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THREE YEARS

Culture and Politics in the Mid Twentieth Century

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THREE YEARS

Culture and Politics in the Mid Twentieth Century

From the *Britannica Book of the Year* volumes for 1950–2, including a previously unpublished insertion (42–51): remarkable detailed surveys of contemporary cultural and political history.

1949

I

THE YEAR 1949 was not notable for any revolutionary change or crisis in the development of thought or of art, or indeed of any form of human self-expression. But there were marked differences between the forms adopted by it in the principal areas of civilisation – Western Europe, North America and the Soviet orbit. In Western Europe the central mood was one of anxiety to avoid anything exaggerated or outré and too self-revealing, any suspicion of wishing to dramatise or romanticise either the present or the past, still less the future. As if conscious of the absurd spectacle presented by the extravagant cynicism and disillusionment in Europe after the First World War, the generation which succeeded the Second World War seemed determined not to be carried away by any wave of violent feeling, whether positive or negative.

It may be not unprofitable to bring this out by comparing some aspects of the year 1922, since, like 1949, it was divided by four years from the end of a great war. In Europe the early 1920s were marked by a sharp conflict between the ebbing, but still strong, current of liberal idealism which had created the League of Nations, which believed in open diplomacy and still, despite many failures and disappointments, seemed confident that a new and better order was surely, if somewhat slowly, coming into existence, bringing with it more liberty and equality and prosperity for individuals and classes and nations than any previous age. This optimistic faith was in some degree shared both by conservatives and liberals, victors and vanquished, at any rate in Western Europe. Arrayed against them were those sceptical and destructive persons who out of amusement and indignation exposed what

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they regarded as the shams, the muddles and the absurdities of their immediate predecessors – above all, the inflated values of that decaying Victorian establishment which had failed to prevent the brutalities of the great slaughter. They proudly flaunted their disbelief in, and indeed contempt for, tradition as a heroic act of testimony to the truth, however unpalatable – an attitude superior to the passive acceptance of systems in art and thought and life no longer tolerable to any moderately intelligent or honest man. The air was full of violent denunciation of old divinities and bold new experiments intended not to produce objects of lasting value, but to innovate and to shock.

This is the best-remembered characteristic of those years; any methods, however bizarre, were applauded, provided they looked as if they could shake the ignorant and complacent out of the exasperating dead level of their unperceptive lives. Often these experiments were mere forms of extravagant exhibitionism or hysteria, launched by individuals with little talent save as impresarios. At times they revealed a pathetic frustration on the part of writers or artists whose anguish exceeded their gifts, and whose works, to a later and more critical generation, seem worthy of sympathy but scarcely of admiration or respect or even interest. At other times they resulted in works of the most authentic and enduring genius; it was a period exceptionally rich in works both good and bad and artistically and intellectually most exhilarating.

II

The generation of 1949, as every available symptom indicated, was the opposite of this. Biographies are among the surest indications of the view of life for which the biographer, whether consciously or not, himself stands; and so far as he is typical of the mood of his generation, he will convey its thoughts and feelings for the most part more truly than its official heralds and prophets. If then we consider those of 1922, they represent either the last phase of the grand, old-fashioned Victorian tradition of competent and solemn monumental masonry, or else the exercise of sharp analytical skill compounded of the new sciences of psychology and sociology with which the authors, with varying proportions of gaiety and savage irony, struck out and demolished, pilloried and caricatured those of their predecessors who symbolised the most ridiculous or the most detested vices or tyrannies of previous

generations. The tone in any case was moral: enthusiasm or indignation, passionate defence or bitter exposure; there was a major battle in progress; the old values and the new were sharply distinguishable; the battle of the young against the old had never reached such heights of open and violent conflict. Both sides, even if they were not fully prepared to say what order it was for which they were fighting, were only too ready to specify what they were against; some stated their reasons in elaborate polemical tirades, others preferred direct action by word or painting or musical composition likely to outrage the enemy and in the end sweep him out of existence.

This was a far cry indeed from 1949 with its mood of sober nostalgia and cool appraisal: the great Victorians were amply commemorated in almost every literate country; in England alone two lives of Ruskin, two studies of Byron, massive books on Tennyson, Dickens and the Prince Consort appeared. Their writers were cautiously determined to say neither too much nor yet too little; the analysis was careful, judicious and morally neutral; the eminent dead were represented as burdened with an excess neither of virtue nor of vice – they were figures neither exceptionally great nor absurdly small, and although not overwhelming, were clearly considered as being far more impressive than either the biographer himself or his reader. The attitude was neither one of admiration nor disdain at the fact that those large beings once walked the earth. The reader was invited to inspect the more noteworthy characteristics of the persons described as part of a solid, and on the whole, more interesting world, worthy of the attention of the civilised and the fastidious, but not of sharp or eager advocacy.

At first this appeared a juster and certainly more mature outlook than that of a quarter of a century before. But if we compare the imaginative literature of the two periods we find that, if this is so, the price paid had been high indeed. For 1922 saw the appearance of these works (to take only those in English): among the older poets, new collections of verse by W. B. Yeats, Thomas Hardy, A. E. Housman; and then the true harvest begins – *The Waste Land* by T. S. Eliot, *Ulysses* by James Joyce, *Babbitt* by Sinclair Lewis, *Jacob's Room* by Virginia Woolf, *The Garden Party* by Katherine Mansfield, *Swann's Way* (the first volume of the translation of Marcel Proust's *À la recherche du temps perdu*, by C. K. Scott Moncrieff); all these, particularly *The Waste Land*, *Ulysses* and

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Babbitt, were works whose influence on English was greater than that of any other contemporary writing. In this same year, moreover, there appeared such minor masterpieces as *Lady into Fox* by David Garnett, the *Puppet Show of Memory* by Maurice Baring, *Books and Characters* by Lytton Strachey, *The Second Empire* by Philip Guedalla, *Aaron's Rod* by D. H. Lawrence, *Mortal Coils* by Aldous Huxley, *Mr Prohack* by Arnold Bennett, *Heinrich von Kleist* by Gundolf, books by Wells and Galsworthy, Keynes and G. M. Trevelyan, two volumes of caricatures by Max Beerbohm; and a work of philosophical genius which had a greater influence on the development of logic and the theory of knowledge than any other of its time, the *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* by Ludwig Wittgenstein. This is all stupendous enough in a year which was not exceptional in its own period; even allowing for the magic of distance it must be conceded that 1949 had somewhat less to show.

III

The most important single factor in 1949 was, of course, the continuation of the battle between the creeds – between Marxism and its various enemies – the greatest since the Reformation and its aftermath. This divided the world into hostile camps about which no all-embracing generalisations could profitably be made. In the West, imaginative literature, while not precisely in decline, showed no sign of any bold new beginnings. The best English-speaking novelists produced works of great technical perfection in accepted and familiar genres. Elizabeth Bowen, Ivy Compton Burnett, Henry Green, utterly different as they are in almost every respect, published novels which reflected acute moral and spiritual preoccupation with the fate of individuals hemmed in by and insulated against an aggressively impinging environment. The feeling was romantic, and to some degree nostalgic, the canvas not large, the problems were (unlike post-war writing in France) neither intellectual nor social nor metaphysical, but personal, not a direct expression of – although not untouched by – the psychological doctrines prevalent at the moment.

George Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, which caused a considerable stir, was a tract of the times, dealing with the implications of the unchecked development of the ruthless control of the lives of individuals by political tyrannies which brutally crush and destroy human beings and forms of life in the name of

official ideologies scarcely believed in by the leaders themselves. The mood of general distrust of political nostrums and formulae as such, a sense of horror when faced by the inhuman consequences of doctrines and ideas unmodified by understanding or sympathy for the actual predicament of specific individuals or groups in specific situations, filled the writings of disillusioned writers who had broken with Communism (like the very gifted novelists Koestler and Silone), who denounced their past with varying degrees of anger or bitter and ironical satire. Even T. S. Eliot seemed caught by this ambiguity and lack of positive character; of all living writers in English he had had perhaps the strongest positive influence on other writers; he had an 'ideology' and a 'message'; his poetical dramas had conveyed his views as clearly as his left-wing opponents succeeded in expressing their own. But the performance of *The Cocktail Party* at the Edinburgh festival was less eloquent, more obscure and more elusive than even *The Family Reunion*. The zeitgeist seemed to have cast its spell even on his low-toned, carefully modulated voice. There was, on the other hand, a great deal of very distinguished work done in the field of criticism: Ernst Robert Curtius of Bonn published a masterpiece on the rise of the European tradition; and interesting and penetrating critical studies were published by Herbert Read, Edward Sackville-West, Lord David Cecil, Basil Willey, Cleanth Brooks, Van Wyck Brooks and Leavis; the bicentenary of Goethe's birth led to commemorations in many parts of the world and notable discussions of his genius and influence. Critical powers exceeded those of the creative imagination almost too obviously.

IV

The general mood in Western Europe was sober, sane, touched with scepticism, afraid above all of those excesses of cynicism and disillusionment which to a later generation seemed sentimental and infantile. There was neither great optimism nor great pessimism; above all, writers were anxious to convey the impression that they were adult, balanced, fully capable of surveying the contemporary scene, however dull or dangerous or hopeless, with the unprejudiced and unexcited eyes of long experience, not likely to be betrayed into giving themselves away by exaggerated passion for or against anything. The genuine romanticism of the wartime resistance against fascism, both Communist and non-Communist,

was dying fast. The great three-cornered ideological war – between Catholicism, Communism, existentialism – which during the years immediately following the war dominated both the life and art of France and threatened to convert the latter into applied social theory, metaphysics, theology, everything but itself, diminished in importance. Mauriac and Claudel, Aragon and Edouard Sartre and Mlle de Beauvoir, continued to act as party leaders and banner bearers of the three movements; but some of their most gifted followers failed to retain their ideological purity. Some formally seceded; others returned to the practice of an art not primarily concerned with demonstrating the doctrine or preaching a particular way of life. And although France since the Renaissance had been – and still remains – the classical battleground of philosophy and religion, of highly self-conscious alignments of the least politically minded writers into this or that ideological camp, yet even there the claims of ‘pure’ literature were asserting themselves once more.

Aragon wrote a party novel, *Les Communistes*; Sartre continued to write existentialist plays and published a new volume of his great *roman-fleuve*. Camus published a remarkable historical play, *Les Justes*, about a political assassination in Russia in 1905. Neither Sartre nor Camus, after the fashion of their school, sought directly to suggest solutions to social or individual dilemmas in the manner of the realists, nor to discredit their importance in the drily cynical and deflationary manner of the Maupassant–Somerset Maugham tradition of amoral storytellers, nor yet to create lyrical or religious art like Mauriac or Cocteau. These once revolutionary writers, now no longer in their first youth, wrote and were widely read, and visited foreign countries and were duly acclaimed, but seemed more remote from the new mood than the surviving writers of the nineteenth century: André Gide and Maurice Maeterlinck (the latter died in the course of the year).

The climate of opinion was temperate, the attitude to life serious, meticulous, unsentimental, a little bitter and, in a restrained way, nostalgic. Julian Green was greatly looked up to; in France there was a minor revival of ‘daring’ literature, which dealt with sexual aberrations in a deliberately flat and unromantic manner which betrayed the still very powerful influence of André Gide and the modern US ‘tough’ school of novelists so greatly admired by him – Hemingway, Faulkner, Cain and O’Hara, the

much-praised Steinbeck. The principal characteristics of writing, both imaginative and critical, were (apart from the waning Communist vogue) freedom from dogma or crusading zeal, a kind of cautious humanism, respectful both of the truths and methodology of science and of the inner life of the individual, sensitive, tolerant, careful, observant, open-minded, civilised – almost a return to the civilised melancholy of Montaigne, but on the whole with little hope and little temperament.

This seemed true even of post-war German writing, which sought relief from the humiliating present behind the metaphysical smokescreen of the transcendental theology of such writers as Jaspers and Heidegger; the view of life was vaguely tragic but too remote to bring home the sense of the crimes and horrors of the immediate past, relieving the burden of particular guilt by a misty disquisition on its nature in general, in which the painful facts grew dim and invisible, written in quasi-theological prose for which the dark tradition of German and Danish mysticism and idealism was heavily drawn upon.

It seemed obvious that the post-war period in Western Europe had gone on far longer, because of the failure to achieve adequate social and economic reconstruction, than the similar period after 1918; and that, as happened then also, the romantic afflatus of the heroic years of war had become exhausted without producing an equally spirited reaction. The appetite for life which seems to require a certain degree of economic security and opportunity within the middle class (which continued to produce the majority of the writers and artists) had clearly not been achieved. The year 1949 was a time not so much of transition as of absence of forward motion, becalmed, with little wind to swell the sails.

If this applied to the field of critical and creative writing, in which no works of genius were born and even Malraux had ceased to be a revolutionary writer, great signs of originality and life could perhaps be perceived – combined with the prevailing unsentimental mood – in other spheres: Italian films, for example, among the most interesting artistic achievements of the day, displayed a capacity for natural vision, artistic sensibility and purity of purpose and freedom from rhetoric, or contrived pathos or solemnity, and so resulted in works of art more moving, poetical and true than anything achieved in any other country since the war. The reason for this may lie in the fact that Italy, with its

creative energies so long constricted and perverted by a sterile despotism, possessed unexpended resources of feeling and constructive capacity not to be found in countries in which the writers and artists went through their greatest moral crisis in the late 1920s or the 1930s.

In music there was much charming and sensitive writing, particularly in France, Italy and Switzerland; the English composer Vaughan Williams produced a notable symphony, surprisingly modern in structure and sentiment. Interesting and highly skilful and agreeable but very non-revolutionary works were written by Ernest Bloch and Hindemith in the US, by Benjamin Britten in England and Dallapiccola in Italy. There was a revival of music in Germany; much was expected of a composer of partly Russian origin domiciled in Berlin, Boris Blacher. No new voice was heard, no new tendency asserted itself. The atonalists continued to experiment in their chosen medium, and much was written to expound the theories of its founder Schoenberg, but since the death of Webern atonal music seemed to exercise more appeal to the eye than to the ear. The technical skill of orchestras (though not of players of chamber music or singers) and the art of recording and mechanical reproduction appeared to improve in inverse ratio to originality and beauty of composition.

As for the visual arts, they were, as had often and monotonously been pointed out, dominated by the masters who were already in the full tide of their creative activity after the First World War – the painters Matisse, Picasso, Braque and Léger continued to overshadow their younger contemporaries; no national school could vie with that of Paris in this respect, but there was little new to record. The neo-Gobelin school of French tapestry and the occasional additions to their vivid brand of public art by the Mexican school did little to alter this general impression. Public appreciation of painting and sculpture rose as creative output diminished: the great exhibitions of painting in Paris and London and Switzerland held in 1949 were models of their kind, and excited much discriminating enthusiasm. Excellent critical studies were published on both sides of the ocean; commentators and interpreters appeared more gifted than their modern originals. The study of the history of art in English-speaking countries rose to heights of elegance and scholarship which made it the rival of the most distinguished masters of the subject in Italy and

Germany, and Malraux's *Psychologie d'art* continued the noble French tradition of writing about art by men of letters, the tradition of Diderot, Taine and Valéry. The refinement, imagination and uncompromising fastidiousness displayed by the Third Programme of the British Broadcasting Corporation, and its musical and literary programmes, raised this experiment far above any consistent public effort of its kind attempted before; the state itself seemed to be adopting standards hitherto confined to cultivated amateurs.

In philosophy there was genuine progress. No common language could bridge the gulf between the great empirical school which dominated English-speaking and Scandinavian countries and the metaphysical and religious philosophies of Western Europe. The great revolution inaugurated by Bertrand Russell in the beginning of the century, perhaps the greatest since the seventeenth century, appeared in the 1920s and 1930s to be in danger of ossification in the great dogmatic schools of Vienna and Cambridge, and their many offshoots in Scandinavia and the US and elsewhere. There was some justice in the frequently made charges that the division of what could be said into empirical statements of fact and logical formulations of the rules of language mechanically eliminated, instead of solving, many problems which tormented generations of enquirers, and created an oversimplified form of utterance in which the finer differences became obliterated, and the problems posed by metaphysics were crudely dismissed instead of being resolved by the new technique. The progress of the subject in 1949, although not rich in major philosophical works, made possible far greater flexibility of expression, and so allowed the rich ambiguity of language to play its proper part in the conveying of those differences and similarities for which metaphysicians devised strange terminology, which in the end obscured and almost destroyed the purpose of the precise and therefore technical use of words. The most notable single work of this school of thought in 1949 was *The Concept of Mind* by Gilbert Ryle of Oxford University, a bold and imaginative volume written with uncommon force and freshness.

