

the intelligentsia like an elderly professor. The *Guardian* and the *Mirror* are "both pro-Man and neutral against Heaven"; and the *Guardian* must for ever be seeing three sides to every question and changing the subject, in order to "escape from its suspicion that nothing can be done, so as not to be forced to contemplate the horror of a world out of man's control. . . ." One sees exactly why Mr. Matthews himself likes the *Guardian*.

He does not like *The Times* at all, and naturally despises the Beaverbrook and Rothermere papers. The *Observer*, somewhat superficially, is lumped in with the *Guardian*. Only the *Daily Telegraph* eludes him, which is perhaps significant; it is time someone took this phenomenon of modern journalism apart to see what makes it tick, but I suspect it would be very hard to do. Too hard, evidently, for Mr. Matthews, who makes all the rest look so easy—because they are easy. The *Telegraph* fits into none of his categories, and cannot even readily be described in terms of "personality." It is therefore ignored.

It is all too easy—and, for that reason, not worth doing.

Angus Maude

The European Question

Europe and the Europeans: An International Discussion. By MAX BELOFF. Chatto & Windus.

21s.

EUROPE is as difficult to define as the Middle East: to define, that is, in the sense of drawing a geographical outline round it, so as to be able to say that everything within the line is Europe and everything outside it is something else. A score of different experts would produce at least a dozen different definitions. And to say that this is not the way to define Europe, which may very well be true, is tacitly to claim that there is some other defining characteristic than geography, and to expose oneself to the challenge of naming it. What is it to be, then? Language, religion, race, and other possible choices would all yield different Europes, just as they would yield different Middle Easts. Language and literature, for instance, would give Persia a better title than Turkey to be included in Europe; religion would presumably exclude a sizeable chunk of the Balkans; and so on. Participation in a common history is perhaps as dependable a notion as can be devised, vague as it is, and itself little more than a geographical accident. It gives Professor Max Beloff perhaps the firmest ground he can find anywhere for the foundations of his study of *Europe and the Europeans*; but his own cautious words indicate

how little superstructure it can be expected to sustain:

What European political history yields as a general picture is not then a European community, transiently divided into separate nations, but a community which is itself a family of nations, prone certainly to barbaric conduct towards each other—as on occasion towards sections of their own citizens—but at the same time uniquely capable of mutual comprehension, and uniquely fitted by common experience to work for common ends.

Is it merely an exhibition of the notorious British practice of "dragging the feet" to believe that this, like patriotism in Edith Cavell's phrase, is not enough—not enough, at any rate, to subsume patriotism in a higher-order consciousness of unity?

The answer is not very clearly to be read in Professor Beloff's book. This is to some extent a reflection of his intention, which was to think out loud rather than to reach definite conclusions. It is also a reflection of the rather unsatisfactory nature of the task set him, which was not of his own choosing. Originating in a series of round-table debates among intellectuals of nearly every country represented in the Council of Europe—hence the sub-title, *An International Discussion*—the book is a sort of symposium written by a single pen: a contradiction in terms which has seldom been successfully resolved since Plato. Professor Beloff is handicapped firstly by the fact that he is a sceptic summing up the discussions, in the main, of believers (and this is very evident in the contrast between M. Denis de Rougemont's iconoclastic introduction and the tone of the rest of the book); secondly by the fact that he is not (as no one could be) sufficiently expert in all the necessary fields of study to make *ex cathedra* judgments of his own on the prospects of Europe in each of the relevant contexts. His special field is politics, not economics or strategy or the arts or even history; but all these have to be taken into account in order to determine what Europe is or ought to be. Professor Beloff has therefore had to rely heavily on others for certain chapters. The economic arguments, for instance, do not bear so clear an imprint of his thought as the political; they are not wholly consistent with the rest; and the supercilious attitude adopted in them towards bankers and members of parliament seems unworthy of him.

But it is not only the answers that are unclear: the questions are so also. There is one fundamental question which, on the evidence of this book, the participants in the discussions seem never to have faced. This is, what is meant by a belief in the unity of Europe? Is it a belief that such a unity naturally exists, whether potential or actual (like a belief in the Holy Trinity);

or is it a belief that it must at all costs be achieved (like a belief in stopping hydrogen-bomb tests)? Probably both beliefs are held about the unity of Europe, but in different contexts. And that is in part why the matter is so confused and the measures taken or urged make such a tangled web. For two sorts of unification seem to be pursued or advocated concurrently in Europe, and they are in fact historically the only two ways in which larger sovereign units ever have grown out of smaller ones. One is the evolutionary way, which culminates in the recognition that to all intents and purposes, through links of common interest and history and sentiment and general congruity, those who formerly thought of themselves as separate are really one nation (or whatever the appropriate unit may be called), when all that remains is to put it on a formal basis. The other is the way of imposition by force or fear. The first is the way that the theorists of "the Six" believe they are pursuing. (Professor Beloff significantly quotes, though he does not examine, the view that the "Europe of the Six" is the Europe of the Counter-Reformation.) The second is the way that produced NATO. It needs no rubbing in that Great Britain belongs to the second but not to the first. (Professor Beloff is nowhere more English than when he argues that "the military approach has hitherto always achieved most.")

The essential difference between the two approaches lies in two differing conceptions of the sentiment of "being a European." Is this sentiment prior or posterior to the achievement of institutional unification? Most Englishmen would say it can only be posterior; and though there may have been notable exceptions who felt themselves to be "citizens of Europe," in Edward Gibbon's phrase, they are exceptions of the kind that prove the rule. Professor Beloff, however, has undertaken to assemble the thoughts of a group of people many of whom think the answer is "prior." The difference between the two is liable to produce two Europes which are not merely qualitatively different, but different in size, shape, and composition. Countries that would be excluded from the first conception, such as Turkey, are included in the second; others that would be included in the first, such as Spain, are excluded from the second. The result is that the only group of European countries which shows signs of really coalescing into a new unit of sovereignty is the highest common factor—the group that is unmistakably common to both conceptions. If "the Six" succeeds in forming a new kind of political union, it will be an important step. It will be irreversible and probably inextensible. But it will not be Europe.

