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Frogmore and the Fatal Woman

—J.S. GLASSCO

(This is the second of three selections from a novel)

Later, as he walked slowly about the gardens, picking his way between the uncertain borders of the paths, he weighed the importance of an air of mystery in a woman, of the fog through which one who possessed nothing but grace and maturity was seen as a veritable siren.

Women had always been for Frogmore symbols of the unknown, creatures existing in another dimension, beings to be either worshipped or scorned, but who kept their secret under all circumstances. Like Goethe's, his idea of woman was not drawn from experience: rather, he explained his experience by reference to it; it was to him one of the first elements of imagination, not a thing puzzled out, or which he remembered having conceived, but a part of his primitive conceptions which were coeval with memory itself.

Now, with this new example of its power to colour a simple morning reaction, he sought to probe its origin.

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The subject, he thought, opened up infinite possibilities. To trace this mysterious being back into the past, uncover her roots in mythology and folk-lore, follow her through her deifications, devilhoods, changes and confusions of sex, observe her emergences into poetry, art and fashion, and her sudden vanishings into obscurity, as she alternately advanced and receded with the ages, always turning up in some new masquerade when man sought to escape her by flagellations and austerities, tiptoeing out to offer a sexually-flavoured bonbon to his hunger for the timeless and unknown and so transform his mysticism into nympholepsy; and then, to identify her with his most spiritual need, to see her as the image of his own creation, the angel whom he adores, until, with her tendency to rise ever higher, she bursts like another Minerva into godhead again,—ah this, he thought, this would be something really worth while! He felt a glow of enthusiasm at the prospect of such a work.

"But first," he mused, "I must have some clear idea of just

what it is that constitutes the Fatal Woman,—even, if possible, some central figure to place in the foreground and with which to begin, some focal point from which will radiate the innumerable aspects and avatars of my subject, and to which I can constantly return: something to serve me as a Golden Bough.”

One thing was certain, however: he need not look for this archetype in English literature, with its tradition of the hermaphrodite heroine which ran unbroken from Rosalind to Becky Sharp.

As he sought once again to fix the elusive picture he had of his subject, she seemed to dissolve away, to become more and more a phantom, a creature of other men's imaginations no less than his own. Into this vague world he resolutely followed her.

At first, she seemed to make her debut, in literature at least, during the years that succeeded the fashion of Byronism. At once the successor and the complement of the Byronic Men,—the Sbogars, Belmoths and Rio Santos, not to mention the heros *à la Marlinsky*—she had the effect of an image set up by man only when he had grown either bored or really horrified by those faces he had made in the mirror. This view of her was borne out, it appeared, by the necessity of keeping her unexplained, shadowy and powerful as a poetic symbol: if for a moment her consciousness was entered, her divinity fell from her and she showed like a stuffed golliwog, like a ghost in a weird story with a scientific explanation at the end, and one was left with the same sense of emptiness that was reflected in the dry, tedious style of churchmen and theologians who have at last entered the consciousness of the mysterious God of man's creation. Was she, then, only another by-product of romanticism—with no claim to the fabulous history with which he meant to dower her? In that case, the field of his inquiry would be changed.

“What is romanticism, after all?” Frogmore asked himself. “Does it really explain anything to trace its attitude to Milton's Lucifer? For what is this terrible sensibility that has obsessed the world for a hundred and fifty years, this boundless preoccupation with self?”

An answer suddenly presented itself. Was it not simply a disease, the germ of which first showed itself in Rousseau, in his poor health as well as his famous ‘I am not made like any man I have ever seen’?

He had always found Rousseau both fascinating and unsympathetic. In this profound psychologist, who had first revealed the nature of the mind's constitution, and who, however false his evidence and his conclusions, had demolished forever the systems of Locke, Holbach and La Mettrie, he had recently discovered also the first self-conscious expression of the spirit he wished to trace. Timid, vain, greedy and treacherous on his own confession,—although it was for none of these reasons that he was somehow most repellent—the victim of hallucinations and persecution-mania, assailed, ridiculed and vilified wherever he went, he yet kept, in the face of universal obloquy and his own cowardice, the final conviction that he alone was inalterably *right*, and the rest of the world wrong—an attitude which, based solely on what Sainte-Beuve called his *entrailles*, had the air of something almost divine in its novelty.