The philosophers engaged in this type of work seemed scarcely themselves aware of the magnitude of the transformation which they had been so rapidly effecting, or of the mass of philosophical writing during the last 150 years which they were rendering

obsolete; seldom can so much darkness have been illuminated so rapidly and so successfully. The effects of this spread widely beyond the realm of technical philosophy, and standards of clarity and responsibility for factual statements insensibly rose in the fields of history, the social sciences and criticism generally. While empirical theories of thought and language on the one hand and the techniques of symbolic logic on the other progressed and developed, the older philosophical theories lost ground, at least in the major seats of Anglo-US learning; or at any rate recognised enough of their opponents' claims to be fruitfully transformed themselves.

Meanwhile, the more traditional types of philosophy, relying upon intuitive methods rather than upon those of the natural sciences and common sense, continued to flower in France and Germany and Italy, as well as the countries of Latin America; there existentialism fought with more orthodox Catholic rationalism, in particular neo-Thomism, or uncompromising Protestant faith; while the proponents of Marxist dialectical materialism in the orbit of the Soviet Union denounced all philosophies in the Western world as equally bourgeois, decadent and false. Apart from the logicians and empirical philosophers and their allies among the psychologists and sociologists, whose subjects also were making swift if not always solid progress, the contending philosophers confined themselves to exposition rather than formal argument, each side remaining convinced of a sense of superiority; nor were there any inter-metaphysical techniques of communication between warring camps in terms of which either side could be made to recognise its own fallibility. This was particularly true in the field of ethics.

The general impression of the Western European scene was, therefore, one neither of an exceptional flowering of creative powers, nor of chaos or decadence; but of the pursuit of older directions with exceptional sensitiveness, competence, seriousness and moderation. As a result, its best achievements were not dull or mediocre, or extravagant, or counterfeit; but on the other hand they opened no new windows, and created no novel fields for the application of new technical methods. Individual works possessed a degree of originality and truth as great as any before them; they sprang from sober reflection and great critical sensibility, not

exuberant imagination or an irrepressible desire to know or to enjoy, to do or to be, something in particular.

V

The situation outside Western Europe in the countries dominated by Communism and in the US was somewhat different. In the US there seemed less evidence of sensibility, but there was far more hope, and above all a far stronger sense of the crucial importance of the issues involved and of the need to speak out and declare oneself in a relevant fashion. No doubt, the quality of works like Mailer's *The Naked and the Dead* or Williams's *A Streetcar Named Desire*, still widely discussed in 1949, was inferior in kind and not merely in degree to the masterpieces of Ivy Compton Burnett, or Sartre or Elizabeth Bowen, or Edith Sitwell, or Mauriac, or Anouilh. But these works, and the great mass of documentary and journalistic description from which they sprang, represent a vehement interest in, and passionate feeling about, critical issues, which, however crudely conveyed and analysed, were a symptom of a conflict of attitudes which in its turn presupposed belief in the possibility of action, and a sense of the presence of boundless resources with which, and for the possession of which, the battle was being fought.

The US novel and play referred to above, which had provoked much admiring and indignant reaction in the US, fell flat in Europe, partly because their lack of intrinsic literary or dramatic interest was no longer half concealed by the urgent nature of the social problems involved or the blunt courage with which they were set forth. The situation in the US in certain striking respects resembled that of Europe twenty-five years before. The narrow streams of personal and fastidious art – for instance, that of Glenway Westcott, the novelist, or Samuel Barber, the composer, or indeed so rigidly isolated a province as that of Faulkner's south – were so many conscious deviations from that main current of literature and the arts which more truly focused the condition and the moods of the broad central stream of social life; they stood aside from that public arena in which intellectuals fought with philistines, where open and concealed rebels of the type so common in Europe during the previous half century 'unmasked' and 'exposed' the follies and the vices of the establishment or of tradition or of fashion. Above all, there was a feeling that an

immense amount was at stake, that the future seemed sufficiently controllable by a concentration of human resources to make the issue genuinely uncertain, the battle worth fighting. The arts and letters of the US in 1949, whatever their other qualities, were the only true heirs to the great social tradition of the nineteenth century in Europe, with its moral idealism, bitter partisan feeling and those immense public issues which involved the artists deeply and influenced the general outlook of a generation. A great critic like Edmund Wilson was far more representative of the great line of European essayists and critics – Saint-Beuve or Taine or Mathew Arnold – than anyone writing in Europe in 1949. In so far as T. S. Eliot belonged to this tradition too, he derived from what was most American in him and not from what was most like his contemporaries among European men of letters.

In Western Europe this broad river seemed to be divided into isolated streams and pools. The French and English figures who represented the main tradition – the widely read ‘upper middlebrow’ novelists and poets and painters – were, with the solitary exception of Mauriac, minor figures, rightly made little of by serious critics, and aware themselves, with varying degrees of embitterment, of the fact that their *métier* had outlived itself.

Meanwhile, in the US, in the fields both of imaginative and quasi-historical, quasi-sociological writing, there was an effort to answer questions, to discover solutions of acute social and individual problems. It was accompanied by an increasing intolerance of heterodox views, by growingly severe tests of loyalty exacted by all parties and sects and movements, by demands for clear alignment, and charges and counter-charges, and declarations of war. And this, however exaggerated the results, and hostile to disinterested lives and humane forms of culture, was yet evidence of movement, and of passionate moral concern, and a capacity for heroism and uncompromising pursuit of ideals whose very fanaticism and violent collision was at any rate characteristic of the atmosphere in which alone major advances come into being. It was not political and economic predominance alone that led to the preoccupation with the US on the part of so many European writers.

VI

But if the US scene resembled, at any rate in the depth of its preoccupations and antagonisms, that of Europe before the recent war, the cultural conditions of the countries dominated by Communism went back to a considerably earlier period – to those of the great religious wars of the seventeenth century or perhaps earlier still, to the ages of faith and heroic barbarism. In the Soviet Union itself the campaign for undeviating conformity to the party line in the realms of literature and art attained new heights in 1949. The limited licence granted to nationalism, and even to a certain degree of personal self-expression, during the war years was finally revoked; a political storm, more violent and more widespread than that of 1936–7, began to gather force in the early months of 1949, and finally broke over the heads of all the liberal professions. The dramatic critics were among the earliest victims of this great campaign to standardise all forms of cultural life; adherence was demanded to the party line – a blend of primitive Leninism with an anti-Western chauvinism more violent than any known before, even during the severest purges of 1936–8. All Western influences, every form of alleged sophistication or insufficient saturation in the carefully prescribed brand of social content was condemned with unheard-of severity as ‘formalism’ or ‘grovelling to the West’. Those suspected of the least degree of nonconformity, among them nearly all the most honoured names among the survivors of the still quite genuine Russian culture of the 1920s and 1930s, were subjected to vituperation unparalleled even in the history of Marxist polemics; and although this was more difficult to achieve among the central European nations, where Western influence and liberal traditions had had a longer history, there too the immense levelling apparatus had begun to crush the native civilisations and impose the new uniformity.

This process now gained pace in Czechoslovakia, Hungary and Poland, and led to the replacement of their normal literatures by a vast stream of what could be best described as children’s or young people’s books, literally. The novel became the medium for the widest possible inculcation of the simple virtues needed by the regime, and the castigation of the more obvious vices opposed to it. Anything which diverted attention from this simple goal – the idealisation of the right kind of citizen in the simplest and crudest

colours, calculated to make a strong impact on the least educated reader – was frowned upon as a dangerous form of diversion and a sign of disguised admiration for the corrupt and hostile West.

All art forms were subjected to this process; the state in 1949 imposed a degree of conformity to dictated patterns which exceeded all previously known examples of regimentation. Writers and musicians, critics and composers, historians, biologists, physicists, geneticists and even circus clowns confessed their crimes and humbly declared their gratitude to the Communist party for showing them the path to salvation. Attacks on the West grew more unanimous and violent; the mood was of a school which had been collectively punished for an infringement of discipline and was anxious to show every sign of contrition and zeal. Styles grew simpler, works of art more uniformly didactic than during the most unquestioning periods in the Middle Ages. Such originality and initiative as were left at all found expression in the relatively non-political corners of nursery rhymes and translations from the West European classics, or of the epics of the Asiatic nations within the Soviet Union; or else in public criticism of Western culture, in which there was still opportunity for ingenuity and sharp insight and power of irony and which, therefore, despite the standard of crudity demanded, succeeded at times in giving effective expression to damaging home truths about the art and literature of Western countries. Such communication as there was between the Soviet Union and the outside world, precarious at the best of times, which had grown somewhat larger during the better relations brought about by alliance during the war years, had diminished steadily since, and in 1949 began to approach vanishing point. Original works of art comparable with the best produced even by the attenuated cultural life of the West scarcely appeared. The purpose of all activity was the training of a certain kind of citizen, and all mental and material resources were concentrated upon this end. The State had evidently decided that its own security and that of its system left it with no margin within which it could afford to permit free self-expression to occur at any level; it was viewed as being at best a luxury, at worst a menace, to the minimum social discipline needed for survival.

VII

It might seem that no generalisation can conceivably apply to such disparate developments occurring in a single human society. There were in being, if not many, at least two worlds, distinct from, and indeed opposed to, each other in every detail of both theory and practice. Yet something like a common tendency was nevertheless discernible. Everywhere the doctrine of social responsibility was gaining ground at the expense of self-assertive individualism and liberal humanism alike. In particular, disciplines were encouraged whose purpose it was to mould human beings in ways likely to make them fit more effectively, and eagerly, into preconceived patterns of social life; and this ideal was advanced at the expense of conceptions of existence in which men were left – or at any rate expressed the wish to be left – relatively undirected, to achieve their own triumphs and failures. Avoidance of misery was on the whole cultivated as a goal worthier than the development of independence of character with its record of conflict and frustration. The social sciences began to encroach boldly upon the territory of the older forms of humane learning; the application of social techniques on a wide scale was viewed no longer as a triumphant achievement of human intelligence and skill over human ignorance or the recalcitrance of the material environment, or as being indispensable to the preservation of what had been won against nature or the consequences of men's own technical achievements, but as being a form of activity valuable in itself. There was a growing preoccupation with the problem of self-preservation and survival in a society growing, with an apparently inevitable rapidity, less and less capable of creating or protecting what previous generations had sometimes valued beyond life itself – the disinterested discovery of the truth, the cultivation of personal relationships, the making and enjoyment of objects whose social value was of secondary importance.

This attitude had already found its way into literature and art before Germany attacked Poland in 1939. But it continued after 1945 with more vehemence and sense of urgency in the US, and in a more depressed and calm fashion in Europe. French existentialism was perhaps the last Byronic gesture of romantic defiance in which, however hopelessly, and, indeed, the more hopelessly the more defiantly, a last stand was made against total

submergence and dissolution in a world without independent passions or independent responsibility. This growing primacy of social over individual problems – the conception of the individual as an element in this or that social situation or pattern rather than vice versa – was part of the doctrine upon an extreme form of which the Soviet Union had been expressly built, and it had, in fact, advanced further in the West than the survival of cultural forms fully developed in a more individualist age might at first suggest. The sense of the final end of an era was perhaps most explicitly present in the analyses, filled with anxiety and melancholy premonition, of such critics as Arnold Toynbee and Julien Benda, who both published books in the course of the year, seeking to call attention to the final eclipse of the values of the post-Renaissance era.

The most obvious symptom of the new age is the half-conscious assumption that personal problems (for example, the very discussion of aesthetic or moral or intellectual issues as they affect individual decisions and duties) are peripheral, and at times almost exotic. And, per contra, all social, political and technological problems and all theories relating to them are in the forefront of attention as the battlefield where the fate of individuals and nations will be, or is being, finally decided. Consequently, all the appeals to return to private life and individual self-examination are considered as being in varying degree voices speaking from the past in wilfully eccentric or obsolete terms. In all these respects 1949 saw a further step taken in the direction characteristic of all the years since the end of the Second World War. It was not a turning point, nor did it mark a revolution or a sharp divagation. Nothing had yet occurred that enabled men to predict how far the process would carry them, for plainly the world was nearer the beginning than the end of a development of a genuinely new social age, to which the monuments of the culture of a liberal bourgeoisie would soon be only an interesting but hardly a haunting memory.

1950

I

The year 1950 was culturally undistinguished and politically troubled. It was disturbed by disorders in sixteen countries,¹ involved in acute border disputes in six crucial areas,² and was without the compensation of even the thin but steady stream of human achievement in the sciences, the arts and ideas which had marked the previous year. Moreover, it was overshadowed by a peril of far greater magnitude – the fear, suddenly grown concrete, of the outbreak of a new world war less than five years after the end of the last great cataclysm.

The nuclear physicist Leo Szillard calculated that within ten to fifteen years all human life on the earth might be extinguished by hydrogen bombs. This kind of speculation, the effect of which in previous years was to induce feelings, not only of anxiety, but also of guilt on the part of those who considered themselves responsible – in the first place physicists and politicians – now provoked a desire for self-preservation, if need be by resistance to possible enemies: a combination of terror and resolution, rather than further self-examination or self-condemnation.

The event for which the year 1950 was likely to be most vividly remembered was the outbreak of war in Korea on 25 June, when for the first time the two great systems which between them divided the civilised world finally met in open conflict. This was merely a formal climax of the most crucial development of our times; but the tension between the Communist and non-Communist parts of the world mounted with particular rapidity, with symptoms which were observable in every region of human experience.

It was not an unconscious process. The fact that the twentieth century had reached its midmost point stimulated much self-conscious reflection about the path which mankind had traversed since its early years. Obvious comparisons were made, in almost

¹ Bolivia, Eritrea, France, Greece, Gold Coast, Indochina, Indonesia, Ivory Coast, Guatemala, Kashmir, Malaya, Nepal, Iran (Persia), Puerto Rico, the Philippines, South Africa.

² Berlin, China, Cominform (Tito: Yugoslavia), Jerusalem, Trieste, Saar.

every country which possessed a free press, with the relatively deep peace in which the century seemed to open, and even more with that now almost fabulous time – the years of the middle nineteenth century in the European continent. It was an occasion for many sardonic analogies between the overflowing optimism and pride of the 1850s and our own time, with its sad prophecies about the human future, reflecting the disenchantment which unceasing material progress, with its apparently inevitable accompaniment of uncontrollable chaos and destruction, had brought to the West.

These melancholy summaries no longer possessed that note of tranquil sadness, tinged with gently nostalgic feeling, which permeated both life and letters in quieter times. The previous year, 1949, so far as literature, for example, was concerned, to some degree took refuge in 'escapist' reminiscences of the solid security of Victorianism and earlier periods. By 1950 the danger, not merely of war, but of total atomisation of peaceful populations by the newly discovered weapons of unheard of destructive power, had come too close to permit of even the limited comfort of pleasant daydreams of this kind. The desire to avoid facing the painful facts, which had been responsible for the partial return, in Western Europe at any rate, to purely 'aesthetic' poetry and painting, to imaginative writing preoccupied by the problems of private life, to mordant but light social satire, to memoirs and biographies in which fastidious elegance and a desire to please were more evident than deep moral or political concern – this general trend, while it overflowed to some degree into 1950, was no longer characteristic of that year. The mild, sober, pensive mood of the post-Second World War years began to give way to the anxiety and at times acute depression of what seemed a new pre-war (rather than post-war) period; while there was no discernible hysteria in the countries of the West, they appeared to be permeated by a kind of grim expectation of a new debacle; this feeling was not fatalistic, disaster might still be averted, there was no reason for resignation or despair. Nevertheless, the daily news given by the press and radio acquired a new and menacing urgency, and this was duly reflected in literature and the arts as well as the more obvious social and political manifestations of these months.

The output of books reflecting this preoccupation increased noticeably; the confessions of disillusioned ex-**[xxiii]**Communists (of which the most notable was the collection of essays by many hands entitled *The God That Failed*) no longer served merely to entertain or excite a public avid for sensational revelations or hair-raising 'inside stories' as such, but directly affected readers to whom the energetic conspirators from whose midst came these eloquent 'renegades' still appeared as a very real and immediate menace. James Burnham, Arthur Koestler, Ignazio Silone, Louis Fischer and Douglas Hyde were no longer merely repentant sinners or subjects of thrilling psychological autobiographies, but respected experts and daily guides to action. The kulturkampf began in real earnest, with great embitterment on both sides and no quarter given.