There is in fact little chance that the *à priori*

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and the *à posteriori* Europe, the ideal and the empirical, ever will coincide in actuality. If a new and larger political organism does emerge from the present ferment, it will probably be no tidier or more logical a representative of its order of magnitude than the present nation-states are of theirs. As Professor Beloff points out, the nation-state, which was invented in Europe, is by no means yet obsolete. Here and there, in fact, it is not yet even fully realised, as examples like Luxembourg and San Marino serve to show; and some of the most important nation-states in Europe are less than a century old. The crucial point is, to what political unit the general sense of loyalty is primarily directed. For most so-called Europeans, the answer is still the nation-state. For some, it is still a smaller unit: quite apart from those who still live in autonomous city-states or grand duchies, there is still a strong particularism in Germany, for instance, or in the Balkans; and in common Greek parlance the word *patriotis* still means an inhabitant of the same village. Old political forms may still be vital while new ones are coming into being. Even Aristotle was still writing about the Greek city-state as the last word in political organisation while his pupil, Alexander of Macedon, was busy abolishing it.

Nevertheless, it is common ground to all but the obtusest reactionaries that none of the existing nation-states of Europe is large enough, in the simple sense of head of population, to stand on its own in a world dominated by two super-powers. It is equally impossible in the economic, the strategic, and the scientific-technological context for the nation-states of Europe singly to compete on equal terms with the U.S.A. and the U.S.S.R. Yet the realisation of this fact does not seem to be enough by itself to lead to the sort of action that reason and expediency dictate. What is to be done to bring that action about? Professor Beloff makes the interesting suggestion that

unless the European question can be injected into national politics as a central issue, that is to say one around which party divisions actually form, European integration in a political sense is unlikely to advance much beyond its present stage.

This is certainly a very improbable development in British political life, and therefore Professor Beloff's conclusion will disappoint his European friends. But in the economic, strategic, and scientific-technological senses, as distinct from the political sense, almost every important step so far has been the outcome of fear. And there is little reason to be found in Professor Beloff's book for expecting this pattern to be altered in future.

C. M. Woodhouse

Three Poets

A Winter Talent. By DONALD DAVIE. *Routledge and Kegan Paul.* 10s. 6d.

Brutus's Orchard. By ROY FULLER. *Deutsch.* 12s. 6d.

Rilke: Poems 1906-26. Translated by J. B. LEISHMAN. *Hogarth Press.* 25s.

OF COURSE we are living in reduced circumstances. "Common to all the poems is the conviction that in the present age the poet, no more than other men, can afford the large gesture and confident surrender to irrational afflatus." This is from the blurb to Mr. Donald Davie's latest volume; the syntax is ambiguous, but it means that we can none of us afford the confident surrender. Poetry for Mr. Davie is a dangerous trade, to be approached only with the utmost caution. Determined to run no risks, he anticipates somewhere or other in this volume almost all the criticisms that could possibly be made of it. No large gestures; metre has been loosened, but only "judiciously"; the penultimate piece answers a critic who has accused Mr. Davie of not daring to feel; and worry is expressed in other places about making the

verses scan and not saying more than one means. This meticulousness has its due reward. The poems have the virtues they profess. The language is cool, accurate, and nicely varied; sometimes these qualities are sufficiently heightened to become positively lively. As for the judicious loosening of metre—well, yes, one can detect, for a few occasional paces, something approaching a collected canter; and certainly there is none of the broken-down stumble that afflicts the ear in much contemporary verse. In criticism Mr. Davie has appeared as such a jealous guardian of the chastity of the muse that one almost began to fear for her health. However, she seems to be bearing up pretty well, if a little anxiously.

When the cloud of hypochondria lifts, Mr. Davie can be very good indeed. The best poems here are "Obiter Dicta," addressed to his father, and "Dissentient Voices," a sequence of four pieces about a Nonconformist childhood. They seem to have stronger roots than the rest, and show how good a writer Mr. Davie can be when he has something better to think about than purity of diction and being generally judicious about everything. The weakest work is in the section called "Italy." Mr. Kingsley Amis, a critic with whom I do not often find myself in agreement, has remarked, "We do not want any more poems about foreign cities." But very likely we don't. Mr. Davie quotes this pronouncement, anticipating criticism as usual; but he does not disarm it. It is almost impossible to make poetry about what are already works of art in their own right unless the vitality of the originals can be matched by a strong and fresh reaction to them. These dealings with Piranesi, Brunelleschi, the Renaissance in Tuscany, the Boboli gardens and all are at best judicious, at worst somewhat less.

The fact is that Mr. Davie, besides manifest integrity and seriousness, has a real talent at present suffering badly from under-nourishment. Whether this is due to a mistaken regimen or a poor digestion it is hard to say. No one can live on worry and a determination not to get the feet wet for very long. And this sort of anxious scrupulosity is separated by a thin line from self-conscious posturing. But you can't catch Mr. Davie out; looking back I see that he has already made the point himself:

*A conscios carriage must become a strut;
Fastidiousness can only stalk
And seem at last not even tasteful but
A ruffled hen too apt to squawk.*

To be sure, what with the dollar gap and the bank rate as high as it is, surrender to irrational afflatus is a terrible thing; but if one were to open the window just a little? I doubt in this case if the draught would be very dangerous,