

Comment

“Two Wandering Satellites”

In his excellent article on Poland and Hungary published in your January issue, Peter Wiles writes:

“In these two countries, so deeply disgraced by anti-Semitism, many Jews naturally react by being anti-Polish or anti-Hungarian as the case may be. I suggest that, in a crisis, Hungarian Jews like Gerö and Hegedüs would experience less emotional hesitation before calling in the Red Army than a pure Pole like Ochab.”

As far as Mr. Wiles' general statement goes, I think one might very well argue that the emotional attachment of Polish Jews to Poland is astounding precisely because of Polish anti-Semitism. Even in the late thirties, when anti-Semitic barbarism was at its height, many Polish Jews clung to a somewhat idealistic view of a Polish liberal and universal “essence” to which they could belong. This has often been expressed by Polish writers of Jewish origin. The particularities of Polish anti-Semitism did create a certain “anti-Polish” complex, but this—strangely enough—is far more frequent among non-Polish Jews.

In the particular situation to which Mr. Wiles refers, the facts in Poland are contrary to his thesis. Gomulka's adversaries, in the Polish Politburo, who planned a “coup d'état,” who had their direct contacts with Moscow, and who might have called in the Red Army if they had had the chance (they did probably call Khrushchev and the Russian generals to Warsaw) are not only “pure Poles,” but rabid anti-Semites. The “Natolin group,” who are the Polish Stalinists (Witaszewski, Zenon Nowak, Mazur, Klosiewicz) was acting, between the 7th and 8th Meeting of the Central Committee, according to a programme which was interpreted in the following terms by *Po Prostu*, the leading “revolutionary” weekly (October 28th, 1956):

“1.—Democratisation is equivalent to anarchy and to bourgeois liberalism. The ‘intelligentsia’ is the most dangerous element. It should be kept down by physical force if need be (for instance, by beating them with gas-pipes—according to the plan of General Kazimierz Witaszewski).

“2.—Another source of disorder is the press. Its big mouth should be kept shut.

“3.—The character of our relations with the U.S.S.R. must remain unchanged, and every demand of equality or of Polish sovereignty must be fought. . . .

“4.—A purge of the State and of the Party must be undertaken not according to moral or political principles, but according to racial criteria, and in particular, to purity of Aryan blood.”

This programme is based on complete subservience to Russia and on anti-Semitism. In fact, anti-Semitism, while also copied from Moscow, was a very useful tool for the Natolin group in its efforts to fight against the forces which demanded more truth, independence, and democracy. Among the “dangerous” elements of the Polish “intelligentsia,” Jews played an important part. Adam Wazyk, quoted by Mr. Wiles, is of Jewish origin. So are Antoni Slonimski, Pawel Hertz, Jan Kott, Artur Sandauer.

Mr. Wiles stressed the part played by Staszewski, the secretary of the Warsaw Party organisation in the decisive October days. It so happens that Staszewski's opposition to the Natolin group—and to any form of Russian interference—may have been strengthened by the fact that Polish Stalinists opposed his election to the Central Committee on account of his Jewish origin.

In pre-war days, Polish semi-fascist youth organised a famous pilgrimage to the shrine of Czestochowa, in which Catholic devotions were a curious superstructure for nationalist megalomania and anti-Semitism. A huge students' demonstration took place last November in that same Czestochowa. Some slogans carried by the students, like “Poland for Poles” were reminiscent of those of twenty years ago. But they were immediately followed by others saying: “Down with anti-Semitism.” Both were directed against the Natolin group.

Mr. Peter Wiles says himself that “Moscow is extremely anti-Semitic.” Poles—and Polish Jews—realise that. No efforts of Polish liberals could ever counteract the inveterate Polish anti-

Semitism as effectively as Khrushchev's anti-Semitic utterances at the seventh meeting of the Central Committee in Warsaw, and the corresponding policy of the Natolin group.

I have limited myself to the Polish side of the picture, of which I have some knowledge. My Hungarian friends tell me that there are similarities in the position of Hungarian Jews. The conscious efforts of revolutionary leaders not only to avoid anti-Semitic incidents, but to spare the lives of some Stalinists precisely because they were Jews, in order not to confuse the issues, may probably be related to a similar evolution.

I suggest therefore that Gerö and Hegedüs had few emotional hesitations before calling in the Red Army, not because they were Jews, but because they were as good Stalinists as the "pure Poles," Nowak and Mazur, who were prevented from taking power and doing the same certainly by Ochab's attitude, but also by the spontaneous action of Poles and Jews alike, who supported Gomulka's claims for Polish independence.