II

Politically, the most important single aspect of this was the reluctant but for the most part final recognition by the majority of the thinking inhabitants of Western Europe and the Americas (although not of Asia or Africa) that there were in fact two worlds; that the differences in the political spectrum were not graduated but broke sharply at the frontier marked by the so-called 'iron curtain'; that however deeply men of liberal convictions might abhor the cruelties and injustices of the semi-capitalist system under which they lived, there was more that was common to them and their moderate right-wing opponents than between them and the rulers of Communist Russia and the police democracies. The destruction of the old 'Popular Front' solidarity of all left-wing groups against embattled reaction was a very painful disillusionment to large sections of progressive opinion. But this process, begun by Andrey Vishinsky's brutally direct speeches before various forums of the United Nations, continued by other Soviet spokesmen, and brought home by the suppression of civil liberties in one Communist state after the other, did finally begin to achieve the result of isolating Communists as a *sui generis* totalitarian group with ideals in absolute conflict with those of liberals and democrats of every shade and hue, a conflict no less violent and irreconcilable than that with fascists or ultramontane Catholics.

It was in this atmosphere that the Western powers were enabled to make a serious effort to achieve the limited objectives of the Atlantic pact – a move of self-defence against possible Soviet aggression; and arrangements for making possible a united military and economic strategy (which later in the year led to the appointment of General Dwight D. Eisenhower as commander-in-chief of the united Western European forces) obtained a degree of general support in the West scarcely possible a year or two before, when such steps would have been denounced vehemently by a good many persons and bodies in no political sympathy with Communism. Every Western country now feared armed aggression and intervention by members of the Soviet bloc, and there was less liability to illusion (although it was by no means wholly absent) either about the consequences of this, or about the possibility of remaining neutral and untouched.

The Communists, on their side, were plainly not unaware of the shift in opinion; they realised the consequent disadvantage to the Soviet Union, and took appropriate steps. They intensified production, particularly of war material, in the Sovietised part of the world and took increasingly drastic steps to insulate their populations even more hermetically by continuing the violent campaigns against foreigners and foreign civilisations, and by reducing contacts with them to the level of the Muscovy of Ivan and Terrible. At the same time it became plain to them that propaganda about the immense achievements of Soviet culture was no longer proving as effective in the West as it had been, and, indeed, tended to cover its agents with ridicule; consequently, strictly political and cultural issues were played down, and a universal appeal was made for peace. Hundreds of thousands of signatures, mainly in central and eastern Europe, were obtained for a document, drafted in Stockholm, which carefully omitted controversial political issues and concentrated upon the worldwide yearning to avoid another war. The Stockholm Peace Petition was much the most successful piece of propaganda achieved by the Soviet Union for many months, and to some degree the painful effect caused by its particularly harsh recent persecution of all intellectuals and artists who saw any good in any aspect of Western civilisation, as well as by its openly aggressive policies in Asia. The most prominent countermove to this Communist campaign was made by the Roman Catholic Church, which, by giving great

publicity to the Holy Year and to the ensuing pilgrimage to Rome, further attracted attention with the promulgation by the Pope of the new dogma of the Bodily Assumption of the Virgin.

III

Thus 1950 was a year in which the general stiffening of the fronts had begun. The Roman Church formally denounced not merely association with Communism in any form, but other intellectual heresies as well, such as idealism, pragmatism, existentialism and so on, which had begun to creep into the fold in spurious disguises. A major battle had begun. In the US, anti-Communist feeling had reached a new height. A bill had passed both houses of Congress requiring Communists and 'fellow travellers' to register themselves with the newly set up agency for counteracting subversive activities, and a new immigration law (passed over the president's veto) was enacted whereby anyone who belonged, or had ever belonged, to a totalitarian community, whether of the left or the right, whether past or present, found it difficult, if not impossible to enter the US. The sense of present danger was increased not merely by the disturbing news of the growth of Communist power, particularly in Asia, but by such local events as the celebrated trial of Alger Hiss (who had been condemned for perjury in denying that he had, twelve years before, given [xxiv] confidential government documents to a Soviet spy), which culminated in his sentence to a term of imprisonment. This was accompanied and followed by the trials and convictions of lesser figures for similar offences, in particular of scientists, some of whom by their own admissions had given the Soviet Union secrets connected with atomic research. Of these the case of Klaus Fuchs, engaged upon secret work of this kind in England, who made a full confession, was perhaps the most notorious; not long after this an Italian physicist, Bruno Pontecorvo, disappeared under mysterious circumstances, it was supposed to the Soviet Union.

The notion that Communist parties abroad were in effect not political organisations so much as networks of espionage began to be established in the public mind. In this atmosphere a group of US politicians led by Senator Joseph R. McCarthy declared that US government agencies, and in particular the State Department, were riddled with Communists and their sympathisers, who acted as foreign agents and spies. In particular they maintained that many

homosexuals, who were open for this reason to blackmail by Soviet agents, infested US government departments and were a source of grave weakness to them. Senator McCarthy and his friends demanded a thoroughgoing purge of such persons. Departmental inquiries were duly held, followed by some dismissals, but this did not satisfy the accusers. Dean Acheson, the US Secretary of State, was attacked for conducting a vacillating foreign policy which discouraged such natural allies of the US as Generalissimo Chiang Kai-shek and General Francisco Franco, and gave heart to their left-wing opponents. Acheson's dismissal began to be steadily demanded. President Harry S. Truman defended his Secretary of State. The Tydings Committee cleared the accused State Department of most of the charges flung at its members. But the charge of Communist permeation had made a very deep impression upon the public imagination of the US, as shown by the defeat, later in the year, of many members of the US congress suspected of insufficient anti-Communist zeal.

The passions aroused by this drive against Communism spread very widely. Persons of liberal views, untainted by Communism, began to feel themselves affected by the political storm. Several universities demanded oaths of loyalty from their teaching staffs which some of these were not prepared to give. The issue of academic freedom became critical. A further spate of books and articles by ex-Communists and 'non-returning' refugees from the Soviet Union heightened this mood, and a holy war against Communism in the US, which felt it had most to lose by the advance of Communism, was plainly in process of beginning, and might well number among its victims many innocent liberals and unpolitical persons as well as Communist sympathisers.

This phenomenon also occurred, but on a far smaller scale, in Western Europe. The pursuit of security grew to be a major public concern and the discovery of hitherto undetected friends of the Soviet Union in positions of responsibility in various countries of Western Europe upset opinion in the US more than it did in those countries themselves. Thus the dismissal of the celebrated Communist physicist Frédéric Joliot-Curie from his supervision of French nuclear research shook, but did not cause an upheaval in, French public opinion. Repercussions of this campaign occurred in Australia and South Africa, in which bills to outlaw the Communist party were promulgated; South Africa pushed on with

its policy of segregating its non-white natives in a world atmosphere less unfavourable to it than at the moment of liberal enthusiasm which followed the victory over fascism. In short, the question of one's attitude to the Soviet Union and Communism became the central social and personal issue of the time. The Soviet Union was ranged against the US, each ringed by its allies and dependencies, and the principal preoccupation of many Western Europeans was how to avoid being crushed in the collision of the great giants, against both of whom a rising resentment began to be felt. The kulturkampf between the two worlds had reached a stage which made other issues begin to seem irrelevant, and attempts at synthesis between the rival systems of ideas, of which there was a good deal of talk in the years immediately following the end of the Second World War, begin to seem futile.

This had several interesting and important consequences. In the countries which had been defeated by the Germans five years before, preoccupation with the danger of total destruction to some degree took precedence over older political beliefs and principles. Catholics and Communists were protected by their faith and guarded their sacred heritage; but the vast intermediate bloc of opinion, from unreflecting conservatives to left-wing non-Communist radicals, asked themselves not so much what it was they believed, what principles they were ready to defend, but the more pragmatic question – from which side the attack would come first and how it was to be averted. This practical problem of life and death, which the experiences of the very recent war of extinction had rendered particularly real, made the older theoretical issues, such as secularism versus clericalism, collectivism versus individualism, political versus economic action, and so on, seem somewhat academic and obsolete.

One of the alternatives to becoming obsessed with immediate perils was to concentrate one's attention upon remoter fields. The success of the existentialist philosophy in lands which had been ruled by fascists was certainly in part due to the fact that, by dealing in an impressively obscure metaphysical terminology, it served as so often before to relieve, for example, many Germans of the painful need to contemplate their own past crimes and errors by sublimating the issue into a dark and lofty region where nothing was any longer sufficiently connected with daily life to stir

remorse or indignation or human feeling applicable to the events of daily life. The French, with a philosophical and literary tradition less [xxv] capable of generating this kind of spiritual smokescreen, contrived to turn this mood into a literature which, in the works of M. Sartre, Mlle de Beauvoir, M. Camus and others, continued to create a very talented imaginative metaphysico-psychological fiction. thereby avoiding the sharp issues of the mounting crisis. This bifurcation – on the one hand the elimination of political philosophies and principles by an urgent preoccupation with the spectacle of approaching doom, accompanied by a search for the means to avoid it, and, on the other, elevation or immersion into a sphere above or below the terrors of daily life – did not develop in American, British or Scandinavian countries to a similar extent, perhaps because it was the result of harrowing moral experiences and a scepticism born of unbearable humiliation, to which these countries had not had to submit.

In England, and to a large extent in the Netherlands and Scandinavia also, public opinion became increasingly anxious about the approaching possibility of war between the giants; sections of opinion, both left- and right-wing, still nursed the hope of being able to remain neutral, albeit with diminishing confidence. The US – the symbol of an active attitude to the coming struggle for power – at times became almost as great an irritant to British Conservatives as to adherents of the Labour Party, which continued to be in power. The root of this attitude lay not merely in the natural resentments which painful stabilisation at a level of lesser influence and power must naturally induce among previously dominant nations and continents, but in the feeling, familiar enough to Americans (since it was an ingredient of American isolationism of both the right and the left in the two decades before Pearl Harbor), of wishing to be left to solve their own sufficiently acute social and economic problems without being drawn into a lethal war by powers too strong to resist, too hard to influence, and yet impossible to ignore or offend, inasmuch as one of them at any rate was the source of indispensable financial and economic aid.

And yet in spite of much angry criticism in the socialist and liberal press of Western Europe and the British dominions of what was considered heavy-handed or blundering American diplomacy in Europe, or ignorance and bigotry on the part of influential

circles of American opinion, a clear majority of the groups and individuals which form Western European opinion felt the US to be their indispensable protector against the designs of the expansionist Soviet Union. The situation was, indeed, in some respects not unlike the state of US opinion in the late 1930s: the number of Americans who were in those days positively pro-Fascist was very small, although distrust and disapproval of Europe was very widespread; there was disdainful talk of 'rival imperialisms' from whose degrading struggle the new world should steer clear; but even then it was obvious that as against Hitler and Mussolini, US opinion was solidly on the side of the democracies. So now, Western European opinion, resentfully, distrustfully and uneasily, ranged itself on the side of Washington and against Moscow, although the pro-Moscow minorities were relatively larger, more indignant, although perhaps no more influential, and held their ground more steadily, than pro-Fascist groups in the US ten years before.

IV

Certainly the Communists did not increase in influence during the year: in England and northern Europe they remained negligible. The case of Britain was instructive. In the British general election, which returned the British Labour Party to precarious power with a minute majority of six, the Communist representation of two was wiped out altogether; and bitter though controversies over such measures as steel nationalisation and the tempo of rearmament at times became in the British Houses of Parliament, the attitude to the Soviet Union played relatively little part therein. On the major issues of foreign policy both the Conservative and the Labour Parties were in tacit agreement, and when events made the British government's rearmament plans seem ludicrously inadequate, the government no less than the opposition accepted this fact without a struggle, so that what in fact, in all but name, was a 'bipartisan' foreign and defence policy remained singularly undisturbed, despite the temptation which a tiny government majority would have presented to a morally less responsible opposition at a less perilous moment.

In France and Italy, Communism and its sympathisers offered a far greater danger, yet even there the Communist Party made no headway. The somewhat right-wing cabinets in France of Bidault

and Pleven (with a very short interlude under Henri Queuille), and the De Gasperi government in Italy, successfully stemmed the left-wing tide. The Stockholm Peace Petition had made some impression. The French CGT unions remained under Communist influence, and so did corresponding trade unions in Italy and Belgium, and these from time to time staged spectacular strikes; but the net result of this was not significant. Despite such traditionally demoralising factors as bitter disputes about wages and taxes, about electoral reform and Catholic schools, despite the attempts by Communists to start disorders by attacks on the conservative newspaper *Le Figaro*, and the campaign to build up the Communist leader Thorez into a national champion of patriotic democracy – a kind of Gambetta or Jaurès – and the fearless enemy of the cosmopolitan conspiracy of bankers and warmongers, French political life did not go through a major crisis. Some Polish Communists were expelled and relations with Poland and the Soviet Union deteriorated. There was a violent campaign against Jules Moch, who had been an exceptionally active minister of the interior and of defence, and was attacked from both right and left, being accused by the left of brutal oppression of political liberties, and by the right of opposing German rearmament, to the detriment of France and Western defence; but this assault, from which both Communists and Gaullists seemed to [xxvi] expect much, finally petered out. The constructive imagination of France manifested itself in the so-called Schuman Plan, largely inspired by Jean Monnet, for the integration of iron and steel production in Europe under a supernational authority. In the controversy with Britain that ensued, France appeared to be speaking for Europe more truly than any other great nation. But this was the official voice of France; there were no echoes of it in French art or literature, still absorbed, save for the Communists, with personal themes.

Even in Belgium, where a major succession crisis shook the country, stability was preserved. The very large and bitterly hostile minority opposed to King Leopold's return (which included left-wing parties, liberals, trade unionists, and so on) nearly caused a civil war. Disturbances occurred; there were violent deaths; a Communist leader was assassinated. Finally a compromise was adopted by the acceptance of King Leopold's son Prince Baudouin as king. Thus even in Belgium Communism was in 1950 not a

serious internal danger, and the same was true of most of the countries of Western Europe.

Yugoslavia under Tito continued as a heretical outpost against orthodox Communism, thereby incidentally providing an outlet for the loyalty of those left-wing intellectuals in Western Europe who most of all abhor capitalism and even the kind of socialism which compromises with it, and would like to come to terms with, but cannot quite bring themselves to swear absolute obedience to, the despotic demands of undiluted Soviet Communism. Spain and Portugal continued under their dictatorships; Greece, with the Communists crushed, consolidated its economic position; Switzerland continued to be solidly Conservative, while Germany and Austria remained battlegrounds between the ideologies modified by local religious and nationalistic traditions.

The US saw itself (as indeed it was) in the role of a financial patron and saviour, engaged in shoring up the rickety European structure against an otherwise unavoidable collapse, and showed some resentment against isolationist or 'neutralist' attitudes on the part of countries which only it had saved from being gobbled by the Soviet crocodile, and who now appeared to be venting their ill temper upon their largely disinterested rescuer. Consequently, there was much talk in the US of inability to help those who showed no desire to help themselves, and of a limit to the feasibility of defending those obstinately labouring under separatist delusions. Unless Europe gave some concrete sign of federating itself into a political and economic unit, capable at any rate of some degree of serious self-defence, its military future looked to US observers very gloomy; the various international organisations seemed disappointingly unable to create a single political and economic texture; and Britain, with its Scandinavian followers, looked like the ringleader in the prevention of a European union on US lines, because, so it was held, Britain was dominated by a selfish fear of losing its world position which depended on its extra-European connections.

On the other hand, it was allowed that Attlee's government, despite its minute majority, showed a remarkable capacity for survival; Parliament behaved with a commendable sense of responsibility; on major issues of foreign policy it seemed largely undivided, and the angry taunts occasioned by Sir Stafford Cripps's devaluation of the pound were silenced by the solid fruits

of this audacious step. Sir Stafford Cripps retired, leaving Britain in a financial position stronger than that during the previous year. In the autumn the British government took the spectacular step of declaring itself no longer in need of Marshall aid, and yet this nation insisted on displaying an apparent lack of solidarity with its neighbours in Western Europe. It looked for all the world as if French and Italians, the Benelux countries and others were ready enough to form a union, but for sabotage by the British Labour government, which had shown itself no less isolationist and empire-minded than its Conservative predecessors. Winston Churchill lent his great authority to such a view and demanded a greater degree of European integration; spokesmen of the British government declared that the lowering of economic standards of living, with a sudden reversal of the British economy by 'integrating' it into the complementary continental economy, even to the limited extent proposed by the Schuman plan, with control no longer vested in democratically elected parliaments, could hardly strengthen Western Europe or the free world. Their opponents replied that this was mere defence of the obsolete, and now obstructive, concept of national sovereignty against wider forms of association, posing as a demand for democratic control.

The Middle Eastern countries, preoccupied with the internal social problems arising from the semi-feudal systems under which they live, filled with bitter hostility towards the new State of Israel, and nursing resentful memories of the defeat of their armies, and of lack of concrete sympathy from the Western allies, took up a stiffly neutral position vis-à-vis the East-West conflict, pronouncing themselves anti-Communist indeed, but in favour of a more cautious and independent policy of no alliances with the great powers, to avoid fresh disillusionments.