If it was he who, as they claimed, had implanted the genius of reverie in France, and finally in all Europe, he had accomplished a tremendous work.

For the whole succeeding century had plunged into this new world of self, driven by its melancholy and its fear before the implications of that terrible Progress which had appalled all sensitive persons since Montaigne who, if he could have fixed a peg in the wheel of time, and stayed it where it was, would have done so willingly. *Weltschmerz* had descended on the arts like a blanket which insulated them from the world they claimed to reflect, and from beneath which came the moans and cries of a tortured sensibility which imagined the industrial revolution and the age of commerce as more dreadful than even they could be. The props of sanity gave way, the revolt against *Aufklärung* succeeded; and there were few like Schopenhauer—who however eloquently he wrote of art did not understand the passionate doubtings of the romantic spirit—who even attempted a synthesis by the inadequate and old-fashioned method of common-sense.

Was not romanticism, then, the triumph of the sick man, since he was more an individual by virtue of the disorder which isolated him and exasperated his nerves? Books came to be written by men frankly occupied by their digestions and the state of the weather,—two new factors of inspiration. How different from Dr. Johnson, with his insistence that neither illness nor the climate and any influence on a man's thoughts! And as for self-conscious-

ness, that telltale symptom of the romantic malady, how different were Rousseau and Gibbon! The former, with his bougies concealed beneath the Armenian costume,—the latter, with a hydrocele weighing as much as a small child, appearing always in fashionable small-clothes, and even writing to his friend Sheffield, ‘you may have observed, through my inexpressibles, a certain prominence . . .’ This contrast alone, in a pair of distinguished contemporaries, contained the essence of the whole intellectual divergence, of the whole conflict of the eighteenth century.

But Rousseau had won. He was a man whose malady did more than make an embarrassing display. Under its influence, he inaugurated an attitude; and his followers suffered also from a chronic invalidism, an over-awareness of their suffering.

“Yes,” thought Frogmore, “all art has been sick since then.”

But if the sufferer had come into his own, it had taken the supremely sick to make any mark: these were the neurotics, whose sickness was the lack of a personal identity and who, feeling themselves always outside life, projected themselves into dramatic characters, bisexualising themselves, seeking to feel they were alive by an exchange and confusion of gender. The romantic was, in fact, the true psychic hermaphrodite; and romanticism was well summed up in the music of Wagner, which with all its virtuosity of structure, its involved progressions like a suppliant’s on the steps of a shrine, its superbly animal sighs, gasps and entreaties, was only saying the same thing, over and over, a strange compound *Musikwort* that echoed and expressed the groundless yearning of mankind, but in such sensuous terms, and applying with such uniformity to the dispositions of both sexes, as to create in the theatre and concert-room an atmosphere of dazed and epicene longing, setting up mysterious tremors, filling the audience with trouble and a sense of transplantation.

“But I am being very foolish,” he thought, checking himself. “These considerations of sickness are beside the point. I am assuming an absolute of health, which is absurd. Health is surely no more than the condition in which a man can best reconcile himself with his surroundings, and if his age obliges him to dualise, or even to Proteanise himself, that is his defence. As for art, if it accomplishes the end of pushing back the horizons of experience, so much the better. In any event, let us return to the Fatal Woman, for I still feel, in spite of everything, her origins must lie deeper

than all this."

Once again he surveyed the gallery of these magnificent beings, trying to connect creatures like Swinburne's Mary Stuart and Turgenev's Marya Nicolaevna with the fabulous figures of antiquity.

Then, struck by a memory, he found and re-read the passages in Rousseau's Confessions dealing with Mme de Warens, that singular woman who sought to attach her friends by giving herself to all of them, and who, according to the writer, had made him her lover when he was twenty-two, to save him from self-abuse. As he read, the same doubts crept into his mind, until when he arrived at the account of the establishment at Chambéri, he stopped with the simple conviction that it was not true! The *ménage à trois*, so dear to the heart of this dreamer, was here described in a perfection that belonged to fancy alone: Madame, the elderly lackey, and Jean-Jacques, what were they but the constellation of mother, father and child, — with the child the rival, the successful rival, of his father? The situation was too charming, it was the work of imagination. That Rousseau had been his protectress' lover he had no doubt, — but it was not under such circumstances. "No," he thought, "it is already the Reveries of a Solitary. Mme de Warens, subject to such treatment, becomes a character of fiction. She is, in fact, the first modern Fatal Woman."

