed that on that day his son had saved him by his responses.....

It was thus that sometimes I hid in the hole, sometimes I worked in the house to be able to feed my family. I had enough of this life and I was glad to get out—to no matter where.. There is no life in Russia; the whole country is a prison.

Interview conducted by IDA METT

*Translated from the French by Holley Cantine.*

N.B. See editorial on p. 2



## BOOKS

NEW WORLD PRIMER by Julien Cornell. New Directions. \$2.00.  
THE STATE by Randolph Bourne. The Resistance Press. Free. ♦

Although these two little books deal with very much the same subject matter, they are as different as they could possibly be. The Bourne work, while written nearly thirty years ago, has the flavor of intense modernity—if anything, his observations are more relevant today than when he wrote them. The *New World Primer*, on the other hand, despite the fact that it mentions such up to the minute events as the atom bomb and the UN, belongs, in the matter of originality and understanding, to the 18th century—its key arguments are taken from works by Immanuel Kant and William Penn.

Briefly, Bourne's thesis is that the State exists primarily for the purpose of regimenting the individual and glorifying itself—chiefly on the battlefield. He makes a sharp distinction between the State, a coercive apparatus superimposed on society for coercive ends, and the country, which is simply a geographic and ethnic entity. "Country is a concept of peace, of tolerance, of living and letting live. But State is essentially a concept of power, of competition. It signifies a group in its aggressive aspects. And we have the misfortune of being born not only into a country but into a State, and as we grow up we learn to mingle the two feelings in a hopeless confusion..."

A good half of book is taken up with an historical account of the development of the American State from its earliest beginnings in the medieval English monarchy, through the colonial period and the Revolution; its near eclipse under the Articles of Confederation, only to be reborn, in all its majesty and corruption, through the joint instrumentality of the Constitution and the Party System; down to the first World War. Bourne's history is clear, cogent and realistic; his understanding of the complex interplay of classes involved in the evolution of centralized government in this country is especially good.

♦ Copies of 'The State' can be ordered from RETORT.

## BOOKS

41

*New World Primer* is an attempt to make out a case for World Government. It is highly oversimplified and abstract. Mr Cornell, like Bourne, uses history to implement his thesis, but it is the kind of history one finds in a grammar school textbook—a fanciful 'progressive' account of the development of centralization: "...Whereas not many centuries ago there were thousands of warring groups scattered over the world, now there is no war between such groups for they have banded together into nations, within the borders of which there is peace. Peace has come because men have created law, and a government to administer it, and have turned chaos into order. This process has been going on for thousands of years, and is now reaching its end: [One might think after reading Mr Cornell's forward, with its ominous warning of what would be in store for the world in the event of an atomic war, that he would have chosen a word with less drastic implications than 'end' at this point. But Mr Cornell's memory seems to be of the manic-depressive variety common among 'progressives' so he can go on triumphantly to his anticlimax] the creation of a common government of nations...Viewed in its broad historical perspective the problem of war is as simple as that."

The book, too, is as simple as that. Mr Cornell seems totally unaware of the class nature of the State. He makes no mention of the possibility that a world government might suffer from *internal* conflicts—indeed, the idea that there has *ever* been a conflict between the interests of a people and their government is completely beyond his grasp. War, for him, is *exclusively* a contest between sovereign nations, within which there is presumably perfect unanimity. Get rid of sovereignty, therefore, and all our problems will be solved!

The leitmotif of Bourne's book is his famous phrase—"War is the health of the State". Mr Cornell is not a stylist like Bourne, but his position could be summarized in something like: "The (World) State is the death of war." Clearly both can't be right. If historical knowledge, an understanding of economics and an ability to observe and analyze what is happening before one's eyes, are in any way more dependable criteria for determining accuracy than abstract logic and emotional wish-projection, I think Bourne has the best of the argument.