K. A. JELENSKI

Paris

Mr. Wiles replies to his Critics

I DID not say that Mr. Milosz's doctrine of the Captive Mind "had lost its validity," as he claims in your December issue, but that it only ever had validity for a small proportion of the Polish people. This he has admitted himself, so the sole question between us is, how many? In the absence of public opinion polls we cannot say, but the question raised by Mr. Milosz's book is of vast importance, so let us address ourselves to such analysis as is possible.

The uneducated seldom have settled or systematic opinions, so they can hardly have Captive Minds in any proper sense. I suggest that peasants never have, and workers only seldom. A worker may in a superficial way believe Communist propaganda about, say, foreign capitalism, but he is most unlikely to believe his trade union is defending his interests or that he is getting richer every year (unless he is). It takes much education to overlook an obvious fact.

Mr. Milosz developed his concept in connection with fellow-travelling intellectuals. Only he omitted to stress that he meant only such as did really fellow-travel: I stand by my impression that they were never a high proportion in Poland. A far more numerous, obvious, and important case—I owe this point to conversation with Mr. Milosz himself—is Communist *apparatchiki* and administrators. These are all by definition Captive Minds (unless they are pure careerists), and their reaction to Khrush-

chev's secret speech was crucial for Poland's October. If Mr. Wazyk, the poet, was influential, Mr. Ochab was decisive; after all he, not Wazyk, controlled the security police. The Ochabs of all countries have written very many memoirs about their several Roads to Damascus. Everyone has his "Kronstadt," as Louis Fischer put it; we lacked only a colloquialism for the pre-"Kronstadt" phase. It would be unfortunate if Mr. Milosz's brilliant epitome of this intellectual condition came to be applied only to the Ochabs' less important and numerous literary colleagues. My own article ("In a Land of Unwashed Brains") was guilty in this respect.

Milosz suggests a third class of Captive Mind: university youth. He can never have given a tutorial at a university in a free country. All schoolchildren believe something or other they have been told, and unlearning it is more or less painful. It is, then, only to be expected that a high proportion of adolescent minds are captive—it is adolescents that get taught things. But there is equally nothing surprising about disillusionment among adolescents—and nothing new. If there is a journal that specialises in publishing the confessions of such people—as *Po Prostu* in Warsaw—then we get to know of it. If, as in Moscow, there is no *Po Prostu*, we don't. Adolescents have been quietly getting disillusioned with Communism in U.S.S.R. since 1917, just as previously with Orthodoxy. For that matter I occasionally meet first-year men who believe in Imperial Preference. It seems hardly fair to claim this universal phenomenon as proving a thesis about adult intellectuals under Communism. The vast majority of these, I repeat, in Poland, the overwhelming majority in Hungary, and "very many" (I shrink from greater precision) in U.S.S.R. are not Captive Minds at all but simple victims of terror.

It is true that a Pole or Hungarian looking back now will exaggerate the independence of his thinking during the Ice Age. But I don't think this is as serious as Milosz makes out. My impression in neither country was of people *groping* for new ideas, or *discovering* the falsity of Marxism. It seemed that they had always been in secure possession of their basic philosophy, and always been bored and revolted by official dogma. They lacked only detailed information and ideological refinement.

To turn to Mr. Jelenski (above), he does not disprove what I said about Gerö and Hegedüs. He only proves the Polish situation was more complicated. But indeed it was still more complicated than he says. There are, as is known, Jews who are quite unmoved by others' anti-Semitism so long as it doesn't affect themselves: e.g. Kaganovich. Hence certain Jews have figured very prominently in Stalinist govern-

ments, despite the covert and recently overt anti-Semitism of the system. And the system itself is of course quite cynical—and sensible—enough to employ them. In Hungary there were Rakosi, Gerö, and Hegedüs; in Poland, Berman and Minc. It seems a little slippery of Mr. Jelenski not to mention once these distinguished Polish-Jewish Stalinists in so long a letter. Would not they too have called in the Red Army, had fate made them the leading Polish Stalinists? But there happened to be also pure Polish Stalinists like Witaszewski, so naturally Moscow, both for prudential and anti-Semitic reasons, relied on them. Surely then the point stands: Mr. Ochab betrayed Moscow, not least because he is not a Jew, and Gerö betrayed Budapest. Witaszewskis also exist, but it is significant that there was no Hungarian Witaszewski.