This discovery delighted him, for it cleared up his doubts of the Fatal Woman's generic relationship to the goddesses of paganism. The link between the myth and the fictional character was supplied, naturally enough, through the agency of a living person. He understood, too, the peculiar conditions under which such a person had always to appear in literature; she was the battleground of the kinetic urge of the creator and the static demands of art, she must keep her photographic likeness for the man, while being transfigured by the artist. Rousseau had accomplished this, though probably not to his own satisfaction, by considering her as a living being even as he spun his fancies around her, in the manner of an onanist; and the resulting figure had all the oddity, all the freshness and inconsistency of a 'person' new in fiction. He had, in fact, — as Proust had tried to do with Albertine, though with doubtful success — created a new type, presenting to his successors another of those triumphant solutions

of self-imposed difficulties by which art keeps alive.

But there remained many gaps to be filled up, in the years between Rousseau and the age of fables; during this period no more than indications of the geneology would be furnished, indistinct outcroppings in the stony tract of French classicism and the middle ages. Already, however, he had stored up a number of instances which had struck him with that sense of familiarity which was his only touchstone and by which he divined rather than judged. The character of *Chimène*, for instance, even more than *Rodogune*, was one of these; her relation to *Rodrigue* was sometimes more complex than the play required, and the speeches more unrestrained, — becoming so, oddly enough, in precisely those scenes which Voltaire and La Harpe complained of as being against the rules. This example, taken at random, gave him to hope that even behind the frosted glass of French classical tragedy one might discern the movements of nature as well as the attitudes of passion.

The Renaissance, he thought, would be more difficult. Michelangelo and Leonardo had served too well the automorphism of Pater and the decadents, and their whole period was now invested with a false character, charged with the stagy implications of the *Gioconda* smile. But all this could wait.

With Corneille, then, and with a side-glance at the Elizabethan *Vittoria Corombona*, with Tasso and Villon, the less fleshly aspects of chivalry and the mediaeval Courts of Love, and a closer examination of Tacitus' remarks on the ancient Germans, he would arrive once more at a literature of civilisation.

Although not well acquainted, as yet, with the authors of the Latin decadence, Frogmore believed that poets like Claudian and Statius would contain the necessary indications. He deferred a study of this epoch, as well as of the Church Fathers and apologists, in whose works he hoped to find the Virgin addressed with sensual nuances. As for Apuleius and Petronius, they were, it was true, innocent of any tendency to revere the figure of woman, but in them he had already recognised the tone of certain preoccupations, and understood that their cynicism, corruption and high spirits were the natural development from a more serious and impassioned age.

With Catullus, Tibullus and Propertius he was at home again, in the clear light of the Empire, observing that in *Lesbia*, *Delia*

and Cynthia the Fatal Woman had existed for each of them. Here passion, untouched by romanticism, religiosity or chivalry, and even going along with sexual inversion, showed its enslaving power: it was a power that could as easily have turned the same men into murderers or buffoons, instead of into doves with the strength of eagles, who, after each arching flight that brought a circle of horizons in view, sank down at last, fluttering gently to a woman's breast again.

From these poets, he took his way to the threshold of the Eastern mythologies.

But here he found himself suddenly at a loss. Through this tenebrous air, clouded as if by the fumes of incense and the smoke of sacrifices, loomed queer shapes that charged and faded into each other like figures of a nightmare, standing for primitive conceptions and obscure desires, Cybele, Fauna, Mylitta, Tammuz, Astarte and the various characters of Diana, — a fog from which sprang out, in a blinding light that was even more insupportable, the nudities of the Olympian hierarchy. From these origins of deity, where was hidden somewhere the aspect of the woman he sought, he turned away almost in fear! They were too vast and formless, and even if they had been explored and ticketed, he shrank from what could be no more than a superficial ordination. The fragments of a passage from Frazer recurred to him; 'So the story of Hippolytus and Artemis is no idle emblem of a mortal youth paying with his life for the rapture of a goddess' love; it contains a deeper philosophy of the relation of man's life and nature's: this Artemis, then is Nature herself . . . ' Yes, this was the unwedded goddess, cruel and promiscuous, who dwelt in the forests and knew neither anger nor mercy — Diana of the Woods, whom it was death to love or to refuse.

