

times—during the heyday of the blackest reaction and in holy Moscow, the city which was completely subservient to despotic rulers (enemies of the Jews who like Sergei Alexandrovitch persecuted them with passionate brutality)—such indulgence, I say, was considered impossible and unimaginable. Of all the Jewish artists there was in Moscow only one other,

Levitán, who was similarly honored.

I know that Pasternak is not one of the “great luminaries.” But one thing is certain: it is the people of his kind and his level, men of talent and industry, men of culture and tradition, each in his field wherever he may be, who are the doers and the catalysts in every generation; they constitute the building blocks of every nation.

Top Commando of the Cuban Coup

“Fidel Castro: Rebel—Liberator or Dictator?” by Jules Dubois (*Bobbs-Merrill*. 391 pp. \$5), leaves unanswered the question posed in the subtitle of this biography of the new Latin American strong man, but it does throw light on a blistered situation. Reporter for CBS News, Blaine Littell covered the Cuban post-revolutionary period.

By Blaine Littell

JULES DUBOIS has produced the first English language account of Fidel Castro's revolution in Cuba. As the *Chicago Tribune's* Latin American correspondent, Mr. Dubois is perhaps the only reporter who could have undertaken this lightning task. He first met Castro in 1947 and has covered the Cuban political scene extensively ever since. After the revolution had been won and Batista had fled, North American correspondents had a difficult time trying to make sense of the electric, sleepless, and confusing days. However, of all the reporters about, Mr. Dubois was quickly identified and sought out as one of the few who really knew what was going on.

Thus, when Mr. Dubois set out to write this book he had his facts in hand. The book is full of them—names, dates, and faithful, unabridged translations of many of the letters, radio broadcasts, speeches, and manifestos that issued from the prolific pen of Fidel Castro. In the eyes of American reporters, Castro's marathon speeches and five-hour news conferences needed editing. And so, for that matter, does Mr. Dubois. He has assembled his facts chronologically but he has not weeded out the ones that lead nowhere (and recent Cuban history is full of these); nor has he stitched the important and meaningful events together in such a way as to make clear why it finally became possible for Castro, who started with nothing, to triumph over

Batista, who started with everything.

Perhaps it is too soon for anyone to answer the questions posed in the book's title. But there are clues to Cuba's future course, and Castro's own words and actions, as transcribed by Mr. Dubois, provide many of them.

The pattern of Castro's revolution was set in its early days. After invading Cuba by sea in December, 1956, Castro and a small band of followers headed for the Sierra Maestra.

When we arrived at the Sierra Maestra [Castro told the author], we executed a ranch foreman who had accused tenant farmers and peasants of being pro-rebel, and who had increased the holdings of his landlord from ten acres to 400 acres by taking the land of those he denounced. So we tried him and executed him and won the affection of the peasants.

This statement helps as much as



Above: Fidel Castro addressing the nation from speaker's stand at Camp Columbia (now Liberty City) on night of his triumphal entry into Havana. An inspired Major Camilo Cienfuegos stands by. Right: A wistful-eyed Castro at age three in his home at Biran, Mayari, Province of Oriente.

any to illustrate Castro's capacity for sizing up a situation and taking direct, if harsh, action. It also demonstrates Castro's sense of public relations since to have shown leniency during a period of Batista-inspired terrorism would have been taken by the Cuban people as a sign of weakness. Castro, himself, seldom employed terror as a weapon. As a matter of fact, he was scrupulously fair in his treatment of those who, in his opinion, were fighting him honorably.

To most Americans, Castro was a distant, shadowy, and somewhat romantic figure until he won. Then, all too swiftly, he landed on the front pages as a fist-shaking anti-American calling for vengeance. If we concluded that he was a dangerous hot-head, it is Mr. Dubois's contention that we were judging Castro out of context. Castro and what he stands for were not conceived overnight but emerged slowly and logically. Mr. Dubois also makes clear that Castro's attitude toward the United States might have been entirely different if we had played another kind of diplomatic game in Cuba. But, instead, we gave Batista arms, which he used against the rebels, and our military missions trained his soldiers. Thus, both diplomatically and militarily, we were backing a dictator against a self-proclaimed democrat and this, quite naturally, angered and continues to anger Castro.

It is the author's conclusion that if Castro has failed to understand our behavior, it is not entirely his fault, and if we have failed to understand him, that, too, is not his fault.



After the Altar, the Alternations

"The Sensualists," by Ben Hecht (Messner, 256 pp. \$3.95), explores the various facets of modern love and lust. It is reviewed by the novelist Stanley Kauffmann, who is a critic of both contemporary fiction and films.