India and Pakistan, themselves in the grip of a ruinous conflict, with war between them narrowly averted and a fierce dispute about the territory of Kashmir, displayed an equal neutrality. Turkey proved the freedom of its institutions by the result of elections in which Kemal Atatürk's successor had been defeated and was peacefully succeeded by the leader of the opposition; neither party concealed its fear of the Soviet Union, and both were unequivocally on the side of the West. Iran (Persia), which alone held the distinction of having successfully frustrated Soviet plans by purely diplomatic means, continued to tread a cautious and

tortuous path. China, under a victorious Communist government, violently denounced American aid to the defeated nationalists now driven to the island of Formosa. The French were pursuing a none too successful war against the left-[xxvii]wing Vietnam party in Indochina, supported Emperor Bao Dai, and complained of insufficient help from the US in the campaign. The new Indonesian republic finally stabilised its relations with the Dutch on a solid basis and was granted admission to the ranks of the United Nations.

V

The assumption that all the new republics with seats in the assembly of the United Nations lived in the same century was not entirely justified: on 2 April the government of the Burmese republic, in the midst of a civil war against its Karen rebels, suddenly resigned; official astrologers were ceremoniously consulted, and, five minutes later, the government resumed its office. In Malaya left-wing terrorism continued, with Chinese Communist aid as in the case of Indochina. Thailand was nervous but relatively peaceful under its new king. In Korea the Soviet-supported government of the north and the US-supported government of the south glared at each other balefully across the artificial dividing line of the 38th parallel. This was the situation until June, when the North Korean government invaded South Korean territory, using the age-old formula that they had received intelligence that the South Koreans were on the point of launching a major attack upon them. On 26 June, the day after the North Koreans crossed the 38th parallel – a term destined to become unforgettable by endless reiteration – President Truman, with the approval of the majority of the Security Council of the United Nations, offered air and naval aid to the attacked South Korean government, and a few days later, after the Security council had formally called upon all its members to aid it in repelling the aggressor, the US, Great Britain, the non-Asiatic British dominions and other members of the United Nations sent reinforcements to support the South Koreans in their war.

There is no need to trace here the vicissitudes of this war. After the initial reverses by the forces of the United Nations at the hands of the North Koreans, widely held to be armed and trained by the Soviet Union, the invaders were repelled and driven back by General MacArthur's forces (of which much the greater part was supplied by the US) after a successful landing in their rear; the United Nations forces drove across the 38th parallel and to certain points on the Manchurian border, where in November they unexpectedly met a large Chinese army which in its turn drove the United Nations forces across the peninsula, so that by the end of the year they were arrayed near the 38th parallel, awaiting further attack. This was the first serious armed conflict between a state supported by the Soviet Union and its satellites, and a State supported by other members of the United Nations. The possibility of world war seemed suddenly greatly increased, and under its shadow the lines were still more tightly drawn. Various agencies of the United Nations, while expressing their abhorrence of the act of aggression, unsuccessfully attempted to end immediate hostilities by an armistice or a ceasefire order.

For a period American opinion achieved greater unity than at any time since the end of the Second World War; for a time the violent personal attacks upon the State Department and US foreign policy ceased to occupy the forefront of attention. President Truman's bold act in sending military aid to Korea was acclaimed as truly representing the will of the American people. That curious combination of isolationism, acute right-wing nationalism and conservatism in domestic affairs, linked with the passionate emphasis on Far Eastern in preference to European involvement which had characterised the isolationist camp during the Second World War, for once seemed to melt, and its leaders to approach more closely the outlook of the internationalist leaders of the Democratic administration and the State Department. Even the preoccupation with the Communist Trojan horse took second place to the consciousness of international responsibility, of the US as the leader of the free nations against totalitarian aggression. But the mid-term elections proved that the activities of Senator McCarthy and his allies had nevertheless borne fruit; a number of liberal senators and congressmen were defeated, 'rock-ribbed'

Republicans were elected by increased majorities, the inquisitors of the State Department and the US administration generally were returned in great force, and although the revered figure of General Marshall soon entered the cabinet to replace the somewhat discredited Louis Johnson, violent onslaughts on policies common to him and Acheson continued unabated.

In Europe the Korean War produced at first admiring approval, on the part of the majority, of the US president's attempt to back words with deeds and demonstrate that the United Nations could defend its interests by force as well as argument. But after the initial North Korean advance continued, reaction set in. It took the form of protests against what was conceived as an unnecessary war, particularly when this was represented as being due to the intemperate policies of the great non-European powers, who neither understood nor cared for the survival of Western Europe and its values. Opinion presently crystallised round the views expressed by Churchill (whom no one could accuse of pro-Soviet tendencies or anti-American feeling or inclination to undue pessimism) when he told the House of Commons that the Asiatic war was a diversion from the main issue, which lay in Europe – a trap into which major Western powers must not allow themselves to be drawn. This seemed only too clearly to be also the opinion of the Labour cabinet, and Attlee's swift resolve to visit Washington, DC, acclaimed in France and elsewhere as a move likely to sober alleged American extremism, emphasised this as a general European attitude, which in its turn provoked American charges of European cowardice and ingratitude. Presently certain Asiatic powers together with Arab states, who looked upon themselves [xxviii] as a neutral third force in this conflict, offered their mediation. Their proposal was rejected by the Soviet bloc, to whom the whole situation may well have looked uncommonly like a repetition of Western intervention in Russia in 1918, with Chiang Kai-shek as a kind of Chinese Denikin or Kolchak, and the United Nations as an angry but in the end insufficiently resolute entente, bent on intervention against a nation in arms, but, as always, with inadequate forces.

In this dark atmosphere quarrels and recriminations between the Western Allies naturally grew in frequency and bitterness. Britain maintained that, if its advice had initially been followed by the US and the Chinese Communist government recognised by the

United Nations at the beginning of the year, Chinese intervention in Korea, and possibly even its invasion of Tibet (which astonished and dismayed the socialist Indian prime minister, Nehru), might not have occurred. American statesmen maintained that if they had earlier been allowed to rearm the Germans, there would now have been in Europe a far more solid obstacle to Russian aggression. The French declared that to allow the Germans a large army was the most fatal of all moves – the recreation of the Reichswehr with its sinister memories of the Rapallo agreement, followed by General Seeckt's secret and successful rearming of the Germans after 1918, and finally the Russo–German pact of 1939; it was surely better to let the Germans enter a European army as individuals rather than as units. The Western Germans, meanwhile, were divided into those who did not wish to bear the brunt of war again under any circumstances, and rejected rearmament as a prelude to being turned into cannon fodder for the Western powers, and those like Adenauer, the chancellor, who for reasons of national pride refused rearmament unless the establishment of some kind of independent German military establishment were authorised.

The year closed with only a very partial compromise upon these questions, with a wide divergency of views in America and Europe as to the need to fight a full-scale Asiatic war, and in the midst of military setbacks and a prospect of a dark future. Nevertheless, the basic alliance of the Western powers remained intact and the appointment of General Eisenhower as supreme commander of the forces of the Atlantic powers in Europe was, as was noted above, symbolic of a degree of unity scarcely imaginable a few years before.

VII

Meanwhile the life of the peoples under Soviet influence remained opaque to Western eyes. So far as one could tell, the Soviet Union itself was absorbed in the pursuit of its post-war plan to achieve greatly increased production, at the expense of progress in the arts of peace, of both guns and butter. To the accompaniment of the (by now normal) punishments for inefficiency and sabotage on the part of those engaged in production, great economic progress was reported in the Soviet press. In the sphere of culture the acute chauvinism of the previous year was kept up, indeed intensified,

and foreign influences still more rigidly excluded; apart from an exiguous but valuable stream of purely academic literary scholarship engaged in restoring the texts and publishing hitherto unknown fragments of the works of the authors admitted into the Soviet canon, nothing of general significance, or even notoriety, came from the Soviet Union in 1950, apart from a sudden and, as it seemed to the outside world, bizarre pronouncement by Stalin himself, in which he publicly condemned the views of academician Marr, hitherto a sacrosanct Soviet authority on linguistics, who had put forward views of increasing eccentricity until his death in 1934, which had made him and his followers the laughing stock of scholars in other countries. Stalin explained in a newspaper article that language did not necessarily alter as a direct function of the change in the class structure of society, but obeyed slower laws. This was the first pronouncement for many years on a theoretical topic by the high priest of Communist orthodoxy. As such it was not merely accepted with the routine universal adulation by all Communist scholars, but gave hope that the violent drive against artists and authors accused of insufficient Marxist orthodoxy might now be somewhat relaxed, at any rate in regions relatively free from politics – that, in fact, they might share in the blessings of the linguists so suddenly and gratifyingly freed from their heaviest theoretical fetters.

In the satellite countries the process of eliminating ‘fellow travellers’ and ‘soft’ Communists from key positions continued, and the primary duty of each country was rammed home to each and all of them. In Poland an obviously precarious and short-lived arrangement was arrived at with a certain representative of the Roman Church³ whereby Catholic worship was to be tolerated on terms duly denounced as not being acceptable to the Vatican. The violent abuse of, and threats against, Tito and his heretical regime continued unabated, but the major weapons in this war of words were naturally reserved for the US. The attack used in the course of propaganda to, and within, the Western countries was two-pronged; in each case it attributed to the US policies of which the Soviet Union was itself more frequently and plausibly accused. It stressed the desirability of peace, endangered solely by American imperialist greed, but also it appealed openly to the national

³ Cardinal Stefan Wyszyński (1901–81), Primate of Poland.

traditions of each country, and to its longing to remain free and independent, and true to its own national traditions, as opposed to exploitation and destruction as so much raw material for the ruthless American war machine.

The English were duly reminded that they were the land of Shakespeare, Milton, Dickens, and not the degenerate tools of the bankers of Wall Street. The French were invited to reflect on the past glories and the revolutionary tradition of the republic, and on the ancient friendship between France and Russia, and France's traditional hostility to England. [xxix] Herbert Hoover's call to his country to return to old-fashioned isolationism and to abandon the European continent to its own devices – if need be to perish as the victim of its own ridiculous ineptitude – was given an almost approving prominence in the Soviet press. Ever stricter Stalin worship was demanded from the satellite press and public. The last remaining non-political poets and artists in satellite countries had pressure put upon them to pay homage to Stalin as the champion of humanity and peace. The US was represented as the symbol at once of war and of a vulgar and materialistic cosmopolitanism seeking to destroy Europe, the cradle of civilisation, morally, intellectually and physically, an image made familiar originally by Nazi propaganda, and at various times applied by it both to the US and to the Soviet Union, and then in turn used to describe Germany itself by Soviet publicists in the period of friction before the Soviet–Nazi friendship pact of 1939.

VIII

So far as the arts and letters and thought are concerned, 1950 was a remarkably undistinguished year. If we compare 1950 with the corresponding year after the First World War, the contrast is even more depressing. In 1923 such writers as Joseph Conrad, George Moore, H. G. Wells and Bernard Shaw were still full of creative power; D. H. Lawrence, Virginia Woolf, Sinclair Lewis, André Gide, Arnold Bennett and W. B. Yeats were at the height of their powers. Aldous Huxley, Edith Sitwell, Jean Cocteau, François Mauriac, Ernest Hemingway, T. S. Eliot and other exceptionally gifted writers were beginning to arouse attention. If it be said that men of genius and even of striking talent are seldom noticed by their contemporaries and loom much larger in retrospect than at the time of their emergence, and that consequently many a genius

may today be writing or painting or composing and not be visible as yet to the average critical eye, it may be answered that the attitude towards the arts had greatly changed in a quarter of a century.

In those far off days the unorthodox and unconventional was often sharply condemned by the average respected critic, and sharp controversies were common about figures whom their followers claimed as men of genius, while their opponents denounced them as charlatans or the false idols of ephemeral coteries. Since then, so poor does the world seem to have grown in literary and artistic giants that the critics, so far from disparaging the unfamiliar or the disconcerting, seemed only too much on the alert to catch the faintest symptom of anything remotely suggestive of truly original talent. The danger now is not that men of gifts may be ignored or unjustly treated, but that the commonplace or the counterfeit may be over-praised by those who, in their terror of missing a masterpiece for lack of sensibility or perception, see a swan in every goose. The public can no longer, at any rate in Europe, be shocked into protest; even the most philistine assume that genius may be concealed in the incomprehensible. The capacity for sharp reaction, whether favourable or hostile, has grown very weak; the atmosphere is becalmed; eyes and ears are acutely strained to catch the faintest glimpse, the faintest whisper, of something interesting or unusual, and yet there is little enough that the most generous and comprehensive fisher of talent can catch in his net.

Among English-speaking writers, Evelyn Waugh's fantasy about Saint Helena continued his unique but by now familiar strain. Henry Green, Joyce Cary, William Sansom, Jocelyn Brooke, Liam O'Flaherty, Angus Wilson and Rose Macaulay added to the literature of imagination, but did not extend its boundaries in any dimension. In France Pierre Klossowski, André Dhôtel and M. Perain⁴ were new authors who wrote novels of distinction, but scarcely made a literary summer; Jean Giono and Julien Green added small jewels to the crowns secure upon their heads; Arthur Waley added yet another to his series of exquisite translations from Chinese; in Germany Hans Jahnn wrote a work of fiction worthy of serious comment. Nor was the situation very different in the

⁴ Untraced.

field of criticism. Lord Russell, G. M. Young, Aldous Huxley, Graham Hough, Edward Sackville-West, Martin Turnell, Sir Maurice Bowra, Julien Benda, Rex Warner and Herbert Read produced essays of genuine distinction, but no new reputations were created, no well-established reputations were strikingly enhanced, no unfamiliar territory was discovered. There was much solid historical research, both in England and in the US. Henry S. Commager and Allan Nevins produced valuable historical surveys, Professor Neale and Mr Rowse made original contributions to knowledge of the Elizabethan age. Professor Feiling wrote a distinguished *History of England*. Professor Braudel produced a remarkable work on French medieval history and the Mediterranean, Professor Altamira's classical history of Spain was translated, and Menéndez Pidal's masterpiece on Spanish aesthetics may also now be read in English; E. R. Curtius put a lifetime of scholarship and thought into his book on the Latin tradition in medieval European Literature. Magistral editions of Theocritus by A. S. Gow, and of the *Agamemnon* by E. Fraenkel, were contributed by the universities of Cambridge and Oxford to the great storehouse of English learning. Monsignor Knox wrote a notable study of *Enthusiasm* – the emotional and spiritual deviations from the centre on the part of religious figures and preachers. The splendid edition of Ben Jonson, edited now by Percy Simpson alone, drew nearer to its close. G. G. Coulton's monumental and authoritative treatise on medieval monasticism achieved its posthumous culmination. John Hersey celebrated the heroic resistance of the Warsaw Ghetto to its Nazi executioners in *The Wall*, a work of greater humanitarian and historical than literary merit. Professors Renier, Halecki and Niebuhr wrote thoughtful works on the nature of history and its practice. Charles Morazé pursued his bold and original reinterpretation of recent history in terms of demographical and economic categories. A noble monument by Father Dvornik on the making of central and eastern Europe made its unobtrusive appearance.

Several elegant biographies appeared of a now familiar type, of which the most informative was that of the Victorian worthy, Monckton Milnes, by James Pope Hennessy. This was followed by several studies of the eighteenth century with publication of hitherto unfamiliar private papers of which the most sensational was the lately discovered London journal of James Boswell. The

life of Florence Nightingale by Miss Woodham Smith captured the public imagination. Bernard Berenson summed up a lifetime of critical experience in *Aesthetics and History*. Sir Osbert Sitwell added a charming pendant to his autobiography. Freya Stark, Wyndham Lewis, Sir Arthur Keith, Geoffrey Grigson, Mrs Franklin Roosevelt and Benedetto Croce wrote their reminiscences. Richard Aldington wrote the life of D. H. Lawrence and Louis Fischer a ponderous work on Gandhi. But these looked back to an older world. The public was reminded of the great distance which the world has travelled by the deaths of such great pillars of a civilisation, now oddly remote, as Bernard Shaw, General Jan Christiaan Smuts, Léon Blum, Henry Stimson, the composer Richard Strauss, the dancer Nijinsky and the actor Emil Jannings. Even the world of those who died at an age less ripe – the gifted, gay and versatile dilettante Lord Berners, the notable socialist Professor Harold Laski, Sinclair Lewis, who invented a famous literary genre – seemed cut off from contemporary life, and to belong to an almost golden age of audacious new directions which turned out to lead to reputable but hardly startling goals. Only George Orwell, the most incorruptible of all modern writers, who died in the beginning of the year, was thoroughly contemporary in the feeling and content of his remarkable satires and essays. His writings have made a genuinely deep impression on the younger British and American intellectuals, and his influence, both literary and political, in large part, perhaps, because of the moral severity and rigid integrity of his personal life, seems likely to have a lasting effect.