"No, no," he thought, "I can never penetrate these mysteries! I cannot bear to use the rational method, and desecrate, in these heathen deities, my own profoundest feelings: in short, I will not. And yet, if I don't treat this question of origins in a reasonable way, I shall be merely vapouring."

He remained sunk in thought, revolving this new problem, fighting against the conviction that his essay would never be written. He saw now that he was unwilling to bring any feature of his Fatal Woman into the light, that he would rather remain one of her worshippers than break the spell. Moreover, his approach to the whole subject was wrong, was that of an enthusiast

unqualified to judge.

He rose and paced the lawn gloomily. "I shall have to give it up," he told himself. "Better to leave such work to the scholars with their card-indexes." He remembered suddenly that Mme de Warens was 'maman'. The whole question had the stale odour of incest, nothing more.

He looked at the sheets of paper and his other preparations, feeling a mixture of bitterness and relief.

But the conflict set up in him by the clash of dream and reality had sharpened his faculties; his fancy, too, quickened by the strife, was still seething with images, from which in a flash emerged the idea of some proposed perfection that should contain them, some form where they would be displayed, controlled and perhaps come to life.

Hastily sitting down, he wrote four or five lines of verse at random, and in a moment was plunged in the work. An hour later the effusion was finished:

Trembling with hope, I implore you, mysterious woman,
 Wherever you are, — for that you live, I know —
 Cast off your veils, figure of Angelo!
 Step from a dream and take this ancient throne
 In a heart and brain and eyes that for the inhuman
 Have kept a furious need, a perennial place,
 Altars of worship, forgiveness and grace,
 Where Deity never comes to claim its own.
 Silent as stone, your body yet shall sing me
 The music of an immeasurable sea:
 So much I ask, so little need you bring me,
 Bearing as all your dower what all possess,
 The natural mystery of a nudity
 Where I may ponder and hope, nor seek to guess!
 It cannot be that you exist no longer,
 Type of the Beautiful that I admire!
 For I must embrace in you a holy fire,
 Draw from your loins and body what you allow,
 Drink for my thirst, assuagement of my hunger, —
 O Goddess of all my thoughts — no less, no less!
 Angel of my sleep, minister of my loneliness,
 Say, shall I tell you all my secrets now?

Three linked things I abominate as Saints do,
 The love of mastery, and cruelty, and malice, —
 And each I will adore in You;
 For I am of that lost company most perverse
 Who from their loathings have built a voluptuous palace,
 And in a ferocious lover embrace their Nurse!
 Beneath the divine tyranny of your mouth and eyes,
 Their furious angers and exquisite derisions,
 My soul should ripen and bear me superb visions;
 And my mouth, from knowledge of the curious hollows
 Behind your knees, and between your sheltering thighs,
 And where your Shoes leave the imprint of their laces,
 With marvellous influence of those sacred places,
 Should grow adept and musical as Apollo's!

And the song would be all of you, and of you alone,
 Unmingled passion where never a word discovers
 Behind the adored the Beauty not her own:
 Come, let me but love and worship you, — and for this
 You shall be held by the true, the passionate Lovers
 Higher in fame than Helen or Beatrice.

Startled by a sudden scuffling of feet inside the house, Frogmore rose from his work-table and walked to where he could see, through a high lattice, the servants' courtyard where a light cart was standing.

At that instant a boy burst from the kitchen door and came charging down the steps, pursued by his housekeeper, — releasing from under his jacket, as he ran, several oranges which bounced behind him. This little chap was the baker's boy, a wretched creature whom Frogmore had already suspected of being not quite in his wits.

His pursuer, swiftly pulling the whip from its socket as she passed the cart, had headed him away from the driveway just in time; now, advancing on him by zigzag leaps, brandishing her weapon before her like a ringmaster, she backed him adroitly into the angle of lattice and wall, a few feet from where Frogmore stood unnoticed.

Planted before him, she struck the boy's bare legs with short, shrewd blows, laughing maliciously as he skipped and danced before her like a mechanical toy; but as he rushed forward suddenly to escape, she collared him in a single magnificent spring,

pulled his jacket over his arms with the skill of a policeman, and held him helpless.