HOLLEY CANTINE



THE INNOCENT EYE by Herbert Read. Henry Holt & Co. \$3.50

There are two kinds of innocence: the first which results from lack of exposure and the other which synthesizes and resolves the complexity of exposure in a manner which permits a more conscious simplicity or innocence. The first—the everyman period of innocence that is more synonymous with ignorance, part of that untested, pre-experiential aspect of life we know as childhood with its relative freedom from reflection and conscious decision has a duration depending on class, external circumstance\* and individual sensibilities, and is generally terminated by some large event. To this period one does not return, but one leaves it in one of two directions: towards greater ignorance characterized by indiscriminative unsympathetic acquiescence, or towards reflection, individuation, protest: innocence; the latter a triumph, the other the average indifferent manner of life.

Herbert Read was thrust from innocence at the age of 9 by the death of his father—turned out of an idyllic pre-industrial England, out of his lovely, isolated, orderly and comparatively free farm childhood into the imprisonment of a loveless high-walled boy's school. He has, after years of "profitable wonders", years of Ruskin, Morris, Santayana, Tolstoy—of more men, aesthetic and moral preoccupations than it is possible even to enumerate here, come to innocence with a synthesis of his major problems resolved from a new level of consciousness, which is rooted in Taoism: accepting "The Way...the laws implicit in the visible and material universe"—more than that, it implies an identification with them, a being of and belonging to the natural world.

While Read is not ultimate in his rejection of contemporary "civilization" neither is he a naturalist (that unsuited species of man, who uncertain of his capabilities in determining good from ill, would like to destroy both, in order to insure his future infallibility). Read rejects "civilization" sufficiently so that his politics are anarchist, his aesthetics are inspirationalist, his morality mystical, and his aesthetics and morals are coextensive. This unity is existential, "the deed...is a work of art, and the deed...is an inspired moral act".

A belief in the individual, in his "glory" as Read puts it,—which we suppose he means to differentiate from the "rights" of

\* for the new terrifying child see p. 39 of this issue

the individual—those condescending, vulgar and albeit mythical "rights" that are the abject hand-me-downs of "democracies"; this belief derives from our Romantic heritage which flowered in Read's background and in his early philosophical examinations, so that his appreciation involved him in aesthetic movements ranging from Ruskin, post war I dada thru imagism and surrealism. He has no arbitrary or fixed aesthetic absolutes, no inviolate categories. Art functions as a resolution of the arational contradictions of experience. It is the "super-real world of the imagination". Goodness in art as in living is inspirational.

Logic and history, along with the desire for the free fulfillment of the aesthetic need in all people led Herbert Read to Innocence and Anarchism. It is a good place to be.

DACHINE RAINER

THE COMING CRISIS by Fritz Sternberg. John Day. \$3.00

'We're going—we don't know where we're going, but we're going.' This expression is perhaps most descriptive of how the various organized radical groups in America are moving these days. Yet the direction in which the socio-economic forces in the background are moving is now clearer than ever before. The contrast is one of the strange realities of a disintegrating world.

In a relatively short period of time mankind's questions have been forced into terse terms by a number of phenomena: the almost certainty that cessation of major hostilities in the war of obliteration is but a momentary interlude; the use by the militarists of the fantastically destructive atom bomb; the division of the world between two giant powers; the starvation of millions; and the absence of any large, vital, intransigent radical movements. In making a diagnosis and prognosis, Sternberg illustrates the effects of these phenomena.

His book is written in the Marxian pattern like a primer. His thesis that monopoly capitalism is heading towards its doom is not very original. Indeed it has a tinge of irony when the real question is considered: how can man at his present cultural development survive? However, the book as a whole appears to suggest an answer to that question so it is in this light that it must be reviewed.

To begin with, it is noted that capitalism has not become the



dominant mode of production the world over. A large area of the world has been removed from the orbit of capitalism, while in other areas capitalism is only in a rudimentary form. Sternberg's conclusion "We are therefore justified in doubting that as things now stand the majority of the world's population will ever produce under capitalist conditions within the framework of capitalist society". The implications are profound and the door is open to the working out of new perspectives. But what this means to Sternberg in terms of a concrete program of action is shown by his attitude toward America and Russia.