Lastly may I correct a mistake of my own? Soviet complicity with the Natolin group was far more direct than I said. The group visited Moscow this summer; it was more Soviet than Polish troops that moved on Warsaw; the Soviet leaders' interruption of the Central Committee was not merely uninvited but unannounced. The Poles first knew of their 'plane by their own radar.

P. J. D. WILES

New College, Oxford

“Amateur Journalism”

I WAS a little surprised when reading the interesting and extremely well-informed article on “Amateur Journalism,” which appeared in your November number, to notice that no mention was made of *Time and Tide* among the journals discussed. I should have thought that in the history of weekly journalism in this country in the last twenty years, this journal deserved a very honourable place. Its columns have given hospitality at one time or another to most of the English writers whom your readers would regard as having integrity and intellectual standing; and whether or not one agrees with its editorial comments—and I hasten to say that there are many occasions on which I find myself in acute disagreement—it must surely be admitted that in these constricted years it has done much to sustain the tradition of independent and serious criticism of policies and tendencies.

LIONEL ROBBINS

London, W.C. 2

“The Indian Alternative”

MR. JOHN STRACHEY'S “The Indian Alternative” in the October issue of *ENCOUNTER* can be cited as a classic example of an expert's report based

on the expertise of misinformation rather than solid facts. It is regrettable that a person of Mr. Strachey's eminence should have built up the edifice of his theory on the loose sands of doctrinaire considerations rather than the solid rock of facts and figures.

Without going into the merits of his general theory, we wish to point out that he has proceeded on the wrong impression that Private Enterprise has neither the capacity nor the intention of undertaking any development in India. Getting this impression as he did from the Chief Secretary of one of the Indian Government Departments, who perhaps had his own predilection in gathering more power and patronage into his hands under the slogan of an Enlarged Public Sector, Mr. Strachey has fallen a victim to a common disease of this “State-worship” era, namely, accepting opinions expressed by some Government spokesman as the gospel of economic life.

Let Mr. Strachey have a look into the World Bank Mission's Report on India. After a careful study, the Mission reported that “the record bears out the fact that private enterprise has performed creditably during the last five years with respect to both investment and production. In the organised sector of manufacturing and mining, private business has contributed ninety per cent of the increase in net output during this period.” If Mr. Strachey is reluctant to accept the conclusions of the World Bank Mission, surely he should have no objection to accepting the facts presented by the Indian Planning Commission. In its Report entitled “Programmes of Industrial Development, 1956-61,” the Planning Commission pointed out that investment on new projects and expansion programmes had reached one hundred per cent of the original target of about Rs. 2,330 million, whereas the Public Sector fell short of its target of Rs. 940 million by nearly forty per cent during the first Five-Year Plan. If the starting of nearly forty new types of industry for the first time in the country is not an example of initiative by private enterprise in India, then one would like to know from Mr. Strachey the semantics of “initiative.”

For the benefit of all fair-minded observers, one would like to stress that the performance of private enterprise in India has been creditable despite the severe limitations imposed on it by Government.

In view of these facts, one only hopes that experts who visit India in future will show more respect for facts rather than misinformed opinion emanating from what has been aptly described as the “Mahalanobis Zoo.”

Yours, etc.,

(PROF.) C. L. GHEVALA

Bombay

“Commonwealth Poetry”

MR. DAVID WRIGHT, as an ex-occupant of the sometime Empire's fringes now firmly established in the British hub has, of course, special reasons for recommending a central movement of all poets to London or Paris. In his review (December, 1956) of two recent anthologies of Commonwealth poetry he has, however, overstepped the margin of his predilection; overstepped so far, in fact, that he has plunged into a morass of snobbery one had almost thought drained dry. It seems extraordinary that at this moment, with the whole question of a *commonwealth* (of culture and ideals, as well as natural product and treasure), being re-examined in the light of Britain's actions in the Middle East (actions which challenge her very domination over Canadian, Australian, and South African thought) that Mr. Wright should trot out the old fallacy about the only literary wealth being possessed by those who bear it to the shrines of Chelsea or Bloomsbury; that the best poets of the Commonwealth are those who have learned or are learning their craft from the magisterial presences who dwell amid the dry rattle of leaves in Russell Square or the susurrations of gossip in Gower Street.