Snapping the whip in two, she now went to work in earnest.

Frogmore, who had been impressed, in spite of himself, by the grace of her manoeuvres, was now confronted with a show of strength and ferocity even more striking.

Carried away by the primitive rhythm, he found himself nodding his head in time, following the multiplication of weals on the idiot's thighs, turning from them at moments to observe his housekeeper's face, which in its freedom from anger, its expression of Puritan resolve, had so much the air of righteous authority. But when tell-tale streaks began to show themselves he turned away.

He had always had a horror of blood, as of something too personal, like sweat or tears, whose appearance on any scene showed it was time things came to an end. Nevertheless, sitting down again at a distance, listening to the boy's cries which lasted for some time, he experienced sensations whose keenness puzzled him.

Garcia Lorca

"In 1936, in the outskirts of his own beloved Granada at dawn, a Fascist firing squad composed of Civil Guardsmen took the young poet out and shot him."

It was, as if the devil of evil had got
 the God of all that is good by the throat
 and shot
 the garden with his breath,
 Adam the boy and Eve his girl
 scorched like a but through space
 the end of a world

And yet, just as the fascists, firing, were only
 an ignorant audience, breaking
 to bits his stage,
 that was such a friendly comedy
 of loving creatures, all of flowers and happy people
 and the poet
 with notes in his fingers was
 something on a stem
 a fire
 in cups of flowers

so, of us, many wise as candle wicks
 in our halos while round us the insect wheels
 in violence, kill what we can
 alone, with subtle and selfish claws;
 set up ourselves a single majority,
 usurp the soul with a dollar,
 the dictator for the ruling class of greeds;
 and intent on the growth of percentage
 and drawing a little blood from friends,
 prepare the squeaking gallows
 where soon, like innocent lilies, our children
 will weep, bewildered and wondering why.

Each man's struggle against the pack
 is the futile and dispersed class war. Could we but
 concentrate violence, press out this pus
 in one shock! But we make
 a nest for germs, saving our inch of skin,
 a home for killers paid by generous bankers,
 ready to belt on their holsters and say, "I am the law."

So it grows to insanity, the furious stars
 in our ears ringing, the poet's roses
 ripped and scattered apart, as Federico
 Garcia Lorca was shot that morning,
 an agile songster dropped in the damp grass.

What if from bloody Granada
 the black bullets sped
 like lights from a mirror, knocking

at doors and at window ledges
with knuckles bleeding and red?

The news is a prophecy
no one heard:
a child has been taken from bed
and broken in our hands.

—LOUIS DUDEK

The Teheran Line

—MARTIN ELLIS

Since the legalized Canadian Communists forged their political arm last summer, there has been some doubt as to what they really want. Formerly they were heard to say that the C.C.F. was not Socialist enough; and, indeed, they still do when ultimate aims are discussed, though not frequently or loudly. Yet they have appeared as champions of reform within the capitalist order, proclaiming that "Socialism now" is a false issue. In making this study of Labor-Progressive policy, I start from an utterance of the party leader in the magazine *National Affairs Monthly*.

"Everything has been changed by the war," Buck's article begins. A few lines below we read: "Stated boldly the alternatives are as follows: We can advance through a higher stage of political relationships to far-reaching democratic progress, or slide backwards unto economic chaos, civil wars in different countries, new wars between nations, and a third and even more terrible world war." Persons familiar with Marxist doctrine up to the death of Lenin might expect Tim Buck to anticipate the later. But no, he does not. It is the C.C.F., in his eyes, which does. It is the C.C.F. which confuses the situation by inculcating pessimism about the post-war era, and it is the C.C.F. which is itself threatening to upset

the apple-cart by raising the issue of "Socialism now" as the alternative.

Now, what specifically is this great change — clearly, from Buck's attitude, a profound one — which has been brought by the war? Let us look into the events of the last few years.

