

prise, leisure for cultivation of the good life, and a personal style appropriate for wooing the masses.

At this point, however, the parallel suggested by perusal of *The Kennedy Years* breaks down. What the Medici achieved through the vertical succession of a century, the more impatient Kennedys sought to accomplish in the space of about 30 years. Father Joe was still very much in charge of his vast business empire in 1961 and 1962 when John became President, Robert became Attorney General (the most powerful appointive office in the nation), son Edward U.S. Senator from Massachusetts, and son-in-law Sargent Shriver head of the Peace Corps. Nor did this array of power include the Cawdor and Glamis of political muscle and financial thew which made the Kennedy machine even more formidable. It was a startling achievement for a free republic, and its embodiment in the physical form of the Clan Kennedy, right down to Rat Pack impresario Frank Sinatra, friend of Kennedy in-law Peter Lawford, is made vivid in this montage of striking photographs. What the Florentines did in three generations, the Kennedys, our horizontal Medici, did in one.

A second difference emerges, not from the photographs, but from the text, prepared under the supervision of *The Times's* Day National News Editor Harold Faber. The narrative is for the most part spare and factual, tracing from the paper's archives the major elements of Kennedy's background, public history, and White House tenure. As might be expected in a book intended as a pictorial sacrament, it is slightly biased in favor of Kennedys and Democrats. It tends to gloss over such matters as Kennedy's backdown in Laos, omits the fact that his regime triggered the overthrow of a friendly government in Viet Nam, portrays the Cuban missile crisis of October '62 as a Kennedy "victory," and occasionally repeats official misstatements (e.g., that a hurricane prevented aerial reconnaissance of Cuba in the days immediately prior to October 14, 1962). Nevertheless, the net effect of the Kennedy record as spelled out by *The Times* is one of inadequacy and failure.

It is difficult, for example, to read even the most restrained and primly factual account of the April, 1961, Bay of Pigs episode without reflecting upon the shame and infamy it implies for the United States. One cannot review the history of the Berlin Wall, and all it meant in loss of life and freedom, without similar impressions. Nor can the most charitable description of what occurred in Viet Nam disguise the fact that in this

episode America cruelly betrayed a struggling ally.

The Kennedy story, in short, resembles the history of the Medici in all respects except the most important. The consolidation of immense power within the structure of a free republic, skill in courting and winning popular adulation, enormous wealth, even—granting the difference between a Bounarroti and a William Walton—patronage of scholarship and the arts; but not statecraft, or resolution in defense of the nation's interest. And that failing, unhappily, cancels all the rest.

Reviewed by M. STANTON EVANS

### *The Manichaeian Marxist*

*The Words*, by Jean-Paul Sartre; translated from the French by Bernard Frechtman. *New York: George Braziller, 1964.* 255 pp. \$5.00.

*The Marxism of Jean-Paul Sartre*, by Wilfred Desan. *Garden City: Doubleday & Company, 1965.* x + 320 pp. \$4.95.

IN THE 1920's and 1930's, with the discovery of young Marx's manuscripts of 1844, the labors of George Lukács, Alexandre Kojève, Benjamin Fondane, and others lent a new vigor to sagging Marxist studies by digging down to the foundations of Marxism, that is, to Hegel. For this century's intellectual history that was a most important event: Western intellectuals who had found Marx an undigestible economist were henceforward able to chew endlessly on the philosophical bone and its marrow: the concept of alienation.

Sartre is the archetype of the Marxist or quasi-Marxist intellectual who benefited by these discoveries; of Marxism he naively accepted almost the whole edifice since he admired its radical "point of departure from man's material conditions." Of existentialism he wrote later that its role would be fulfilled the day it achieved the transformation of Marxism into a philosophy of freedom for the human collectivity; it could then forever disappear "in the dialectic movement of history."

These two stages of Sartre's reflection are not so much rationally thought-out arguments as

quasi-autobiographical necessities for a man condemned to write while he worships action, or rather the concept of action. Simone de Beauvoir tells of the young Sartre who wore no ties to his classes as a teacher and lived in cheap hotels to protest the status symbols of the bourgeoisie. He himself reveals even more of this pose in the narrative of his early life: *The Words* describes indeed the frustrations of a little bourgeois lad living in plush comfort, loved and pampered—only to revile later the family and the milieu which permitted him to become the irresponsible and spoiled aging brat he is today.

Kicking up at his puritanic background, André Gide had exclaimed: "*Familles, je vous hais!*" But Gide was a gentleman who refused to exhibit his own family as a bunch of pompous clowns and timid souls. Sartre, the voluntary déclassé, has no such inhibitions: he ridicules his widowed mother and grandparents, not prompted by any real bitterness, but because they nurtured a forever hesitating petit-bourgeois intellectual. The three good souls who surrounded his childhood are above reproach: but with poisoned pen Sartre knows how to rigidify them retrospectively into types, immobilize, and thus better sneer at, their idiosyncrasies and petty problems. However, the villain of this autobiographical sketch is no other than the author.