Meanwhile Agar, J. F. Dulles and Stringfellow Barr brought the lessons of history to bear upon the issues of our day in a large style, and based on presuppositions, which in Western Europe seemed no longer to be accepted.

IX

The poetry written during the year was neither better nor worse than that of other years, but on the whole less memorable; among the old masters, Walter de la Mare, Ezra Pound and M. Supervielle published volumes of verse. Among the newer poets, Barker, Gascoigne, Montale and Ungaretti made some mark. But the most acclaimed works of this period were both works of poetic drama: T. S. Eliot's *The Cocktail Party* and Christopher Fry's *The Lady's Not*

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For Burning. The first achieved great popular success on both sides of the ocean. It offered little new light upon Eliot's outlook but it was widely recognised as an ingenious and impressive translation of his social and religious principles into the medium of drama. As for Fry, his verbal felicity was conceded by the sternest critics to be of an uncommon order but he opened no new window, created no arresting new genre; nevertheless upon so flat and unimpressive a scene it was a performance of scintillating virtuosity, and sprang from a thin but genuine vein of talent.

X

In the world of music much was written that was both agreeable and competent; apart from the performance of the posthumous works of Bartok, and the latest works of such established masters as Hindemith and Vaughan Williams, nothing appeared to mark the year; Stravinsky, Prokofiev, Poulenc, even Benjamin Britten remained relatively silent. In place of creative music there was a notable rise in the standards of performance and of critical interest. the growth of love for serious music among sections of society hitherto contented with musical banalities, or jazz, or nothing at all, was truly arresting. The exceptional number of musical festivals in Europe alone testified to the fact that a more widespread interest in music was probably taken at this moment than at any previous period in history. The festivals of Salzburg, Lucerne, Aix-en-Provence, Siena, Perugia, Venice, Besançon, Edinburgh, Glyndebourne (and, in the US, of Tanglewood, Mass.), and above all the Prades festival, organised round the violoncellist Pablo Casals, by far the greatest instrumental player of his age, and dedicated to the memory of J. S. Bach, who died two hundred years ago – as well as many less known, but no less devoted, musical celebrations – provided a great enrichment to the world of pure art. The year was marred by the death of the Romanian pianist Dinu Lipatti who, still in his twenties, was a lyrical genius of the first order.

XI

The great creative impetus which produced the remarkable Italian films of previous years seemed to be, not indeed exhausted, but running at a lower ebb. The best films, and none of these were of

lasting value, were made, as so often, in France. The first classical culture of that country proved still the most solid framework for the arts. In literature, music and painting, if it produced nothing notable, it did not lower standards. Picasso alone, in his new light-hearted genial mood, produced work of wonderful gaiety and imagination. He painted ceramics, he published lithographs of satyrs and nymphs on sunlit rocks in Provence, he quarrelled with England for failing to admit his Communist friends to its shores, and paid England back by refusing to allow his work to be exhibited in London, and by designing the ‘dove of peace’, which became the emblem of pro-Soviet feeling on the eastern side of the ‘iron curtain’.

Politics played a greater part in art than ever before. [xxxix] Creative artists of all kinds were deeply committed to both sides of the great East–West controversy; they took part in the congress dedicated to the freedom of culture held in Berlin and critical of Soviet methods, and they were involved in the counterstroke in the form of the ‘peace’ congress summoned originally to meet in Sheffield but finally shifted to Warsaw owing to the inability of many delegates to satisfy the British immigration authorities of their peaceful intentions. In general, metaphysical and moral considerations dominated in the world of art and letters at the expense of aesthetic and ‘formal’ or frankly hedonistic tendencies. The mood was of the kind that Tolstoy would have approved: preoccupied with tormenting doubts about the ends of life, which entered into considerations of every issue – whether centenary reappraisals of Wordsworth or R. L. Stevenson in England, or the historical studies in Germany (where only the very old and very grand – Alfred Weber and Friedrich Meinecke – were not engaged on apologias of German nationalism), or the metaphysical writings of French and German philosophers.

XII

In philosophy, indeed, the great chasm between, on the one hand, the clear, dry world of Anglo-American (and to some extent Scandinavian) empiricism, with its preoccupation with the importance of different uses of language in life and in the sciences, and, on the other, the darker and more personally anguished world of French and German religious or aesthetic or political metaphysics, was never deeper or more unbridgeable. Neither side

recognised merit in the other, and no interpreters appeared to explain these apparently disparate activities to the other camp. To the lucid prose-writers of the English-speaking world, the 'logic' of, for example, Karl Jaspers appeared at best as a deep, impenetrably dark, romantic meditation whose claim to be a treatise on logic bore no relation to anything which they might understand by this term. Nor did they with any greater degree of success grasp the import of the Gifford lectures of the French existentialist philosopher Gabriel Marcel, or the agonised *pensées* and fragments of Simone Weil. Doubtless to thinkers of this kind, struggling like so many Laocoons with cosmic issues on which they most suppose salvation in some sense to depend, the logical writings of such positivists as Professor Ryle of Oxford, or such logicians as Professor Quine of Harvard, must, in their turn, have appeared thin, arid and almost wholly pointless. As for that quasi-philosophical world in which literature has a common frontier with abstract thought – that unclassifiable no-man's-land between the two, whose condition serves often as the truest index of the vagaries of the zeitgeist – in that world formalism and positivism seemed to be yielding ground to a kind of neo-Romantic revival, in which criticism both of the arts and of life drew its inspiration from Dostoevsky, Kafka, Kierkegaard and the German Romantics, rather than the tradition of European enlightenment, with its emphasis on clarity, its reliance on accessible evidence, rational argument and secular values.

In the meantime the Communist writers on either side of the 'iron curtain' pursued their undeviatingly narrow path, heedless of all but the dogma to which they seemed attached with an ever growing intensity. The most gifted among them, the Hungarian Marxist George Lukács, made some impression when his literary studies appeared in the course of the year in an English translation. The world of art and of ideas seemed to be in a state of détente, possibly a trough before a splendid crest, but indubitably a trough. It was scarcely made more attractive by the sudden widespread popularity of television as a new method of mass communication; in due course T. S. Eliot gravely warned his English compatriots against this fatal American innovation as likely to destroy the last vestige of fastidious taste. Yet no fewer than 100,000 copies each of the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* were purchased in the US in the course of this same year. Matthew Arnold would certainly have abhorred

the use, if not the notion, of television; but at the same time he believed passionately in the educational value of the great classics. It is difficult to measure the progress and regression of civilisations: the facts must be left to speak for themselves.

XIII

The principal trends of the moment accurately reflected the social and political state of the world. There was too much uncertainty, too much fear and tension for either of two possibilities to be realised: either of a lyrical and imaginative escape from the repellent realities, as had happened during other periods of darkening skies; or, on the other hand, of a serious effort towards some realistic technique capable of restating the central problems (even if not their solutions) in a manner adequate to the new kinds of human experience. The works most characteristic of the year 1950, whether they were inspired by Communist or capitalist ideals, whether they were objective and positivist or personal and romantic, took forms which no longer fitted their relatively new content, and therefore made the result seem either lifeless or curiously ill-compounded – in the latter case an urgent, earnest but unsuccessful effort to speak in a medium which had conspicuously outlived its usefulness to an audience all too anxious to be told whatever there was to say by anyone who had something genuinely novel to express and had discovered, what was still missing, some method of effective communication. Never was the world more patently prepared for a new turn in the development of art and, indeed, other forms of thought and imagination, and never did the emergence of new forms created by, or at least appropriate to, the crucial moment seem so obstinately delayed everywhere – no less in Marxist than in non-Marxist and anti-Marxist societies.

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1951

I

Some Political Events of 1951

This section is probably a draft of an unpublished part of the contribution on 1951 that follows. It is based on an uncorrected carbon copy in Berlin's papers. Obvious transcription errors have been corrected, but some unclarities remain, and suggestions for further emendation will be gratefully received.

General MacArthur was dismissed on 11 April 1951, and arrived in San Francisco on 18 April. From the moment of his arrival, his procession through the US was a triumphal tour. Cities, states, legislatures vied in paying him homage. The Republican section of Congress succeeded in causing him to be invited to address both Houses of Congress on his return, and he did so – in a speech which even his opponents were compelled to describe as a masterpiece of political skill.

General MacArthur denounced incompetence, weakness and subversion in the administration, and became the focal point around which gathered all those who, from widely separated points of view, felt inimical to the policies or persons of the government of the US. The nucleus of his followers appears to be composed of those ex-isolationists who were still dominated by fear and distrust of Europe, looked upon the foreign policy of the US as dominated by fellow travellers, or at any rate persons anxious, for one reason or another, to appease the Soviet Union and to view its policies in a rosy light.

General Chiang was represented as the only real anti-Communist champion in Asia, betrayed and abused by those blind or politically subversive agents of the US who preferred to lean upon his left-wing enemies. General MacArthur was represented as a military genius and a stout-hearted patriot, recalled solely because he had had the moral courage to denounce the suicidal policies of the president and the Secretary of State. Senator McCarthy, who throughout the year was busily denouncing members of the State Department and other offices for allegedly following the Communist line, either now or in the past, went so far as to accuse the sacrosanct figure of General Marshall himself of having betrayed his duty during and after his China mission. This went too far even for those who were only too ready to make

as much political capital as could be made out of any well-delivered attack on the Democratic administration. But besides professional Republicans or bitter opponents of the party in power, the arrival of General MacArthur appeared to release a great deal of feeling long pent up against the administration for reasons very remote from foreign policy.

The Democratic Party had been in power continuously for almost two decades. The acute frustration which this in itself had created suddenly burst through its dreams and in the heroic figure of the splendid old soldier it found a hero, homage to whom was in itself an act of protest – an expression of the many real and imaginary grievances against Mr Truman's regime. Moreover, the undeniably romantic air of the general stood out as a patch of bright and brilliant colour in what had for too long been a procession of drab events in a country addicted to pageantry and heightening of the emotions.

General MacArthur found among his allies such out-and-out isolationists as ex-President Hoover, who lost no opportunity during this period to say that ground troops, at any rate, should on no account be sent to Europe; that Europeans, at any rate, could or at least should be in a position to defend themselves without a perpetual drain on American lives and treasury; in various ways this was echoed also by Senator Taft, who was known to have clear personal ambitions. General MacArthur did not, it is true, support this point of view: indeed, he made it clear that he favoured every means of stopping Soviet expansion, and was in favour of an aggressive policy of resistance and not isolation; nevertheless, he was the natural hero and champion of the anti-Truman front.

The swift conquest of China by the Communists lent plausibility to the view that the US administration had been guilty of the double crime of letting itself be hoodwinked by Communists posing as mild agrarian radicals, then, when it was too late, offering inadequate aid to the unfortunate Chiang. Chiang, indeed, became almost a Republican hero, and Senators travelling abroad made a point of visiting him and identifying themselves with his grievances and his claims. European countries, especially those in any case only too prone to look on the US as emotionally unstable and in the grip of mounting war fever, needed only to point to the cult of MacArthur as evidence for their

diagnosis. Conversely, those who favoured MacArthur found in this European attitude fresh evidence for the old thesis that the countries of Europe were ungrateful, corrupt, either too cynical or too frightened to resist Communist penetration, and in any case not capable of being successfully defended by American arms, which they did not have the spirit to use, and perhaps not worth defending or speaking to by a good, strong, young republic anxious to defend the enemies of all that had made it great.

Presently the administration struck back. Congress examined witnesses to uncover the causes of General MacArthur's dismissal. Mr Acheson presented the administration's case with an impression of thorough sincerity and skill; but as he was one of the many targets of attack, and inasmuch as his very appearance and background and origin stood for the values which the attackers regarded as most deplorably un-American, his testimony would not by itself have counteracted the far more formidable speeches of the General. The tide turned when the Defense Department – service officers – began to testify to their belief in the disastrous consequences of MacArthur's policies; General Marshall, the Secretary of Defense, and General Bradley, the Chief of Staff, finally placed their immense authority in the scale against the great recalcitrant; they denounced the policy of defensive war against the Soviet Union, which they conceived that MacArthur's plan would have made inevitable, and for which by implication he stood.

The situation was highly paradoxical. The bulk of General MacArthur's followers came from those who were opposed to foreign entanglements and who suspected the administration of carrying on the late President Roosevelt's, to them excessively warlike, policies. Yet this was what the general himself in some sense appeared to stand for. He declared he had no political ambitions, and that made him a figure to be set in sharp contrast with scheming and unscrupulous politicians. He denounced the present conduct of the Korean War, and that his Republican followers approved; he was the symbol of war against Communism, and that attracted to his side anti-Communists of all shades, and such powerful organisations as the American Legion and the Roman Catholic Church. Yet in some sense he stood for aggressive warfare; and that confused at any rate some of his potential supporters; moreover, the immense moral weight of such men as Marshall and Bradley disposed of the image of MacArthur

as being opposed only by politicians and left-wing intellectuals; and so, in the end, as the year wore on, this episode receded into the background.

The Korean War had not been lost; a general war had in fact been averted. The great armament orders had prevented such possible economic recession as might have caused international melees, prices were rising, and so to some extent were wages. Strikes occurred, but none of them too lengthy or crippling to industry; there was great prosperity in the land, greater perhaps than at any previous period; there was a good deal of political discontent, much suspicion, some of it evidently justified, of corruption due to the retention of power for too many years in the hands of the same interests, which had perhaps willy-nilly become infested; Senator Kefauver conducted a campaign designed to expose sinister collusion between politicians, police and racketeers of various brands. He had uncovered much general corruption. Government agencies in Washington were systematically exposed as harbouring men who behaved, if not always in a corrupt, yet often in a highly incorrect and disreputable, manner; Mr Truman's administration lost much prestige thereby; efforts to purify public life were held at times to be less energetic than they could be because of the president's passionate sense of personal loyalty to his own friends, some of them considered unfit for the offices they held.

Republicans and some Democrats attacked Washington as a sink of dreadful corruption; the president defended his administration with much force. There was doubtless exaggeration on both sides; but this mood, however politically prejudicial to the Democratic Party, did not contain that mixture of fear and despair in which strong men are raised to power by great waves of popular feeling. The US was too prosperous for Boulangism of this kind. It is true that the production of weapons, airplanes, tanks and the like under Mr C. E. Wilson reached those peaks which he and the president had foretold in a sanguine moment; on the other hand, consumer goods – cars and washing machines, refrigerators and television sets – had poured out with a prodigality never before seen in the history of the world. Food and clothing were produced in prodigious abundance; the backbone of the country – the farmers, industrial workers, the middle classes – were not dissatisfied. Scandal – symbolised by the mink coats worn by wives

of government officials as a result of their ill-gotten gains – caused excitement, disgust and indignation, but not the ferocious sense of injustice which leads to radical political changes. There was naturally much talk of the spiritual dangers of such unbridled materialism; nevertheless, it remained the cynosure of many wistful eyes in almost every other part of the world.

Apart from the scandals and the flurry caused by General MacArthur's return, and by Senator McCarthy's violent and vituperative campaign against Communists, who, according to him, infested every branch of the administration and indeed of national life, Mr Truman's regime was not seriously shaken by events at home. Inflation had to some degree been tricked. The hoarders of goods who had banked upon an imminent war found themselves foolishly overstocked with goods; the great stores lowered their prices in precipitous competition with each other, to the astonished gratification of the general public. The only serious clouds to be observed darkened foreign skies.

The two outstanding problems of the year were the troubles of the Middle East and of Germany. The Muslim countries of the Middle East still presented an almost ideal example of the orthodox Marxist model of countries on the eve of revolution. One regime was dying, another, brought in by imitation of technologically superior empires, was still waiting to be born. New economic enterprise had begun to break down in Persia, Iraq, Syria, Lebanon, Egypt; and, as a result of the influx into Palestine, in Jordan, too, the picture was much the same. A rich, corrupt, astute, traditionally semi-feudal ruling caste; a depressed, illiterate and largely starving peasantry; and between these a nascent middle class – merchants, factory owners, manufacturers of various types, and members of liberal professions, some risen from below, some emancipated from above, but for the most part frustrated for lack of opportunity to develop their skills, or live the kind of life of which their knowledge of more advanced civilisations had made them acutely aware. The dissatisfaction of this bottled-up middle section of the population poured itself into both Communist and international channels; and, if allowed to fester uncontrolled, would clearly soon overthrow the obsolete regimes of the pashas and their equivalents, with their ramshackle temporal alliances with this or that centre of power – the army or religious heads – much as they had done in the Balkans and indeed in Russia herself.