In 1939, hostilities broke out between Europe's two great capitalistic structures: on the one hand, the old structure of reactionary British and French capital, dominated at this time by "appeaser" governments which were far more anti-Soviet than anti-Nazi; and on the other hand, the parvenu structure of German-Fascist capital, a system of counterfeit Socialism which was in fact the imperial weapon of the Junkers and industrialists. The latter was the more active, the more immediately virulent — at least as far as Europe was concerned. But the plans of the Western Powers for intervention in Finland, the statements of leading French politicians and of a British Cabinet Minister that the U.S.S.R. must be treated as an enemy and even as "Enemy No. 1", the anti-Soviet clamour of the London press which exceeded in violence the propaganda against Germany — such signs as these showed that the cause of Socialism and of the human race would hardly be furthered by a long and ruinous war ending in the victory of the British Tories and the French financial oligarchy. Terrible as the choice was, a negotiated peace would at least secure a respite; a little more life for some thousands of young men; a chance to dissipate the anti-Soviet fictions, to attack and reform the extant governments, to gain the trust of Moscow and build up a new system of collective security. The chance might be slim, but, however slim, it was worth taking, for the prospective war held out no hope at all.

Moscow's attitude was clear. The Soviet leaders, with good reason, mistrusted and feared both parties in the war, and supported Hitler's peace offensive in the hope of securing a balance between them. However, when France collapsed and Britain was threatened with defeat, the anti-British tone passed away from the Soviet press, and simultaneously Bessarabia and the Baltic States were absorbed into the U.S.S.R. — an event logically inevitable, but clearly prompted at this particular time by strategic motives. There was no more talk in London of the "Nazi-Soviet alliance", of the "Berlin-Moscow Axis".

The change in the character of the war, proclaimed by the Communists as soon as Hitler made his incredible blunder of June

22, did not become evident at once. Perhaps the first real signs were the stirrings of the French Communist underground organization (formed, as a matter of fact, in May). For some time there was officially nothing in the Eastern war but the brave fight of the Russian people. This was still largely so when the climax of the whole world conflict arrived in the first week of December, 1941: when the Germans came within sight of Moscow, when the British Mediterranean fleet was almost annihilated, when the confident Japanese were bearing down on Pearl Harbour and the East Indies. But the crisis passed; people saw with amazement the collapse of the German offensive, and many began to ask what was responsible for it. Britishers, almost free of bombing, felt gratitude to the Soviet Union, and gratitude was followed by interest. Gradually the truth about Russian Socialism began to spread. Little-headed prophets, it was found, had spoken for the U.S.S.R. even in the black period of 1940; the writings of such people grew in popularity.

The objective change in the war's character was simple. It had become a global civil conflict. The former internal struggles between the cause of the worker and the cause of the capitalist had reappeared on a gigantic scale, in the form of a war between nations: Socialism being represented by Socialist Russia, and Capital, in its most reactionary and militant form, by Fascist Germany. In this warfare the internal class struggles were not only dwarfed but lost. For, since capitalistic British and U.S. governments were in charge of the Anglo-American war effort in alliance with Russia, any assault on the capitalistic regime in these countries could only confuse and hinder the major struggle. The unrelenting, uncompromising class warfare once dictated by the Comintern now took the form of unrelenting, uncompromising warfare against the Fascist Axis.

This is part of what Tim Buck means when he says that everything has been changed by the war. But it is not all. The present line of his party is founded on a very recent development—the Teheran agreement. This document, noble as a statement of purpose, and as promising in its implications as any mere statement conceivably could be, has been stressed by the Labor-Progressive Party as the keystone of a co-operative peace. It is to be the archetype of a New Order of collaboration between states and classes. Out of the New Order will come a series of reforms,

leading toward eventual Socialism.

We will pass in a moment to the party's rejection of Socialism as an immediate issue. The point to notice here is that any politicians who do not put the Teheran ideal first are failing in the common duty of humanity toward humanity, and, therefore, in their own duty toward their own people. True, the Teheran agreement, as far as the post-war world is concerned, is in itself little more than a pious hope. True, we are not yet justified in any strong feeling of confidence. We cannot naively assume any real desire or even ability to co-operate on the part of the three statesmen. But we do not need to. The hope itself is enough as a basis for policy, because even the mere hope of permanent peace is quite literally the most important thing in the world. We may have private doubts — indeed, over-confidence is an obvious danger; but any politician, any journalist who publicly encourages a sceptical or cynical attitude is doing no good service either to his country or to mankind at large. "He has no faith in it himself; how can he expect *us* to do anything about it?" — so his audience might feel, and not without justice.