Other aspects of the petit-bourgeois villain come into evidence in Desan's book on Sartre's "Marxism." Although unintended, the book does Sartre a disservice, because it is badly written, boring, and pompous, a desperate effort to treat a second-rate subject seriously. At a time when it is no longer fashionable even to recount why X or Y has broken with Marxism and the Communist Party, Desan chooses to explain why Sartre is a Marxist. And whatever the contortions, the reason is not flattering: Sartre is basically a Cartesian intellectual, and a typical bourgeois to boot, whose academic straightjacket does not permit him to learn and evolve. The journey to Marxism has been for him what a visit to the whorehouse may have been for his male forebears: an adventure—in Sartre's case an endless one which makes it more enjoyable, tormenting, and conveniently scandalous—like the tieless shirt.

Where does this leave Desan's book? His effort reminds me of Fr. de Lubac's assignment to save face for his fellow-Jesuit, Teilhard de Chardin. The latter's "doctrine" is in flat contradiction to the Church, to common sense, and the lessons of human nature. De Lubac's method is to show—oh, through what grotesque mental acrobatics!—

that Teilhard did not really mean what he viciously meant but something else, far more orthodox and sane. Similarly Desan. As I suggest before, Sartre tries to square the circle, reconcile Marxism and freedom, equate what he calls existentialist, concrete freedom with the Hegelian nostalgia to be alone and unfettered in the universe. His humble commentator gets hopelessly involved in the inextricable intricacies of the comic battle between *En-soi* and *Pour-soi*, so hopelessly involved, in fact, that like a mediocre student sweating over his term paper, he stops at every turn "to make the point," "to survey the ground so far covered."

But there is no ground, only an ever-deepening mire. Desan, poor soul, took it upon himself to explain and clarify his philosopher's latest product, the *Critique de la raison dialectique*. Normally, Sartre is a good writer, at times an excellent and masculine stylist; but as I suggested, he is an aging brat who decided to make the reader's task an agonizing one: he studded his book with unfinished reflections, purposely incorrect references, suspended enumerations, empty categories, and, finally, with a misleading, enigmatic table of contents. All this, as he admits, in imitation of life and art which are also unsystematic and free.

Desan could have tempered his gloomy enterprise with a little sense of humor. But no: he is deadly serious. The result is that with an unshakable determination he transcribes such sentences as this from the Master: The dialectic of the working man implies the "shaping of the present through the future, the interchange of the inert with the inorganic, negation, contradictions overcome, negation of negation, in short, totalization in action." Another gem: "The intelligibility of the praxis poses no problem and requires no super individual entity, but merely the individual act of interiorization of the ensemble and its striving toward the common purpose." We are also advised on the pages of the *Critique* that class struggle cannot be simply identified with "a double contrary alienation of two serialities in the pratico-inert." If only Marx had known!

If I have created the impression that the Sartrean game, uncritically interpreted by Desan, is a harmless one, I wish now to correct it. The harm is that through the writer's and playwright's prestige, Sartre has also become a fount of wisdom in leftist circles where it is no longer of *bon ton* to be an orthodox Marxist, but it is imperative to test theories and events against the "truths" Marx discovered. Desan himself defines a Marxist

as "one who sees History as progressing under the moving force of economics and man himself as a being of action, no longer held back by myth and speculation, but attempting within the progress of History to free himself of all alienations, whether they be political, economic, or religious." Thus the possibility that Marxism may also be only a myth—a myth alienating us farthest from reality!—is implicitly rejected, and its truth-value—rooted in the "progress of History"—is demonstrated. This is of course Sartre's position too, a position he cannot abandon for personal, I should say autobiographical, reasons. The result is that his brand of existentialism is shot through with contradictions and inconsistencies, and the more so as he attempts to clarify it.

Not even Desan can lift his Master out of the role of the fragile, porous Roquentin, narrator of *La Nausée*, in contemplation before the solid tree trunk in which he sees the compactness of essence unaffected by the *conscience malheureuse*. This ontological experience determined Sartre's entire life and activity. It has made of him a kind of Manichaeon, dividing the world between objectness and subjectness. (Perhaps the most exciting moment in the life of this typical intellectual was his discovery of Husserl, who claimed to reconcile them.) It has prevented him from joining the Communist Party and allowed him to retain a semblance of freedom, forever wavering. It even dictates his taste in literature and art: in Giacometti and Genet he found exemplars of existentialist freedom, while in John Dos Passos' novels he discovered characters plunged into the "social," yet remaining individuals.