By Stanley Kauffmann

THIS is Ben Hecht's first novel in more than twenty-five years, and the gentlest thing to say of it is that he is somewhat out of practice. Mr. Hecht has won a large reputation as a writer of short stories and screenplays, as a newspaperman, biographer, and autobiographer. He is the co-author of three fine theatre pieces, "The Front Page," "Twentieth Century," and "The Great Magoo." (Jean-Louis Barrault thinks the first is one of the best American plays; this reviewer thinks the last an unappreciated vulgar delight.) He comes to his latest work full of years and experience, but, alas, they are not evident in this book, which would be callow and clumsy from any hand and is staggeringly so from his.

It would be incongruous to call his characters by name since they are virtually devoid of reality. The story deals with a Handsome Worldly Husband and a Beautiful Innocent Wife. He gets involved with a Night-Club Singer, who is desired by a Sadistic Detective. Husband is implicated in murder of Singer's estranged husband. Wife, shocked at revelation of his in-

fidelity, nevertheless believes him guiltless of the crime and tries to help him. She meets Singer, who seduces her into a Lesbian experience. This completely deranges the Detective, who is also an impotent drug addict. More violence follows. Wife, sadder and wiser, eventually rejoins Husband.

The point of the story, presumably, is that because of the Husband's misdeeds the sheltered Wife is led to a broader and more tolerant humanity. It is a quite serviceable irony; but here, besides the incredibility of the characters, there is an ineptitude in construction and execution that would be discouraging in a beginner. Mr. Hecht's novel may be based on a true story, as he tells us, but it has not been transcribed into a truthful fiction.

Worst of all—worse even than the facile Freud with which the book is laced—are the epigrams scattered like aphoristic tinsel. "Marriage is depravity with a license." "A woman's lower lip is for kissing. The upper one for crying." "A wife who doesn't betray a husband at least once makes a happy marriage impossible." "News is always bad, that's why it's news." If these few samples strike you as penetrating or witty, you may like the book.

Mr. Hecht says on the jacket that he wrote "The Sensualists" as a "sort of seminar on modern eroticism," which is curious because, despite its subject matter, it has basically a rather old-fashioned, almost prudish air. In understanding of sexual emotions the book is juvenile compared with numerous modern novels, and on physical detail it shyly turns its back. In odd contrast two brutal murders are vividly detailed.

To write thus disparagingly of an author of Mr. Hecht's achievements can only be an occasion of regret. In the period between wars he and Charles MacArthur and Gene Fowler were chief members of a school of journalistic *littérateurs* noted for warm-hearted cynicism, amusing if self-conscious verbal pyrotechnics, and a respectable competence in storytelling. It was the chat of the newspaperman's saloon glorified on paper, and it had a certain beery eloquence. This novel, however, is the thin rinsings of a barrel that is—at the moment, anyway—empty.



—Lotte Meitner-Graf.

Elizabeth Taylor—"cool . . . prose."

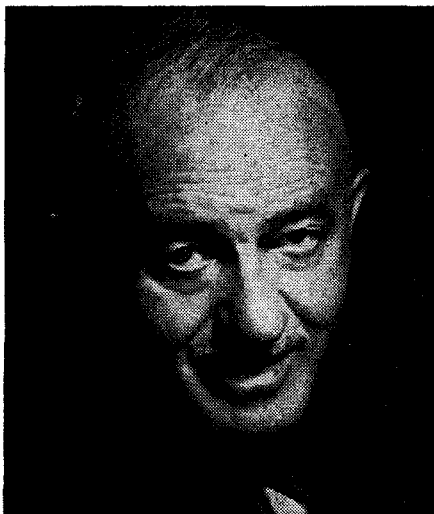
Basics by the Thames

"The Blush and Other Stories," by Elizabeth Taylor (Viking, 217 pp. \$3.50), reveals the subtleties and the solitude that lie beneath common experiences. William Peden, who discusses the collection, is a professor of English at the University of Missouri.

By William Peden

THE short stories and novels of Elizabeth Taylor have always depicted the complexity and confusion which underlie the most apparently orderly human relationships. With admirable understanding Mrs. Taylor reveals the hearts and minds of her characters in a cool, disciplined prose, which is as good as any being written today on either side the Atlantic. "The Blush and Other Stories," her eighth or ninth book, is certainly one of her best.

Except for an unusual turn-of-the-century story about a tormented governess and her bizarre pupil—Mrs. Taylor's version, perhaps, of James's "The Turn of the Screw"—these stories of today's England are set in or near the Thames Valley. The setting, be it a noisy pub or a quiet private home on the river with dew-drenched gardens and flower-scented rooms, is an important element in all her work. Mrs. Taylor is at her best when she explores the drama inherent in such "undramatic" situations as that of a group of girls preparing for a dance, the summer adventures of two spinster sisters, a young woman's tongue-tied embarrassment at a very stuffy dinner. Even when she writes a story around so hackneyed a situation as that of the bride-



—Philippe Halsman.

Ben Hecht—" . . . lower lip for kissing."