This aim of international peace must appear paramount, not only from a human, moral or religious standpoint, but also from that of the Socialist or Communist. For the war, with its "forcible overthrow of existing conditions" in the occupied countries and its impending dissolution of the great centres of militant capital, has opened up prospects for Socialism in Europe which are bright indeed. The Communist parties, largely through their courageous leadership in the resistance movements, have built up enormous strength, notably in France and Yugoslavia. Reactionary European landlords and capitalists, by dealing with the aggressor, have discredited their whole class. Even in Britain, which was never occupied, great progressive forces have been released. Now as long as there is peace, goodwill and agreement between the great powers, so long will the danger of new "Spanish" affairs be kept at a distance. On the contrary, a British government fearful of the intentions of Moscow might support, for example, an artificial French Rightist faction much as reactionary officials in India have sought in the past to counter Hindu nationalism by being first the sponsors and then the "protectors" of unrepresentative Moslem groups. If left to itself, Europe will be Socialist within a few years; if power politics enter, there will be new struggles of doubtful issue

— this is the political argument for the implementation of the Teheran promise.

But why the rejection of "Socialism now" in Canada? Partly, because Canadians are not ready for it as we might deduce merely from the Gallup polls on national insurance and national banking. Partly, because the war has given a great impetus to the capitalistic economy, which may well be slow in dying away. Partly, because an attempt to bring in Socialist measures in the confusion of the transition to peace would be foolish and dangerous. But principally — from a world point of view — because internal peace is the prerequisite of an effective drive for international peace. Since the Ontario election, we have witnessed, in the propaganda field, a kind of inverted class warfare: most of the sound and fury about Socialism has come from the spokesmen of reactionary capital.

The first business of a progressive party in Canada is to campaign for international peace and collaboration, and to put pressure on the government to take all measures possible toward that end. The second is to secure the smooth transition to peacetime economy, the rehabilitation measures, the immediate social reforms, on which all Canadians can agree; and by its championship of these causes the party will gain in prestige and membership. The third task is the building up of a strong politically oriented labour movement, preparing the objective conditions for a transfer to Marxian Socialism. The fourth and all-embracing task is education, to the end that the final crisis of Capitalism, when it comes, may be softened, the transition to a new sort of society being effected easily by the weight of a unified and enlightened people. And these are the aims of the Labor-Progressive Party. Should the hopes of Teheran fall through, a reversion in policy, or perhaps the development of a new policy, will be just and inevitable; for the present the situation is as I have stated it. There are, however, two major questions confronting the party. First, if the C.C.F. attains power and attempts to bring in "Socialism now," to what extent are the Labor-Progressives to support it? Second, how far away is the transition to Socialism likely to be, and how suddenly and in what shape may we expect it to come? Both are points that thinking persons will do well to ponder.

Book Reviews

The Hitleriad, by A. M. Klein. New Directions.

This is an important book, a landmark in our rapidly growing national literature. Now that it has happened, I am impressed with the inevitability of some one with the talents of Mr. A. M. Klein writing an *Hitleriad*. Canada's most versatile poet, editor of the *Jewish Chronicle*, a barrister and possessor of a coruscating wit, I can think of no one more able to sum up the prosecution for humanity and to enter its rightful claims against the miserable gang of sadists and torturers that have ruled Germany and terrorized Europe for more than a decade. The man and the moment, or rather the poet and his subject, had embraced.

But equally this is a difficult book to review: the temptation to quote is almost irresistible. There are enough epigrams in it to make a small fortune for a leader writer, Mr. Klein's characterizations are done with a hatpin in one hand and a bottle of sulphuric acid in the other. Compression is a subsidy to wit and on Page 7 Konrad Heiden's erudite but somewhat massy volume 'Der Fuehrer' is condensed into six neat lines:

His strength is as the strength
Of ten, and ten times ten;
For through him, magnified
Smallness comes to our ken —
The total bigness of
All little men.

This is excellent. So are the lines about a former ambassador to Turkey who was recently told that he was *persona non grata* with the Turkish people and is now, alas, an ambassador without a country to go to:

Von Papen, spy and diplomat,
Hiding low cunning in high hat,
Giving his masters fealty
As long as they held mastery,
Reliable, whate'er might happen
To serve the good of Herr Von Papen!