The Soviet Union did not need to do very much beyond general encouragement of this natural process – both nationalism and Communism were natural centres of xenophobia and resistance to the West, much exacerbated by the triumph of the state of Israel, which embodied sophisticated, alien, Western ways of life, and was a strong symbol of a humiliating defeat of backward Arabs in the hands of scientifically trained Jews supported by American and other Western countries.

Wounded and bitterly resentful nationalism boiled over in Persia in the course of the year, when a Muslim fanatic assassinated the Premier, General Razmara, on 7 March in the name of national independence, which took the form of demands for the nationalisation of the oil which was Persia's chief economic resource, and whose control by the Anglo-Iranian Company was the bitterest stigma of national degradation and exploitation. After a brief interlude under a pro-Western premier, accompanied by somewhat unimaginative compromises by the company, behind whom the British government was conceived as a major stockholder by the Persians, the international hero Dr Mossadeq took office as Prime Minister on 29 April. Full nationalisation was decreed on 2 March, and after that a debacle followed. Dr Mossadeq was a picturesque figure who almost at once captured the half-amused imagination of the world public. He was (and is) a rich landowner of aristocratic birth, liable to weep uncontrollably at every emotional crisis; courteous, high-strung, shrewd, and exceedingly tough.

Dr Mossadeq presently declared his life to be in danger from Muslim bigots, for whom evidently he was not fanatical enough; reclining in a bed in the sanctuary provided by a room in the Persian parliament, he declared himself unalterably opposed to any concessions to the oil company. The oil was Persia's birthright: she must possess and control it all. The British government took some time to realise with whom it was dealing. During the previous dispute, satisfactory compromises had as a rule been reached. The British government laid its case before the Hague International Court, which issued an injunction freezing the status quo. The Persians denounced the Court, declined to be bound by its jurisdiction, and refused to retreat before the British threat to move out, bag and baggage, with their experts and their tankers,

leaving the greatest oil refining industry in the world to be managed by the incompetent natives of Iran.

The US did its best to mediate between Persia and Britain. The case, it was thought in Washington, had not been too competently handled during Mr Bevin's illness, and Mr Morrison, who succeeded him as Foreign Secretary in March, did not seem to handle it any better. Mr Harriman was sent to Teheran to mediate; Mr Richard Stokes, Lord Privy Seal, was sent at the head of a British mission to negotiate with the Persian government. Concessions were made by the British, condominium was offered, and after that more was conceded. Dr Mossadeq wept, fainted, but remained adamant, and was cheered violently by great throngs of his countrymen who felt the day of liberty was dawning at last. Dr Mossadeq journeyed to Lake Success to lay his case before the Security Council, but all that happened was that the dispute was adjourned. The US refused economic help to a country so perversely intent upon damaging the interests of the West; nor was it prepared to put such pressure on Britain as would give Dr Mossadeq the whole loaf. It was pointed out to him by Mr Harriman in Teheran that he was only accumulating grist for the Soviet mill, represented by the Tudeh Party; it was reported by Mr Harriman's oil advisor, Mr Walter Levy, that Persia did not hold a monopoly of world oil and would lose far more than she gained by making life impossible for her British specialists.

Dr Mossadeq throughout behaved somewhat like a powder barrel or a bomb. If pushed too far he might explode and ruin others – the West – in the Soviet holocaust which this might bring about; the Persian frame of mind seemed to be that of people humiliated too long by a foreign domination and therefore not to be talked out of the shining goal of liberty and independence by larger considerations of world stability and prosperity or peace. It behaved like a child that had been cheated too often out of what it had set its heart on by appeals to extraneous and irrelevant issues; it might be that stubborn nationalism might lead to economic ruin and consequent collapse and disappearance into the gaping jaws of the Soviet Union – that must be for the West to worry about. Persia had no choice but to seek its liberty from an intolerable yoke.

Dr Mossadeq in effect warned Western statesmen not to irritate him beyond endurance; he explained Persia's strategic position to

the fullest. He drove British and American statesmen to despair by his mixture of charm and refinement with blind obstinacy and exasperating nationalism; on his way he was greeted in Egypt as a conquering hero, as a champion of the Muslim world against the old imperialist oppressor, although he was coming home with empty hands. The British experts withdrew from Abadan in safety, after much talk about having to be rescued by warships, and a demonstration of strength. The oil flowed uselessly and was wasted.

Mr Churchill and other Conservative leaders duly denounced the Labour government for ignominious withdrawal, deplorably damning alike to the pride and the standard of living of Great Britain; the Tudeh Party, despite occasional clashes with the Nationalists, appeared far from displeased with the recent development. There were demonstrations of hysterical gratitude to the Persian statesman who brought about the disappearance of the hated alien invader. Persia was free but in a state of economic chaos and far poorer than before.

In this condition the year ended. Meanwhile the neighbouring Iraqis saw no reason why they too should not obtain concessions from the Iraq Petroleum Company, and this time the oil company hastened to comply. Iraqi directors were created, the royalties of the Iraqi state greatly raised; King Ibn Saud made demands upon the Aranco Company, which holds monopolies in Southern Arabia; the sultans of the Persian Gulf in their turn extracted higher rates from their concessionaires. The Arab world was plainly going to assert itself. Syria and Israel had a prolonged clash with the Huleh concession, and both complained to the Security Council, which on the whole spoke more severely to Israel than to the Syrians, although it upbraided both and instructed its Conciliating Commission to patch things up; this it failed to do, but after a time the quarrel appeared to expire from natural causes.

Nationalism, partly stimulated by the discontented embryonic middle class, led to violence elsewhere. After the assassination of a Lebanese statesman in Jordan, the celebrated King of Jordan, Abdullah, was murdered as he was about to enter a mosque in the Arab section of Jerusalem. This was plainly stimulated by the opponents of his traditionally pro-British policies, and his relatively moderate and tolerant dealings with even so detestable a foe as

Israel. His murder was punished, but the son who succeeded him was clearly less good-humoured and judicious than his father.

Meanwhile national sentiment in North Africa had succeeded under British auspices in creating the new federated state of Libya, consisting of three provinces governed by the King of the Senussi, Ibn Idris. Egypt, which had long smouldered with violent anti-British hatred, finally, after much rumbling towards the end of 1950, denounced the 1936 treaty upon which the presence of British troops guarding the Suez Canal, and the Anglo–Egyptian government of the Sudan (established in 1899), rested, and, inspired by the example of Dr Mossadeq’s successful intransigence, and perhaps by the manner in which the state of Israel had come into being in the teeth of almost universal opposition, and consequently refusing to listen to British arguments, provoked an incident by detaining and searching a British ship, the *Empire Roach*, in the Suez Canal, on the plea that it was carrying goods for Israel, denounced the US for its ostensible support of Britain, and, amid rising popular fury with all foreigners, attempted to seize control of the British military installations in Suez.

This attempt was arrested by force and led to some bloodshed. Nevertheless, the Egyptian resistance did not possess the stamina of the Persian; and towards the end of the year visibly began to crumble. The King, having allowed the passions of his subjects to exhaust themselves, appeared in the mood to restore order by some species of compromise with Great Britain, who alone, with the US, would protect him from possible Soviet invasion. Apart from Israel, where the mid-year elections restored the anti-Soviet Labour premier Mr Ben-Gurion to power, and which seemed in no position to control its own left-wing and nationalist zealots, Turkey was the only power upon which the Western nations could rely in the Eastern Mediterranean. The scheme for Middle East defence was devised to be shared by the Western powers – the US, Britain, France and Turkey – and a place of equality in it was offered to Egypt, which could surrender Suez to this federated body rather than Britain alone. Iraq and Syria seemed to favour such a bulwark against the Soviet Union, but Egypt sharply and haughtily refused, and Cyprus seems now the likeliest seat of the United Middle East Commission, the equivalent in the Western

Mediterranean, as it were, of the great NATO organisation of the Atlantic Powers.

Violent nationalism and defiance of the old imperialist masters was a safety valve which no Middle Eastern government, except in the very primitive states such as Yemen or Saudi Arabia, could afford to dispense with; but the social and economic causes that created the tensions which exploded in this manner were clearly not to be cured by mere displays of national pride and independence, and it became increasingly clear as the year developed that unless some opportunity for effective social development, satisfying the ambitions of the frustrated young men, could be provided to fill the vacuum created by the collapse of the old forms of imperialism, and the decay of the feudalism which had lived with it in a queer and disreputable alliance, the Marxist prophets would sooner or later turn out to be right and social revolution against the West, and of political profit to the Soviet sphere alone, would transform the Eastern world. Consequently, more and more began to be heard in the West about the necessity of exploding this bomb harmlessly and compatibly with the interests of the democracies, by radical transformation of the decrepit little Eastern regimes rather than a hand-to-mouth policy punctuated by national outbursts of increasing violence, until the final eruption likely to bury all that is generally progressive in the Middle East under its ruins, as had happened in the Balkans and parts of the Far East.

II

One of the most notable characteristics of the literary and artistic scene during the year 1951, not merely in Western Europe but beyond its confines, was the revival of religion, in the widest as well as the narrowest sense of the word, as a central issue of discussion. Historians of opinion have often noted the fact that periods of doubt and scepticism, of criticism and analysis directed against the dogmatic certainties and orthodoxies of previous periods, are as a rule followed by new periods of faith and irrationalism.

But as a rule the ages of faith are to some degree also those of reason; there is a dominant opinion, there is also an opposition; during the ascendancy of sceptical rationalism, the voices of anti-rationalist faith are never wholly silent, and, during the rise of

orthodoxy or emotional abandonment to ideals conceived as either above or at any rate beside empirical or rational enquiry, are seldom allowed to occur unchallenged but are compelled to run the gauntlet of what is usually described as radical or left-wing opposition.

Nevertheless, during the year, it appeared almost as if the rising preoccupation with religious or quasi-religious – metaphysical and eschatological – issues was becoming almost a monopoly. Who were the most discussed authors in Western Europe in the course of the year? In England they were, among the novelists, Evelyn Waugh and Graham Greene. These were authors noted not merely for the fact that both were members of the Roman Catholic Church, but because the issues with which they dealt were concerned with specifically religious problems and provided by them with specifically religious solutions. Indeed, the popularity of Graham Greene – his novels, stories and articles for journals – or of broadcasts and films directly or indirectly founded upon his works seemed to derive as much from the issues with which he dealt as the purely literary skill and depth with which he dealt with them.

Similarly there was interest in the work of Herbert Butterfield, because he was an avowedly Christian historian who discussed historical and metaphysical problems which occupied the thoughts of many persons; and this was one of the most powerful causes of the continued interest displayed in Europe, and far more deeply in the US, in the views and writings of Arnold Toynbee.

Among poets and essayists, T. S. Eliot occupied an easily pre-eminent place, again perhaps as much because in his essays and last plays he dealt with what were to him the most fundamental issues – the condition and destiny of the individual soul – which now after many years had become a topic which captured the intellectual imagination of the general public to a greater degree than at any time, perhaps, during the last two centuries. Some among the most distinguished literary critics in England – C. S. Lewis, Lord David Cecil, Basil Willey – were writers, if not on religious topics, at any rate with much implicit religious feeling. Even the purveyors of lighter forms of art – the popular playwright Christopher Fry, for example – found themselves treating religious issues not so much because of any obvious pre-occupation with them as because of a sensibility of the currents of

thought and sentiment, a natural inclination responsive to the nature of the public interest of the times.

In France the works of François Mauriac had long been the centre of growing interest and fascination: his articles in *Le Figaro* had about them a magistral quality possessed, perhaps, by no other public prophet; and the mere fact that he was able to denounce Jean Cocteau's last play – *Bacchus* – as heretical, and formally to read the author out of the Church, was an event scarcely conceivable in the France, let us say of twenty years before. It seemed almost as if with André Gide and Paul Valéry the last great secular voices of France had ceased to speak; for Paul Claudel, their great Catholic friend and violent opponent, had won; Cocteau replied to Mauriac in a tone certainly as serious as that in which his religious views had been impugned. It is scarcely conceivable that such an exchange on such a topic could have occurred, with such solemnity, between, say, Valéry and Charles Péguy. Yet Mauriac was able to thunder; Cocteau replied with great earnestness and dignity; the public was profoundly interested. And although the Existentialists, who still to some degree dominated the literary and intellectual scene, were by no means all formal adherents of established faiths, yet even the atheistical Jean-Paul Sartre or Simone de Beauvoir dealt with the human predicament in a sense which nearly touched the attitude of those to whom metaphysical and religious issues were of the deepest concern. And this, of course, was even more true of such religious thinkers as Gabriel Marcel, one of the most widely admired of French *penseurs*.

It is what Luther called the human abyss that was the central topic of the most prominent writers of France, and those who did not deal with this – say Valéry or Jean Giraudoux, or even the celebrated Alain, who died in 1951 – seemed more out of date, less relevant to contemporary discussion, than Pascal or Renan or Péguy. The plays of Marcel, the plays and philosophical essays of Sartre and Albert Camus, the philosophical essays of such writers as Jacques Maritain or Jean Wahl and Kojève, the interest increasingly taken in the Russian theological essayist Nikolay Berdyaev, or the Jewish theologian Martin Buber, the brooding presence of Martin Heidegger and Karl Jaspers, and behind them the greater figures of Nietzsche and Kierkegaard, dominated

French intellectual circles to the relative exclusion of older liberal and humanistic writing.

Against this, virtually the only voices which were raised loudly were those of the Communists, who, unlike the more rationalist Marxists of an earlier day, preached a fanatical counter-religion of their own. The celebrated Gallic spirit – secular, detached, humane, sceptical and concerned with the empirical facts and the lives of men on earth – the spirit of Voltaire and Diderot, of Michelet and Taine, of Flaubert and Proust, seemed temporarily in abeyance. Socialism, liberalism, rationalism had won their victories and become absorbed into the texture of normal experience and lost their cutting edge. The wave of metaphysical spiritualism seemed to have engulfed all or at any rate much of what was most gifted and expressive in France, or temporarily obscured from view other tendencies which might have been stirring.

In the US, a similar phenomenon was observable. The writings of W. H. Auden and Reinhold Niebuhr enjoyed a great vogue; it was the saintly life and faith of Albert Schweitzer, not his music, that was mainly responsible for his sudden vast celebrity in America; novels which dealt with religious subjects, at all levels of artistic skill, seemed assured of wider circulation than those concerned with almost any other topic. Such an indicator of popular taste as *Life* magazine contained a greater proportion of writing on religious and metaphysical topics, supplied now and then by Waugh and Greene, and less directly by the mild humanism of F. S. C. Northrop, than it would have done, say, a decade earlier. An attack on Yale University for alleged deficiencies in its religious instruction assured its author greater fame than the treatment of any social or political topic.

This was naturally added to by the fact that, on the continent of Europe, the parties which held power, in Germany and Italy, for example, and entered into the coalitions which governed France, were avowedly religious, as they could scarcely have been fifteen or twenty years earlier; and this fact, which in certain respects resembled similar political developments during the nineteenth century, differed from them in that the anticlerical opposition in the West did not seem to possess that ancient vehemence which served to throw the issue into such violent relief during the great kulturkampf battles in France, Germany and Italy in the last century.

This growth in the religious outlook did not, as in the past, take the form either of the consolations of religion supplied to a distraught and despairing generation which had found its older values too easily flouted and overthrown by the brutality and moral cynicism of the day, nor yet of some rigorous hierarchical discipline offering a strong and secure asylum for those who found it difficult or impossible to withstand the chaos and fury of the world by their own unaided resources. Although the religious revival might indeed have had one or both of these effects, the form which it took was something relatively new, and owed more to Dostoevsky than to the orthodox doctrinaires of any of the Churches. For what the books and essays and plays and histories of the return to Christianity tended to stress was the seamier side of life, to paint with a realism as grisly and violent as any employed by the 'slice of life' writers of an earlier, more atheistical generation the least attractive aspects of social relationships and individual experience.

In a sense, this attitude was the successor to, and no less sophisticated and 'highbrow' than, the two other great movements which had dominated modern times – psychoanalysis and Marxism. And like them it conveyed to its followers the impression that it too was cutting through the mere surface of the phenomena to the hideous depths below, which must be faced because they were real, because they existed, and exercised an influence more decisive upon the course of human life than the more superficial phenomena which composed the worlds of science or common sense. And in the very chaos, irrationality and violent malformations and morbid growths which were thus rendered patent to the shrinking eye of the unhappy but fascinated observer, they discovered not the inexorable laws of psychology nor the inevitable laws of social development, nor the material for any other positive science, but the inscrutable workings of God.