This forever floating thinker is of course moored to Marxism but, characteristically, to a brand of stale Marxism covered by the dust of the Kremlin archives. His admirers may always refer to his splendid article in *Les Temps Modernes* (1946), "Materialism and Revolution," in which he denounced Marxism for predetermining history and blocking our freely chosen future. But in his commentator's servitude, Desan perhaps does not even realize the shameful enormities contained in, for example, the Sartrian analysis of the Budapest insurrection. It seems, then, that the Russian Communists had not yet learned how to mix correctly Marxist *knowledge* with the diversification of *projects* that existentialism recognizes. Unable to "envisage" other forms of socialism (in other words, not possessing the versatility of Saint Germain-des-Prés intellectuals), the Kremlin's leaders suppressed the Hungarian uprising. Not a word, of course, about Soviet

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imperialism or Russian geopolitical interests. Yet even here Sartre would not be Sartre without contradicting himself: the events of Budapest were possible only because petit-bourgeois elements, that is opportunists, had been diluting since 1948 the Hungarian workers' solid phalanx! The circle of unreasoning is closed, the Soviet Union vindicated.

Let us vindicate, partly, Wilfrid Desan too. His book is arid because he chose as his subject an arid man, his phony engagement, and his freedom which goes whoring after a grim and stolid doctrine. *The Words* reveal a rather insufferable little Mandarin, and the adult is no better. "That old crumbling structure, my imposture, is also my character," Sartre ends his confessions. "I still write. What else can I do?"

Reviewed by THOMAS MOLNAR

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## *Poverty—There and Here*

***Point of the Lance***, by Sargent Shriver.  
New York: Harper & Row, 1964. 240 pp. \$4.95.

MR. SHRIVER put the Peace Corps together more or less single-handedly after a blueprint by John F. Kennedy. He has run it ever since, and is now branching out into the wider program against domestic poverty. One of the oddities of his book—and there are more than one—is his assumption in the speeches and magazine articles which make up the text that the two assignments are pretty much comparable, of which more below. Another oddity is the choice of a war-like title for an eminently peaceful enterprise. For as everyone knows, the Peace Corps is one of the successes of American policy just because it has not aimed at tyrannicide, or at razing social institutions to start afresh, or at any exercise of force and arms. There was in this case no assumption that parliamentary democracy is an export commodity to be packaged, shipped, delivered, installed, and set to ticking like a dollar watch or a fifty-million-dollar steel mill. Indeed, it was acknowledged from the start that steel mills are not often the first need of underdeveloped countries. Stressed instead were the improvement of agriculture, the drainage of swamps, the extension of literacy and the teaching of hygiene. No American was drafted for such missions, but any American could go—given health of mind and body

and the altruism to devote two years of his mortal allowance to foreign service at foreign living standards.

One of the values of the Peace Corps to the American community may be, indeed, in the nature of a moral feedback. The first corpsmen and corpswomen are beginning to return and what some of them find in their native land disturbs them. Abroad they have seen the lives that men have lived immemorably, that most men live today—lives at the edge of hunger and under the afflictions of climate and disease; that essential and enduring human condition, in short, out of which has come the wisdom of the race concerning man's true role in the universe. These youths and girls come home to an affluence unique in history and place, to petulance and indulgence and violence and the whole range of *anomie*—and some have caught the dismay that also troubles some of the stay-at-homes. A glossy advertising page proclaiming "a new panty-girdle with something added behind your back to plot a new curve under all your fashions" may seem quite unimportant to a Peace Corps girl who has seen life and death in areas where steatopygia is prized, true enough, but only as naturally evolved. Any leavening sobriety that these young people can give to our sensate culture will be a home bonus on top of their foreign achievements.

But the domestic anti-poverty program is something else again. Doubtless it will have its triumphs, but Mr. Shriver is likely to find more differences between the two assignments than he seems to anticipate. Abroad his Peace Corps volunteers have worked with the motivated, the ambitious, with leaders eager to learn and with others to be taught. It is not heartless to say that the Job Corps will often be dealing with another kind of beneficiary. Opportunity does vary in the United States, but an incident described by Mr. Shriver himself shows how much of it exists. In Nepal a local councilman, flourishing a newly bestowed scholarship to Lumumba University in Moscow, dropped into the Peace Corps quarters to jeer about race prejudice in America. "Sure, let's talk about it," said Peace Corpsman Carl Jorgenson, graduate of Harvard, tall, personable, son of an NAACP leader in Washington, D.C. Mr. Jorgenson is only a somewhat recent addition to a long parade of Martin Luther Kings, of Thurgood Marshalls, of Ralph Bunches, of Langston Hugheses—and of Al Smiths, Joe Kennedys, Abe Ribicoffs, José Saezes, *et al.*

Abroad Mr. Shriver has been dealing with people who have never had opportunity in the sense