Of U.S.: It is no longer one state among many others but is the lone capitalist state. Its productive capacities are greater than the rest of the world, thus it is at the moment in the dominant position of power. However, in view of the "unliquidated crisis", U.S. is in the process of transformation which is leading to a war economy. Sternberg labels the role of U.S. "reactionary". He offers a three point program to change that role. That the program is highly opportunistic, is symptomatic of the times; it reveals how narrowed is the field of possibilities in political action. It is this reviewer's opinion that, washing aside all the futile babbling about America's bathtubs and modern hygienic jails, selection of American capitalism as a choice in World War III, hence support of its manifest destiny, can lead nowhere.

Of U.S.S.R.: Sternberg considers it non-capitalist. He makes no critical assessment of its political and economic system. On the contrary, all the evidences, and these are many, would place U.S.S.R. in the category of "progressive". Here it is interesting to note that Sternberg's book was widely and sympathetically reviewed in the left anti-Stalinist journals and was even selected by the Progressive Book Club as a book of the month.

Yet none challenged these evidences, nor their implications—they were completely overlooked. Whichever of two criteria are used in judging the U.S.S.R.—1) the sheer destructiveness of human life, or 2) the development of industrial production—Sternberg makes out a case for the U.S.S.S. as embodying "Progress", or at least the lesser of the evils. The pure anti-Stalinists have failed to adequately answer the challenge.

It follows from this that effective political action in the immediate future means making a choice between the two powers. Of course, once World War III breaks out any thought or effort

at making choices or realizing political ends will be just fantasy. Sternberg rejects support of U.S. but passes no judgment on U.S.S.R. and suggests independent political action for socialist ends. This is not the old Third Camp position.

The Third Camp position rejects explicitly both countries. What validity has it today? While theoretically it is the radical position, in reality—taking the international scene as a whole—the material base for it is dwindling. Any working value it has is based on a number of questions? Will Britain emerge from the present twilight zone moving in the direction of libertarian socialism? How will the political and economic vacuums in Italy and Germany be filled? Whither will France go? Will the colonial countries come into their own and what will be the repercussions? Will there be a confluence of political and social developments in America leading to the overthrow of capitalism? Finally, will it be possible to prevent War III? The picture looks dark for those who hold to a Third Camp position.

Beyond the scope of the Sternberg book, there are tragic questions that confront the radical who would relate the consequences of his deeds to libertarian values. What end shall determine the nature of his struggle: the survival of mankind or of individual men? Is the question of the survival of mankind, under the present conditions, beyond the will of the radical to determine? Is the survival of individual men, the individualistic solution, the only path that history allows the radical at the present time?

ALEXANDER LANG

*BEND SINISTER* by Vladimir Nabokov. Henry Holt & Co. \$2.75

*Bend Sinister* is a satire on totalitarianism. The protagonist of the novel, Professor Adam Krug, is an eminent scholar in an unidentified eastern European country, who has never taken any interest in politics. When the government is taken over by the Party of the Average Man, headed by an old schoolmate of his, Krug is determined to ignore the new regime, and pursue his studies as if nothing has happened. But the regime is not willing to ignore him. Since Krug is the most famous person in the country, and the only one who is at all well-known in the outside world, the dictator decides to give him a prominent post in the government to enhance its prestige abroad. When Krug declines this 'honor',



there follows a concerted campaign of alternating bribery and intimidation, characterized by typical totalitarian inefficiency and heavyhandedness, which, instead of accomplishing its intended effect, results in Krug's complete destruction. The details of this campaign are wonderfully handled—Nabokov thoroughly understands the totalitarian mind—its brutality, lack of imagination and devilish thoroughness. Krug is surrounded by spies, his friends are arrested and finally his small son is kidnapped. At the same time he is continually deluged with lavish offers. At first, he resolutely ignores everything, but the loss of his son makes him weaken. He is on the point of capitulating, when a colossal bureaucratic error wipes out all the patient labor of the State by making him lose his mind.

Nabokov's style is rather reminiscent of Kafka at times—he has the same ability of conveying the helplessness and terror of a victim of bureaucratic oppression. The opening scene is especially memorable: Krug is attempting to return home over a bridge which is guarded by illiterate soldiers (the new regime has just seized power and things are still rather chaotic) who cannot understand his pass. The atmosphere of frustration, the feeling that anything can happen, which permeates this section—and many other sections of the novel—gives one a vivid picture of what it means to live under a police state. This sort of writing, despite, or perhaps because of its dreamlike quality, is the genuine realism of the totalitarian era. The documentary realism of a Zola could not possibly convey the nature of life in such circumstances. Totalitarianism is a sort of objectified nightmare, and only a writer who knows how to deal with dreams can properly convey its essence.