In a sense this was the modern theodicy which, by stripping away the rationalisations and other constructions both of the intellect and of the imagination with which human beings had sought to screen themselves from the truth, sought to discredit reason and empirical methods in order to make room for faith as alone being strong enough to discover meaning and purpose in the abounding folly, weakness and vice which any unflinching analysis was bound to reveal in the contemporary scene; to restore faith in

God and the spiritual government of the universe by making the light shine out of the darkness; the more inspissated the darkness, the brighter by comparison the saving light without which the darkness could not be judged or described or analysed at all.

It was a sign of the times when so 'progressive' and avant-garde a publication as the *Partisan Review* in New York City, for instance, devoted itself to the examination of its writers' attitude to religion and printed the works of Jaspers. To any observer dispassionately considering the artistic and intellectual scene of 1951 – when Henri Matisse completed his murals in Vence chapel, William Faulkner wrote a novel with a religious motif, Gian-Carlo Menotti wrote an opera (for television) on a religious topic, the newer popular films dealt with biblical subjects and the conversions of former Communists to the Roman Catholic Church became events of daily expectation – it appeared that this mood was not a simple 'escapism' after the disenchantment and failure of energy and morale resulting from the destruction wrought by the war, but sprang from some deeper cause, in this case perhaps the failure of misinterpreted psychologies or a belated reply to Marxism; for the Marxist movement had during the last twenty years been gradually changing from a characteristically critical, rationalistic Victorian doctrine, appealing to intellectuals – a sophisticated and elaborate theory, full of subtleties, and above all with a severely scientific tone – into the simple, dogmatic, fanatical faith, relying upon endless repetition of simple formulae and the worship of visible symbols of sanctity and power.

In response to Communism of this type, as practised in the Soviet Union, and imposed upon the satellites in a very crude and all too visible fashion, there was bound to spring up a counter-faith of greater complexity, refinement, psychological depth and artistic quality, in response to the freer and more many-sided and sensitive civilisation of the West. Traditional religion provided something far stronger and more genuine – and even more anti-rational – than the ersatz faiths of the 1920s and 1930s. What seemed certain at the moment was a continuing process of slow pulverisation of all intermediate positions – of all the older forms of liberalism, secularism and tolerant humanism – between the upper and the nether millstones of the rival religions which appeal to civilised mankind. The phenomena described were, of course, not necessarily symptomatic of the prevailing views of the

majorities of the populations of the Western countries; they represented at most the strongest tendencies of those literary and artistic elites which set the tone in such societies. But it is in this context that the literary and artistic life of the year 1951 should be surveyed.

III

The change of atmosphere from the first three or four decades of the century became peculiarly noticeable when contrasted with such works about the comparatively recent past as R. F. Harrod's biography of Lord Keynes and, even more, N. G. Annan's life of Sir Leslie Stephen, both of which appeared in the course of the year. In both these works a world is revealed whose principal ideals were the pursuit of knowledge, the contemplation of interesting and beautiful things for their own sake, the cultivation of personal relationships, personal sincerity driven to an almost fanatical degree, with, above all, avoidance of anything remotely savouring of the pursuit of worldly success, or of rhetoric, or of betrayal of private to public values in any form. Despite the fact that Keynes's world was in open rebellion against that of Leslie Stephen, it shared with it its sense of revolt against the accepted institutions of the great Philistine establishment into which they were both born, and both rejected in their various ways the religious and the political orthodoxies of their time for the values of private worlds and the cultivation of artistic and personal ideals. The death of André Gide, who was himself the high priest of a movement in France not dissimilar to this, in which the worship of beauty and of personal relationships and insistence on scrupulous sincerity and candour in both had taken the place of other social and religious values, served to underline the great distance stretching between the universe of that distinguished writer and the modern world into which he had survived. The year, too, saw the death of the essayist Alain, whose detachment and sceptical pacifism in their turn contrasted oddly with the new preoccupations of the contemporary generation in the major European countries.

In France such recognised and distinguished writers as Georges Duhamel and Jules Romains, as well as authors of the second rank such as Claude Farrère, Pierre Benoît and Paul Morand, continued to write; the works of Colette and Jacques Chardonne, as well as

those of Paul Valéry, Valéry Larbaud and André Maurois, appeared in collected editions, but it was not they who set the tone. This was done to a far greater degree by Mauriac, who was the most distinguished representative of Catholic orthodoxy in France; by Jean-Paul Sartre, whose play *Le Diable et le Bon Dieu* enhanced his already dominant reputation as the most ingenious, penetrating and significant writer in France, and perhaps in Western Europe – in the sense that all the most typical tendencies of the time seemed to be, at times perversely and deliberately, but always sharply, focused in his work, and presented to the public with exceptional professional expertise. He was the leader, quite apart from his specific philosophical point of view, of all those who, in contrast with anti-political revolt, writers of an earlier generation, preached the duty of total self-commitment – the necessity of taking up a position, however personal and individual, but nevertheless a position involving responsibility, in relation to the religious, the political, the social and metaphysical tendencies of the times. In this sense, Albert Camus in his new *L'Homme révolté*, although he was perhaps a better writer, clearly followed Sartre's intellectual leadership. So also Julien Gracq, despite his tendency to surrealism, nevertheless bowed sufficiently to the spirit of the times to make his latest allegory avowedly political. This writer rejected the Goncourt prize awarded to him, as a protest against literary academies and prizes as such, because they made for intellectual bondage and mediocrity, and stifled and corrupted much original enterprise.

This mood, sometimes earnest and almost hopeful, at other times cynical, preoccupied and engaged in emphasising the hopeless and often revolting aspects of the contemporary human tragedy, was seldom one of desire to withdraw from the scene. The inevitability of involvement was, in France, stressed explicitly or else automatically taken for granted. In this atmosphere, charged with the sense of the importance of social and political reality, the works of Victor Hugo were duly rediscovered and overpraised; the German Romantic philosophers who were themselves preoccupied with political issues, such as Hegel and Fichte, were being studied afresh. The darker living German metaphysicians such as Jaspers and Heidegger, continued to exercise a considerable influence. What was conspicuously lacking in the realm at any rate of belles-lettres was the traditional French

‘classical spirit’ – lucid, ironical, detached, critical, intellectually firm, free from the clouds of tormented emotion and the mixture of mysticism and metaphysics characteristic of the Germans, and scarcely able to articulate its broken vision by means of that luminous measured prose which had once been the glory of France. Such elegant trifles as those published by Louise de Vilmorin, or the poetry of such writers of genius as Paul Eluard and Jules Supervielle, or such plays, still within the classical French tradition, as those of Jean Anouilh, could scarcely be said to have secured the continuity of French letters. The central current remained dark and turbid. The only great author apparently untouched by it in France was André Malraux, who did not produce an original work in the course of the year to compare with his magnificent masterpiece, *The Psychology of Art*, of two years before.

The situation was somewhat different in England, which retained a greater degree of continuity with its own sane and sober past. Despite the impact made by Graham Green’s *The End of the Affair*, which dealt with the themes, now common in the work of this author, of infidelity, corruption and salvation by faith (the novel curiously resembled the earlier formulas of Ernest Hemingway, save that for Communism the Roman Catholic faith is substituted), there appeared a number of civilised and agreeable novels by Nancy Mitford and Enid Bagnold, Hester Chapman and Julia Strachey, L. P. Hartley and Anthony Powell, a more considerable work by Victor Pritchett, a novel by J. C. Powys in his accustomed strain, as well as one by Ivy Compton-Burnett, who pursued her thin but pure vein of gold, in apparent detachment from the gusts and waves of the contemporary zeitgeist. It was not a time of great imaginative masterpieces. As for poetry, W. H. Auden published his *Notes*, and a poem entitled ‘The Chimeras’, which gave renewed evidence of his magnificent gifts.

The stream of autobiographies and memoirs continued unabated. The most interesting among these was Stephen Spender’s *World within World*, in which, with his accustomed candour, slowly, and without elegance, but with a direct vision of the object (which he possesses almost uniquely in the modern world), he described his youth in the literary and artistic world of the 1930s. It was perhaps the best book yet produced by this

distinguished poet and critic, and was widely acclaimed and attacked for much the same reasons as similar confessions, for which Rousseau set the fashion, had been praised and assailed, and invariably survived the attacks of their detractors. Sir Norman Angell published the story of his life, and thereby of a world which now seemed remoter than that of the eighteenth century. Katherine Mansfield's letters to her husband, J. Middleton Murry, saw the light during the year, and also wore the air of extreme remoteness. Nicolas Nabokov, the composer, published a delightful book of partly social, partly musical reminiscences, and his cousin, the most brilliant of novelists and poets, Vladimir Nabokov, published an account of his early life in Russia and in England, with a gay, boldly original and sometimes acutely poignant virtuosity, which he alone possesses among modern writers. The correspondence of Paul Claudel and André Suarès was published in France.

Julien Green published the fifth volume of his *Journal*; a remarkable collection of essays on contemporary Italy, by the Catholic writer A. C. Jemolo, saw the light; Ezra Pound's *Letters* proved an extremely arresting commentary on the literary and spiritual issues with which they dealt; by comparison with this the collection of reflections by the ageing American Spanish *penseur* George Santayana appeared a trifle exhausted. Volumes of poetry were published by Walter de la Mare, David Gascoyne, Conrad Aiken, Robert Penn Warren and Robert Lowell. These were distinguished and sometimes beautiful, but made no new summer in the field of English poetry. Nor was the field of imaginative literature made wider by the latest works of the highly competent and readable Alberto Moravia or even by Carlo Levi, or by J. P. Marquand's or Faulkner's new novels, or the latest work of John Dos Passos, who continued along predictable and astonishingly conventional lines. There was greater life and originality in *La cometa* by R. Bacchelli, a still consistently under-estimated Italian novelist.

In Germany nothing of notable interest appeared; apart from the *pièces justificatives* of those who somewhat unconvincingly claimed to preserve their own integrity under the Nazis, and the half-apologetic literature seeking less directly to justify general German behaviour during this period. German literature seemed to have contracted into a thin and scarcely notable trickle. Ernst

von Salomon, an old pre-Nazi Fascist writer, produced a new work along his old violent, nihilistic lines, a standpoint which, however exciting its effect in the early 1930s, was not merely a symptom that the hysterical irrationalism of this type was not yet dead in Germany. Hans Carossa produced a slight but charming book. Ernst Curtius published a new volume of critical essays; these were sensitive and civilised, but added little to their author's already deserved reputation as one of the few critics of European stature. Mario Praz published a collection of characteristically brilliant but uneven quality; critical writings appeared in England by Frank Leavis, Percy Newby and Charles Morgan; and there was a collection of occasional pieces by E. M. Forster of charm, beauty and depth, which, because of the dearth of writings from his pen, was a literary event in itself.

In the US, Edmund Wilson, perhaps the most distinguished of all literary critics, published a collected edition of his comments on life and letters in the 1930s and 1940s, and there appeared a collection of essays by Lionel Trilling of striking interest and distinction. William Empson published one of his characteristically meticulous and original analyses of the language of poetry. In France Jean Paulhan produced an interesting essay on aesthetics. The celebrated novelist Sinclair Lewis died in the course of the year, and brought to memory a genre very different from the fashion of the day; as a writer he had long outlived himself. Eudora Welty and Truman Capote published novels which achieved excellence in a style which had become commoner in America than it was in Europe, in which technical perfection, a remarkable degree of professional skill and a sense of *métier* (which European writers all too often despise) did something to compensate for the absence of sufficient content to sustain so elaborate a vehicle.

In this respect, the *New Yorker* magazine (whose editor and founder, Harold Ross, a figure of great originality and life, died during the year) had created a new category of imaginative writing – its short stories were better built and better written than similar stories in Europe; they seemed to some to lack inner life, and indeed appeared often not to have quite enough to say; but their emergence as a specific literary genre was a phenomenon worthy of notice in itself, and did much to raise literary standards in all English-speaking countries from the chaos and boneless structure

into which the fear of formalism, which developed in the 1930s, had threatened to plunge young English and American writers.

IV

The drama was going through a singularly fallow period. Apart from such established figures as Sartre and Cocteau in France, only Christopher Fry produced anything fresh. He seemed very much the Edmond Rostand of our day – light, gay, melodious, elegant, skilful, perhaps trivial. His plays in rhyme seemed neither intended, nor likely to achieve, immortality; they contributed to the trend towards the formally pleasing rather than the profound, the shapeless and the original, as a kind of light foil to set off the preoccupation with religious and metaphysical issues among the more serious. The best of modern actors, Louis Jouvet, died in the course of the year.

Even in the Soviet Union this mood of marking time prevailed. No new novels or poems appeared to excite even the normal extravagant praise of the orthodox party critics. The official head of Russian literature Aleksandr Fadeev, was engaged upon rewriting his prize-winning novel, *The Young Guard*, in a manner designed to correct errors and suitably to emphasise the role of the Communist party among wartime partisans; the more eminent V. Kataev was also busy rewriting his older works, now discovered to be inadequate. The themes officially laid down for writers were those of the ‘battle for peace’, denunciation of warmongering in the West, aggrandisement of the Russian and Soviet past, and epics of industrial and agricultural reconstruction. Creative activity appeared to be quiescent over the wide area of the Soviet Union.

In short, the literature produced in the course of the year, apart from the clear religious trend, lacked well-defined characteristics; the nostalgia and controlled despair and consciously temperate realism, as well as violent escapes into fantasy and pornography, of the immediate post-war years seemed to have ended; good authors were writing well, and inferior authors badly – but each was treading established paths, without any sense of new beginnings; 1951 was not a year likely to be notable in the literary histories of the future.

There were new scholarly editions of Montesquieu and Chateaubriand, of Hölderlin and Goethe, a new edition of the forgotten scientist and mathematician and *penseur* of the eighteenth

century, G. C. Lichtenberg; the revision of the definitive edition of the works of Boswell was completed; Winston Churchill published two further volumes of his magnificent memoirs; Rear Admiral S. E. Morison continued his history of the naval war; much solid work was done on the papers and the life of Jefferson; an authoritative account of Palmerston's foreign policies was published by Sir Charles Webster; Austin Lane Poole published his long-awaited volume on English history from the Domesday book to Magna Carta; A. L. Rowse issued the first volume of his imaginative and scholarly survey of the age of Elizabeth; the end of the Austro-Hungarian empire was analysed with much learning by the German historians Hantsch and Muensch; Steven Runciman published the first volume of a history of the crusades; Bishop David Mathew published an elegant study of the age of Charles I, and B. H. G. Wormald a life of Clarendon; Julian Amery continued his life of Joseph Chamberlain; a number of scholarly studies of English literature during the Romantic age saw the light.

Two lives by Salvador de Madariaga and Waldon Frank, respectively, of the great liberator of Latin America, Simon Bolivar, were published to commemorate his centenary. Newton Arvin published the most distinguished of the many works which appeared to celebrate Herman Melville on the occasion of the centenary of the publication of *Moby-Dick*. The Italian counter-reformation received classical treatment in the hands of R. Quazzi. In Leningrad the distinguished but unfortunate E. Tarlé was compelled by the fiat of his Soviet critics to rewrite his life of Napoleon for the third time, in order to bring it into line with the prevailing dogma on the subject. UNESCO (the United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization) published an ambitious scheme for the production of a universal history, to be composed by an international committee divided into national subcommittees of historians – the resulting compilation to appear in various formats and successive abbreviations for the use of scholars, universities and schools of the world, in order to secure a uniform objective survey of history and counteract national prejudices.

V

A number of interesting biographies and memoirs appeared. Beside the biographies of Lord Keynes and Leslie Stephen, there

was a life of the humanitarian Labour politician Josiah Wedgwood by his niece, the gifted Veronica Wedgwood; there was a biography of Henry Irving by his grandson, and of David Lloyd George by his old friend and secretary of his cabinet Thomas Jones; the Duke of Windsor and General Omar N. Bradley published their memoirs, and Lord Sysonby, posthumously, his memories of three rulers. New and remarkable letters by Lady Hester Stanhope to a young man in whom she took an interest gave pleasure to a public for whom Arthur Bryant wrote his study of the English social and political scene under the Regency. There was a great outpouring of wartime memoirs, principally apologies for their activities in Hitler's regime by German diplomats; Herbert von Dirksen, E. H. von Weizsäcker, von Blücher and one or two other former minor Nazi officials sought to whitewash themselves and received condign treatment from the ruthless and unsparing pen of L. B. Namier.