The supposition that no men of great intellect live in Australia (I speak for only one of the countries Mr. Wright has wronged) is not the least absurd in his review: not only does the academic life of this country tend to foster men of great detachment and independence of mind, but it has also helped to nurture during its very short history at least six poets who can be compared without a blush to any now writing in English anywhere. The fact that these poets—A. D. Hope, Kenneth Slessor, Rosemary Dobson, James McAuley, R. D. Fitzgerald, and Judith Wright—are badly represented in the latter's anthology has apparently driven her namesake to assume that nothing they write (unless it be Professor Hope's futilely masochistic anti-Australian poem “Australia”) is of any value. The truth quite clearly is that he has not bothered to read the books of all six poets, books which reveal that far from being self-consciously “for” or “against” Australia, her poets are establishing a manner of writing as idiosyncratic, in its way, as American poetry was at about the same stage of development.

The fact is that Mr. Wright is out of date: it is no longer necessary, as it was when Joyce and Eliot were young men, for Americans and Irishmen, or, for that matter, Australians or Hottentots, to come to London, Paris, or Auld Reekie to be recognised. Mr. Patrick White's *The Tree of Man* has been praised in very respectable

quarters as an important book; his future is assured; yet he is firmly ensconced in Australia. The contributions of Professor Fitzgerald to sinology and of Professor Mitchell to philology are not to be scorned; they were not subjected to a “central” scrutiny before proving acceptable. Mr. George Molnar's name as a cartoonist is great *because* his attitude, essentially European and sophisticated, has achieved an added detachment and freshness from the influence of the Australian scene. Australian painting is now world-famous; the works of Dobell, Namatjira, or Nolan do not merely display the richness in isolation of Australian sensibility, they have sprung from an awareness that, at home, there are splendours at once as fascinating and more strange than those overseas (does Mr. Wright think they would do any better if they were to train under the shadow of Burlington House?).

The great spaces, the clear light, the frail, ghost-like trees, the strange dawns and dusks of Australia present, indeed, an exciting challenge to the artist; it is to such far-flung that vital poetry can answer (in England, it is significant that Mr. Watkins, Mr. Nicholson, and Mr. Graham all have drawn poetic sustenance from distant and quiet places, and that they—together with Mr. Graves, who lives in Majorca—are writing the most forceful poetry at the moment); certainly nothing but sterile poems about poetry can spring from chattering about “movements” and “influences” over the clink of glasses at critics' flats, or in having one's works read and gone over at parties, or subjected to the cautiously severe ministrations of one's “peers.” I would say rather that the distant places of the world, the young places, the growing places, are those which offer the greatest opportunity for individual and moving poetry to express itself and flourish; that there is more marginal poetry being written in the centres of culture than on the margins themselves.

A final point and an important one: Mr. Eliot's remark (quoted with approval by Mr. Wright) that a literature can only come to consciousness when a young writer is able to look back on several generations of writers behind him only serves to summarise the fallacy in all Mr. Wright's arguments: if the forebears had not stayed at home how could they have established a literature at all for their intellectual descendants to look back upon? Those who write in Australia, Canada, South Africa, or New Zealand in the teeth of such snobbery as Mr. Wright's may well draw comfort from that.

CHARLES HIGHAM

Sydney, Australia

Mr. Wright replies:

Most of Mr. Higham's letter would appear to answer itself. But perhaps I may point out that when I suggested those Commonwealth writers "who achieved anything worth truly serious consideration are almost without exception those who came to live in Europe," I was not referring, as Mr. Higham seems to think, to anything so naïve as the irrelevant and probably doubtful benefit of being "recognised." "Europe" as a geographical expression contains, or so I thought, more than the parochial boundaries of Chelsea and Bloomsbury: for instance, Portugal, where Mr. Roy Campbell now lives.

DAVID WRIGHT

London, W.C.

At the Tate Gallery

YOUR correspondent Mary Gerard italicises the following sentence in her quotation from Mme Giedion-Welcker: "Very often Giacometti withdraws his figures from possible intimacy by interposing a pedestal and raising them into a spatial and spiritual zone of unreality." Your correspondent thinks that "the conclusion to be drawn is . . . obvious." I agree, but differ as to the conclusion, which seems to me to be, not that the Tate is right in putting the *Pointing Man* on a high pedestal, but that, since Giacometti sometimes incorporates a pedestal into the work, he would have put the *Pointing Man* on one if he had wanted to lift it off the ground.