Or the ironic, well-turned couplet:

And Downing Street announced from number Ten
The balance of power balanced once again.

Extremely cunning is the versification which, with the couplet for ballast, makes use of a variety of patterns that ranges from vers libre to the formal terza rima. The techniques of contemporary verse are deftly pressed into service without destroying the poem's essential unity. These are never arbitrarily introduced but accommodate an artistic progression of temper that begins mock-heroically and concludes with the prophetic. In this way each note is heard by itself, clearly and distinctly, whether it be scorn or indignation or the bitter mirth occasioned by the bumbling failure of the epigones who chattered toothlessly while Hitler prepared his time-table. In this way, too, Mr. Klein has successfully avoided the monotony of the neo-classical couplet with its regular, mechanical jingle suggesting a sleigh bell on a frosty night.

The section on Hitler is a masterpiece of biographical digestion. It is vituperation fused with eloquence, intriguing as today's headlines, and as devastating as only the truth can be when seasoned with wit. Depending upon a careful exhumation of his subject's life and activities, the author has contrived a brilliant nosegay of poison ivy. Hitler's schooling, acquaintance with Viennese flophouses, career as a military spy, the whole detestable story is recounted in biting lines, right up until the unloosing of the present war. In what is perhaps the only carefree line in the poem, presumably because his subject was as yet unborn, the author allows himself a backward glance to say of Hitler that he was "Born to a father, old and over-~~blinded~~^{unwed}/Who had he slept one night, had saved mankind." This is handsome and opens the skylight to the infinites of the historical imagination. Excepting to the prudish who never think about such matters, I suppose, this wistful reflection has occurred to most people.

From Hitler Mr. Klein turns to the men who surround him, his disciples, his evil genii. The Gold Dust Twins, Goering and Goebbels, Streicher, Rosenberg, Roehm, and the lesser notables. Here the characterizations are unadulterated vinegar. These worthies are squeezed so tightly that their rottenness fairly spills out through their eyes. Nevertheless, it is in these passages that I become aware of a curious paradox, for the poem a central and

inescapable one. Satire is consequent upon the jar between fact and ideal, between things as they are and things as they ought to be. It demands a consistent viewpoint, a philosophy or at any rate an eccentricity that places the writer a little to one side of the object satirized. Its hallmark is a cool imperturbability, an urbanity that understands the mortal thrust of reticence. Or stated another way, satire requires two wings if it is ever to get free from the ground. Mr. Klein's subject unfortunately provides him with only one, namely the real.

In addition the element of surprise, struck from the novel juxtaposition of the two, must in this case be totally absent. Absent, since the facts are too well-known and, as intimated above, there is no point in placing them against human or ideal considerations. From one point of view Mr. Klein can not say enough, from another what he says is superfluous. The section on Streicher, trenchant as it is, yet reminds me of a telegraph boy arriving with a singing telegram to a house where someone has just died.

This I repeat, is not Mr. Klein's fault. For satire intends to ridicule the follies of mankind and not its beastlier perversions unless, as was the case with Swift, mankind itself is regarded as a beastly perversion. Therefore, and this is the paradox, in order to write about the Nazi leaders at all, one must first set about humanizing them and this Mr. Klein does by endowing them with human characteristics, albeit of the unpleasanter kinds. Since an exhibition of the cloven hoof is not possible, Mr. Klein must insist that Goebbels is halitotic which is illuminating but is not exactly the circumstance that makes him so unpopular. Other human traits are Goering's fondness for medals and imported grub, Streicher's hefty rear, the hook-nose of Haushofer and Ley's drunkenness. The viewpoint in this while consistent, is a universal which does not enable the ironist to step to one side: it admits by default that Nazism was an outbreak of humanity. It places the satirist in the unenviable position of having to kiss first and kill afterwards.

Beginning with two strikes against him, Mr. Klein has yet managed to knock out an elegant three-bagger. If both of his hands were tied, he has at least extricated one. That is a notable performance and adds greatly to his stature and reputation as one of Canada's most vital poets. This is Mr. Klein's second volume of verse. In it he has given us something fresh, audacious and exciting. I am told the book is having an extraordinary sale throughout the

country. If so, it is well-deserved. The Hitleriad is a caustic annotation in verse on the events of a fateful decade.

IRVING LAYTON

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