An original and pungent set of lectures on American foreign policy by the US diplomat George Kennan made a deep impression: it held a plea for professional diplomacy as against the casual imposition of American ideals on peoples, and in situations, unsuited to them; it spoke in sorrow of the difficulties of democratic control of the process of conducting foreign relations. The diaries of James Forrestal, who had been US Secretary of Defense, contained much acute and controversial writing by a talented and very unusual man. A noble biography of the Swiss historian Jakob Burckhardt was launched by Werner Kaegi, and an interesting study of the young Ludwig Ranke was published by Von Laue. Edgar Lobel of Oxford published an exquisitely edited reconstruction of fragments of a newly discovered ancient Greek play; Sir Kenneth Clark published a beautifully written and justly admired work on the painter Piero della Francesca.

It was clear that the streams of pure scholarship were flowing once more. Long-term projects conceived on the grand scale were being launched, and an atmosphere of intellectual security and solid attention to detail prevailed. At the higher academic and intellectual levels there was an atmosphere of tranquillity for the first time since the end of the war.

VI

But by far the richest harvest was to be found in the field of music. The greatest event of the year was the staging on 11 September, in Venice, of a new opera by Igor Stravinsky, *The Rake's Progress*, whose libretto was composed in English by the English poet W. H. Auden, assisted by Chester Kallman. It was an occasion of great social brilliance, and attracted the kind of attention which a new opera by Verdi or Wagner used to receive in the nineteenth century. There was a general agreement that the opera was a masterpiece – the music was limpid, elegant and inspired, and possessed that peculiar magical quality which Stravinsky's best works had never lacked. It seemed as if this composer had begun on that phase of austere and luminous creation, compounded of a blend of exquisite, serene and ironical melody and a spontaneous and arresting new kind of counterpoint, which sometimes qualifies the late phases of great artists, when the sensuousness of their middle works is vanishing, and a noble, transcendent, life-giving gaiety takes its place.

The year saw the death in California of Arnold Schoenberg, the founder of the twelve-tone scale – perhaps the most discussed composer of the age. Schoenberg's works, from which an *opus postumum* was performed in the course of the year, never became intelligible to the general public, and his final value awaited the verdict of posterity. But there is no doubt that he transformed the musical consciousness of his time, and, abandoning the late Wagnerian romanticism with which he began in his earlier, central European, phase, he created a new musical language, a new framework within which a whole new art of expression came into being, and commanded the most passionate, and at times fanatical, devotion of his followers, among whom there were several composers of undoubted genius. Whether or not Schoenberg himself was a great composer cannot be decided save by those who recognise no other master. But no critic competent to judge musical works would easily deny that title to Bela Bartók, who was deeply inspired by Schoenberg, or to Alban Berg, the lyrical and dramatic composer whose best opera, *Wozzeck*, was, amid much acclamation by the musical world, programmed both in London and in New York City in the course of the year. Schoenberg had among his disciples, too, the noble and austere composer Anton

von Webern, the lively and interesting innovator Ernst Krenek, and many other musicians of varying gifts, temperaments and degrees of originality. Perhaps, like the composers of the Mannheim school of the eighteenth century, he was the cause of greater creative gifts in others than in himself; but his theories and his compositions, his gifts as a teacher, his self-denying devotion to his musical ideal, his very personality (about which there was hot controversy after the semibiographical sketch which, according to some, Thomas Mann had given of him in one of his last novels) created an abiding monument in musical history. With Bartók and Stravinsky he remained one of the greatest composers of the first half of the twentieth century.

There were a good many other musical events of interest and of value. There were two new works by Arthur Honegger, and a work entitled *Winter Campfire* – not heard in the West – by the still prodigiously creative Sergey Prokofiev; a dignified ‘morality’ opera entitled *The Pilgrim’s Progress* by the ageing British composer Ralph Vaughan Williams; and, by him also, a cantata, *Sons of Light*. Benjamin Britten, still the most talented composer of opera in Britain, conducted a performance of his *Billy Budd*, adapted by E. M. Forster from the story by Herman Melville. Like all the works of this musician, it overflowed with musical gifts, was at once original and echoing with eclectic reminiscences, and possessed exceptional skill in construction. Oddly enough, the Italian composer Shedins, apparently unaware of Britten’s plans, also wrote a *Billy Budd* a year or so before; and this story was, during 1951, adapted for the stage in two versions: in these matters the zeitgeist seemed to operate with an almost pedantic promptness.

The Italian-American composer Gian Carlo Menotti produced an opera written for television, entitled *Amahl and the Night Visitors*, a fantasy on the journey of the Magi. An opera entitled *Incognita* by the celebrated musical historian and composer Egon Wellesz was produced at Oxford, and astonished its listeners by the fact that it was not atonal, as had been expected. The Spanish composer Roberto Gerhard wrote a gay work entitled *The Duenna*; and the German composers were again singularly prolific. Werner Egk, Carl Orff, Hermann Reutter and Karl Amadeus Hartmann poured forth works with a copiousness worthy of Hindemith himself. A somewhat more interesting composer also continued to produce

work of remarkable lucidity and elegance – the German-Russian composer Boris Blacher, of whom much was expected. In the US new works were written by Roy Harris and the very gifted Lukas Foss.

Beyond the ‘iron curtain’, besides Prokofiev, there appeared twenty-four preludes and fugues for the piano by Dmitry Shostakovich. The unfortunate composer was once more called to order for incurable formalism and an unlucky inability to escape Western influences. The ancient war horses of the regime, Dmitry Kabalevsky and Herman Zhukovsky, produced routine works – the latter not without sharp political criticism. Czechoslovak music, which seemed promising both before and after the war, had been subtly flattened out by the new regime, and the spate of such works as *Hands Off Korea*, a *Cantata for Gottwald* and so forth were credibly reported to possess no musical merit. Somewhat exotic works, performed in Paris, by the Russian émigré composers Ivan Wyschnegradsky and Maria Scriabin (daughter of the celebrated composer Alexander Scriabin and presumably a relation of V. M. Molotov)⁵ left both the critics and public totally perplexed.

Interesting books on music were published: a posthumous volume by Schoenberg; authoritative studies of Schubert; and a collection of critical essays by Virgil Thomson, who, after the death of the gifted English composer and writer Constant Lambert, stood out as one of the most arresting contemporary critics of music in the Western world.

The greatest loss in the world of musical interpretation was the death of Artur Schnabel, one of the greatest musicians, and the foremost player of Beethoven, of his day. As teacher and player he possessed a moral and intellectual authority in the musical world which was equalled perhaps only by that of Pablo Casals.

The number of musical festivals in Europe and America was once again evidence of the fact that music, or at any rate the performance of it, was enjoying a flowering unlike that of any other art. Not only the great festivals of Edinburgh, Salzburg, Perpignan and Aix-en-Provence, but at least a dozen others both in Europe and America, were occasions for a great volume of music both old and new, performed with a quality which was steadily rising. A work entitled *Polyphonie X* by Pierre Boulez

⁵ [Molotov was born Scriabin, but was not related to the composer.]

evoked protests from the audience at the Donaueschingen festival – a rare occasion on which a musical audience was not sufficiently cowed by what appeared to it cacophony to give open expression to the violence of its sentiments. There was a festival in Tiberias of Israeli music. Behind the ‘iron curtain’ an opera composed by Paul Dessau, with libretto by Bert Brecht, was given in Berlin. This work, however, was condemned as insufficiently conformist.

Arturo Toscanini conducted a series of incomparable concerts in New York City. Toscanini’s style appears to have risen in his deep old age towards a luminous and transcendental ideal, and while the unique combination of absolute discipline, ceaseless electric tension, noble breadth and depth, and an almost superhuman freedom from self-indulgence had, if anything, reached an even higher level, the Italianisms – the fiery Italian rhetoric, the tendency towards the operatic – had altogether fused away.

The year also saw the passing of three celebrated conductors. The Dutchman Willem Mengelberg was once a singularly dynamic and vigorous figure in the world of music, but his collaboration with the German invaders of his country had plunged him into a disgrace from which he never completely recovered. Fritz Busch, with his brother Adolf Busch, belonged to a musically gifted German family; after raising the performances of the Dresden opera to a great height, he then performed the same services for the Glyndebourne festivals in Britain; without attaining to genius, he was a conductor of very great distinction. The third conductor to die in the course of the year was Sergey Koussevitzky, who conducted with all the charm and *douceur de vivre* of the Russia of the *ancien régime*. He made the Boston orchestra one of the best bodies of musicians in the world. Without attaining to the heights of a Toscanini or an Otto Klemperer, he conducted gracefully and delightfully, and with unparalleled pleasure to himself and his audiences. Nicholas Medtner, who died in March, belonged to this culture too. He was a Russian composer and pianist of singular sincerity and charm, whose gifts were less recognised than they deserved, and who was perhaps the last representative of the great Russian school of composition to which Nicolas Rimsky-Korsakov and Sergey Rachmaninoff still belonged, and from which Stravinsky and Sergey Prokofiev represented a bold and successful rebellion. During his last years he attracted the interest

of an Indian potentate who subsidised his concerts and founded a Medtner society to record his works.

While no specific, powerful new trend was discernible in musical composition, the variety, life and sheer quantity of composition was at this moment so great as to justify belief that there was beginning a musical renaissance, even if only of an Alexandrian and derivative, rather than a wholly original, kind. The US, with its 702 symphony orchestras, was in a unique position to commission and perform the works of the young composers.

VII

In the other arts there was relatively little to report. The Italian school of films, which two or three years earlier presented the most creative experiment at that moment in progress in the world, was worthily represented by the film *Miracle in Milan* (produced by Vittorio de Sica), which, like the earlier films of this school, was filled with progressive liberal humanism – a kind of artistic reflection of the liberal socialism of the Italian non-Communist left-wing intelligentsia.

Apart from a sensitive, and almost over-tragic, Swedish film based on Strindberg's *Miss Julie*, nothing appeared worthy of exceptional note, although a great standard of technical excellence now seemed assured in the major countries of the West, particularly in British documentary films. Perhaps the best of such films were the Swiss film *Four in a Jeep* and Jean Renoir's poetical *River*, the American *Death of a Salesman* and *A Streetcar Named Desire* translated the precise qualities of these plays efficiently and not altogether unmemorably into the medium of the screen. But the popular films of the year, responding to the religious trends, were such vast and tasteless shows as *David and Bathsheba*, *Samson and Delilah*, *Quo Vadis* and *Fabiola*, which precisely corresponded to the vast, harmless, religious novels and literary standards of the type of *The Robe* or *The Big Fisherman* or Francis Cardinal Spellman's *The Foundling*, deeply enjoyed by vast numbers of readers in the US and Europe.

VIII

The greatest show of the year was the Festival of Britain, in which an attempt was made to paint a national autobiography. The

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pavilions on the South Bank of the Thames river were built in what was for Britain a daring and elegant modernity; the use also of a decorative 'skylon' – a stylised lozenge pointing upward from the centre of the exhibition – was a worthy tribute to the uselessness and beauty of objects made for their own sakes. There were distinguished sculptures by Henry Moore and others to decorate the exhibition. The progress of the sciences and the crafts was recorded with some skill; there was an exhibition of sculpture in a portion of Battersea Park, and a number of minor musical festivals as well as that of Edinburgh celebrated the occasion. Ships carried microcosms of the exhibition to the coastal cities of the British Isles. But the most imaginative portion of the affair was the Pleasure Gardens in Battersea Park in London, which John Piper and Osbert Lancaster designed, and which provided a charming, ironical and delightfully witty evocation of the mid-Victorian period, when the original Great Exhibition, of which this marked the centenary, first came into being. The gloom of British post-war depression was genuinely lightened by the dash and style and brilliant colour of the gay pastiche here provided with such gusto, and a half-sentimental, half-ironical nostalgia. The performances in the two theatres of the Pleasure Gardens carried on this quality of sophisticated satire. The number of visitors was great; and with the celebration of the second millenary of Paris, which caused that city to make an elegant display of its own unique and unsurpassable qualities, formed two bright centres in an otherwise somewhat sombre day.

IX

It was a thin year in the visual arts. Expressionism and surrealism seemed enfeebled, and abstract painting and sculpture of various types appeared to dominate the field in a peaceful but not striking fashion. The greatest living painters were growing older, though not less productive, and genius seemed tardy among the young. Matisse completed the Vence chapel; Georges Rouault and Georges Braque were painting, but did not exhibit. The greatest of all, Pablo Picasso, still appeared to be in the state of marvellous gaiety and youthfulness, in which he had decorated clay and porcelain dishes, illustrated the *Natural History* of Buffon, painted satyrs on the rocks of the Riviera, and was obviously still launched

upon a sea of delights and fantasies which sprang from his own unique vitality and perpetually self-renewing genius.

In the US attacks were launched upon an alleged propensity on the part of American museums for 'left-wing' art – a paradoxical development, inasmuch as such cultural 'Bolshevism' is, of all forms of art, the most abhorred and persecuted in Communist countries.

X

In the sciences there was no spectacular advance although much progress was noted in mathematics. In medicine – notably in the field of antibiotics – scarcely a day passed but the hope of new drugs to cure ancient diseases was expressed both in general and in specialised publications.

New types of atomic weapons, particularly light missiles, suitable for use against troops in the field rather than cities and great installations, were reported to have been perfected in the US, and to have transformed the art of war.

XI

In philosophy the great chasm which still yawned between the empiricists and logicians of the English-speaking and Scandinavian countries, and the metaphysicians and quasi-religious thinkers and philosophical scholars of the German and Latin countries, continued to divide the two philosophical worlds as sharply as ever.

The more rigid forms of positivism were still melting, both in Britain and in the US, into a far more imaginative and sensitive, if not less empirical, instrument – and this appeared to be largely the effect of the oral doctrines of the Austrian philosopher Ludwig Wittgenstein, who died in Cambridge, England, in the course of the year, leaving disciples devoted to his memory and his methods to a degree of which no other philosopher of the day could boast. Wittgenstein had begun as a logician and the follower of Bertrand Russell, but at the height of his philosophical development altered his views, and practised a technique whereby more light was thrown upon some of the most tormenting problems of modern philosophy than the older and more mechanical methods had succeeded in doing. This new and more flexible method required

qualities of imagination and insight, and even a kind of poetical genius, which Wittgenstein himself possessed to a degree not shared by even his most gifted disciples. His teaching was the most fruitful contribution to the abstract thought of the day made by any single human being. His influence, powerful enough already, seemed likely to spread further, as a result of the vigorous proselytising activities of his disciples. Otherwise, though much competent technical work was published by positivists and their allies, nothing of exceptional importance emerged.

In France Gaston Bachelard wrote imaginatively in his own unique manner about the philosophy of science; Wahl continued his metaphysical reflections, influenced by both Kierkegaard and Jaspers. The metaphysical works of the German Romantics received renewed attention. A philosophical congress held in the capital of Peru merely served to underline the distance which separates such philosophical analysts as A. J. Ayer of London – perhaps the most lucid exponent of modern positivism – from such French metaphysicians as Gabriel Marcel, between whom there was scarcely any common ground for philosophical discussion, only some possibility of meeting in terms of social or political concepts which did not form the main interests of either of these thinkers.

In the Soviet Union the formal logicians, who in the guise of applied mathematicians had hitherto escaped the purges which had decimated other departments of knowledge, were finally, after two decades, attacked in their little enclave, together with the mathematicians proper. The practitioners of these abstract disciplines, which because of the relative lack of interference by the Communist party had, in the realms of both pure mathematics and mathematical logic, accomplished distinguished work in the past few decades, were informed that such formalism was highly prejudicial to the orthodoxies of Marxist doctrine. They were further informed that mere lip-service to the Marxist dialectic, and the conventional compliments to Stalin, would no longer be sufficient; they must transform their outlook radically, and bring their studies into line with the rest of the Soviet ideology. It was too early to tell whether or not this rang the final knell on the only independent abstract studies still pursued in the Soviet Union.

In chemistry a vigorous Marxist polemic against Western theories of valency was launched by the adherents of more

materialist models. It was difficult to tell how far this was due to party pressure, to anxiety to conform to the party's demands on the part of the scientists, and how far to genuine addiction to the material models of the nineteenth century on the part of Russian chemists who, brought up in the tradition, were relatively insulated from Western influences.

XII

The year ended inconclusively, with the issues of foreign policy dominating over the struggle between the political parties in the US; with the Far East still in flames, the Middle East in a condition of mounting upheaval; with fear of general war on the whole abated, but the general outlook, particularly in view of Britain's semi-bankrupt economic position, far from bright. The news of the death of Henri Pétain, of Fritz Thyssen, who had supported Hitler, and of former Crown Prince Wilhelm von Hohenzollern ('Little Willie') served to comfort those who looked back upon the past as to a brighter and securer day with the reflection that the confusions and moral delinquencies and great blunders of that time seemed to itself no less dark and fatal than the present to its inhabitants.

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