When I was organising the Arts Council's retrospective exhibition of Giacometti, I naturally discussed with him beforehand how the works ought to be shown. One of his principal concerns was that pedestals should be avoided as far as possible. The sculptures should be placed on the ground where this was practicable, and otherwise on tables—never on pedestals. I adhered to this as closely as I could. Naturally, the life-size *Pointing Man*, which the Tate Gallery kindly lent to the exhibition, was placed on the ground.

To do this at the Tate might risk damage to the work, not to say damage to visitors. This was why I said in my article that the sculpture should be "on or hardly above the ground." Ideally, of course, even a low pedestal ought to be avoided.

DAVID SYLVESTER

London, S.W.3

BOOKS

Two Witty Women

ONE might argue from their writings that women are the less guilty and guilt-ridden sex. Anyway, women who write do write out of a more innocent, perhaps because limited, experience, than men. Certainly in these two books, by witty, intelligent, and travelled women, a male reader feels that in each case part of the charm is that the writer is only on the fringe of the guilt-ridden, promiscuous, café-and pub-crawling world of men.

With all her real understanding and sophistication, Miss McCarthy in Venice reminds me a bit of Daisy Miller in the Colosseum at Rome, remaining on the outside edge of so much fever and corruption. Her essay* is informed, bright, at times brilliant. It contains an enormous amount packed into a very short space, and if the publishers, so lavish in every other respect, had troubled to provide it with an index, it would be extremely useful. Each of Miss McCarthy's paragraphs is a portmanteau literally crammed with facts, names, lists, quotations. One makes a mental reservation to look back to something she has said about St. Mark's or the Doge's Palace and then, a few pages on, discovers one is in a kind of Hampton Court Maze of thick new leaves, and cannot find one's way back to the berries that delighted an hour ago.

It is difficult to say why this book is slightly disappointing. The reason, I think, is that, although she has looked at a great many things and has responded to them intently, sincerely, and with an independent judgment, her eye is not profoundly touched, it remains virginal. Often too—the Daisy Miller touch—the moral shock of Venice comes between her and the object observed. For instance: "The Venetians are enthusiastic restorers. The paintings of the Doge's Palace have been worked on by gangs of restorers ever since the eighteenth century. That is perhaps why, at least to my eyes, they look so verveless. . . ." She lists some exceptions to vervelessness, but one of them is not Tintoretto's *Mercury and the Three Graces*, illustrated, as it happens, in colour, on the page opposite this remark.

* *Venice Observed*. By MARY MCCARTHY. Zwemmer. £4 10s.

"St. Mark's as a whole, unless seen from a distance or at twilight, is not beautiful." Perhaps this is true, but it is the kind of observation that is not of real value unless one sees how many questions it raises, and is prepared to press them. The question of the "beauty" of St. Mark's, like that of the Taj Mahal, is irrelevant. The point about St. Mark's is that like the Taj, or like the entwined figures of the winds in Botticelli's *Birth of Venus*, or like the opening phrase of Beethoven's *Fifth Symphony*, it creates an undisputed image which impresses itself unforgettably on the mind.

The difficulty is perhaps simply that of writing about painting, which one has to do with Venice. Miss McCarthy's great virtue is that she really works at things and forms her own judgment about them. This is always stimulating, but sometimes her brave brevity of comment cuts her off too short. "Canaletto and Guardi are the last, one might say, of the Venetian mirror-makers." It is more important, perhaps, to remember that Guardi is one of the first (in every sense) of modern painters.

Miss McCarthy is at her very best writing about the present-day Venice to which she responds warmly and immediately: her lodgings, her landlady, cats and gold-fish: a deeply ironic passage in which she compares (at the expense of E. V. Lucas) the reactions of Lucas in *A Wanderer in Venice* with those of André Maurel in his *Quinze Jours à Venise* to the pathetic lace workers of Burano, is the most moving passage in the book. *Venice Observed* is wonderfully illustrated and produced. My criticisms here do not prevent my recording that this is a delightful volume to possess: beautiful in itself, stimulating, and leading in a great many directions, not only to Venice, but to other books about Venice.

MISS Macaulay, like Miss McCarthy, combines remarkable sophistication with remarkable innocence. Nevertheless, *The Towers of Trebizond** is a song of experience, a remark-

* *The Towers of Trebizond*. By ROSE MACAULAY. Collins. 13s. 6d.