HOLLEY CANTINE

## RECORDS

BACH: *Sacred Arias*. Carol Brice, Contralto, Columbia Broadcasting Concert Orchestra, conducted by Daniel Saidenberg. Columbia MX-283. 2 twelve inch records. \$3.00.

The remarkable voice of Miss Brice is clearly what Bach had in mind. It is the greatest vocal performance of Bach's sacred arias that these reviewers know. Miss Brice's voice has extra-human qualities; it seems much like an organ, blending at times with the other instruments, and at times achieving a vibrant stirring intensity that recedes the orchestra into the background.

BEETHOVEN: *Sonata No. 14 in C sharp Minor. Op. 27. No. 2 ('Moonlight')* Vladimir Horowitz, pianist. Victor DM-1115. Two 12 inch records. \$3.00

This sonata has been played so frequently by indifferent musicians that it requires the hand of a master like Horowitz to remind one of its intrinsic merit as music.

HARMONICA CLASSICS. John Sebastian, harmonica. Victor P-166. Four ten inch records, \$4.20

Mr. Sebastian's range is extraordinary—from a Bach aria, an improvisation on Mozart's Turkish march to his own original composition "Harmonica Player"! He is equally at home playing jazz, popular classics, like 'Malaguena', and the classics. Not only is his mastery of the harmonica magnificent, but his arrangements are versatile and stimulating. His accompaniment seems like an extension of his performance rather than as mere background. With an exciting accompanist like the drummer, Norris Shawker, in the Inca Dance, the result is especially effective.

WAGNERIAN EXCERPTS (*Sung in German*) Torsten Ralf, tenor, with the Metropolitan Opera Orchestra conducted by Fritz Busch. Columbia M-MM-634. Four twelve inch records. \$5.00.

Mr. Ralf, the eminent Swedish tenor, offers selections from "Tannhauser", "Lohengrin", "Parsifal" and "Die Meistersinger". The singing is competent and the recording is excellent.



CHANSONS (*Sung in French*) Lily Pons, *Soprano, with Orchestra* conducted by Maurice Abravanel and Andre Kostelanitz. Columbia M-MM-689. *Three twelve inch records \$4.00.*

Miss Pons presents "chansons" [art songs] by two French impressionists, Duparc and Fauré, and by the contemporary composers, Milhaud and Bachelet. The songs, which are the French counterpart of the German "lieder", altho they are not as brooding and intense, have a personal, lyric quality of great charm. Miss Pons' gifted and bird-like voice is an excellent one for interpreting these lovely songs.

RICHARD STRAUSS: *Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme, Op. 60. Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra, Fritz Reiner, Conductor. Columbia M-MM-693. 5 twelve inch records, \$6.00.*

Strauss, in this vastly entertaining incidental music for Molière's comedy combines a mock-archaic style with his modernism. The attempts of a social climber to break into high society are hilariously portrayed; his clumsy efforts to learn the "social graces" are skillfully played up in the musical score. The orchestra seems to enjoy itself thoroly. The listener cannot fail to do likewise.

DEBUSSY: *Sonata No. 2 for Flute, Viola and Harp. John Wummer, flute, Milton Katims, viola, Laura Newell, harp. Columbia MX-282. 2 twelve inch records. \$3.00.*

*Sonata No 3 for Violin and Piano; RAVEL: Berceuse. Zino Francescatti, violin, Robert Casadesus, piano. Columbia MX-280. 2 12 in records. \$3.00*

These two works, written in 1916 and 1917 as part of a projected series of six sonatas were the last compositions of Claude Debussy. In a sense they were Debussy's contribution to the French war effort. He was intensely patriotic, and desired to rid French music from German influence. The nature of the medium, however, prevents its chauvinistic intent from being apparent: the pieces are delicate, classically inspired yet intricately modern. The third sonata, written just before his death, is melancholy and tense. Performances of both sonatas are first-rate.

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