

guards themselves?) Indeed, if one is to take the NCTE's declaration at its word, what need is there of any guards at all? Why didn't the NCTE simply dissolve itself after publishing its silly manifesto?

Certainly if the NCTE disappeared tomorrow, it would not be missed by those who are serious about honing their written expression. A commonplace among professional editors and most teachers of rhetoric is that the best writing about the craft of writing comes from non-academics (Herbert Spencer, H.W. Fowler, George Orwell, Wilson Follett, Robert Graves, E.B. White, etc.) or from academics outside the field of English (principally in history and the hard sciences: e.g., Jacques Barzun and Lewis Thomas). John Simon, a non-academic, belongs to an endangered species: the cultured man of letters. He is currently a drama and film critic for *The Hudson Review*, *New York* magazine, and *National Review*.

Yugoslav by birth and American by choice, Mr. Simon acquired English deliberately (I use the word in its full sense) as a teenager—English being his fifth language after the four he had acquired by age 13: French, Hungarian, German, and his native Serbo-Croatian. In *Paradigms Lost*, Mr. Simon exhibits the work of an amateur in the best and literal sense of the word: He confesses a love affair with his carefully acquired English, and his wit is unleashed mercilessly upon those who would debase the language. His standards—although hardly “impossible,” as some of his victims have charged—are nonetheless tough. Long before he began *Paradigms Lost*, he had started grumbling publicly about the debasement of Western culture. “Art,” he once wrote,

is not in the melting of high and low, nor in the kicking over of the priorities of searching penetrancy and uncompromising effort to express the ineffable; though it keeps its doors open to all who care to enter, it is not a democratic fun house but a place of comic or tragic insight available fully only to an enlightened perception, a spiritual aristocracy.

Such a remark today is likely to provoke charges of “elitism,” but only from those who would ignore the keynote phrase in the remark: “Open to all who care to enter.” In fact, Mr. Simon finds his most enthusiastic audience among readers of the popular press: The essays that make up the collection *Paradigms Lost* first appeared over a period of three years (1977-79) in *Esquire* and *More* magazines—hardly what you would call stuffy outlets.

Far from being “elitist,” the effort to fashion and preserve good English fascinates just about every English speaker and is profoundly democratic. To be sure, it's an effort that assumes the existence of standards, that disavows intellectual leveling, that sustains a hierarchy of preferences; it is also an effort that derives its judgments from consensus, that maintains a common language amid divergent tongues, that stays open to anyone who cares to take on the challenge. Failure may be endemic to the pursuit of elegant and

precise expression, but to abandon the chase is to surrender the health of a culture.

In *Paradigms Lost*, John Simon extends an invitation to join him in a running, perhaps losing battle against the current debasement of English and the attendant cultural sickness of an egocentric era. His expression is often impish, always lively, occasionally self-ironic, intermittently racy, at times cajoling, usually humorous—but his invitation to arms and the battle itself are serious. We're all cordially invited. □

## THE SPANISH REVOLUTION: THE LEFT AND THE STRUGGLE FOR POWER DURING THE CIVIL WAR

Burnett Bolloten / The University of North Carolina Press

\$29.00, \$14.00 (paper)

Stanley G. Payne

The Spanish Revolution is still the forgotten revolution of the twentieth century. It was overshadowed by the Civil War that accompanied it and above all by the mythology generated by the war, a mythology that has

Stanley G. Payne is chairman of the Department of History at the University of Wisconsin-Madison.

gripped the Western intelligentsia, though with waning intensity, ever since. The dominant image of the Spanish Civil War as a struggle between “fascism and democracy” for long precluded a clear understanding of the real nature of the Spanish contest itself. There was no democracy and only a certain amount of fascism in what was in fact a

revolutionary/counterrevolutionary war, the only clear-cut conflict of this kind during the twentieth-century west of Hungary or Greece.

The scholarly demythologization of the Spanish war probably began in 1961, when Hugh Thomas published the first edition of his general history, I brought out a history of Spanish fascism, and Burnett Bolloten produced his earlier study, *The Grand Camouflage*. Although Thomas and I were generally praised for our efforts, Bolloten encountered a great deal of abuse. The title of his first book referred to the effort by the Spanish Communist party (and by implication, leftist publicists), whose aim was nothing less than an extremely violent collectivist revolution, and the establishment of a Communist-dominated “People's Republic,” to hide its true purposes under the facade of Republican democracy. It was denounced by old and new Left alike as a crypto-fascist or pro-Franquist attempt to besmirch the glories of the Popular Front, a sort of historiographic McCarthyism. The fact that it was proportionately the most thoroughly documented of the three studies meant little to Bolloten's critics, who damned him on both personal and political grounds, even though they were very hard put to argue with his direct evidence.

Burnett Bolloten has probably devoted more of his life to the study of the Spanish war than any other living



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scholar outside Spain. He originally worked as a United Press correspondent in Spain during the war, and subsequently invested years forming a massive documentary collection of materials from Republican refugees in France and in Mexico (where he lived for more than a decade), as well as from Spain itself. Later organized as the Bolloten Collection of the Hoover Institution in California,

these materials have earned the gratitude of an entire generation of scholars.

His new book is a massive expansion and reworking of the original volume that now stands as the definitive account of the politics of the revolutionary Left in Spain during the first crucial year of the Civil War. During the first ten months (July 1936 to May 1937) most of the main

political events of the Republican zone took place: the outburst of the Anarchist/Socialist revolution, the formation of a Popular Front revolutionary government, the dramatic growth of Spanish Communism, the political defeat of the Anarchists and their allies, and the organization of the first new-style "People's Republic" government under Communist hegemony.

All this is narrated and analyzed by Bolloten in full detail and on the basis of a thorough and meticulous use of primary sources absolutely unequaled in any other account. Although the new study has encountered some of the same politicized and ad hominem abuse met by its predecessor, Bolloten is not at all a political writer but a scholar and historian who offers a more objective and dispassionate account of this dramatic contest than most university professors would be capable of.

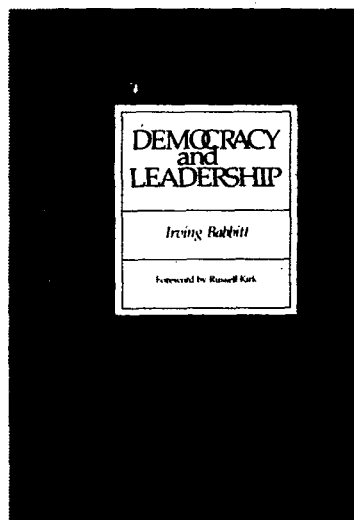
The Spanish Revolution is unique in this century both because it is the only one to have taken place in a West European country, and because it was a pluralistic collectivist revolution not originally dominated by a one-party Communist regime. The revolution itself was carried by three forces: the anarchosyndicalist CNT above all, the Spanish Socialists, and to a lesser degree the small semi-Trotskyist POUM in Catalonia. The middle-class radicals of left Republicanism played a largely Kerenskyist role except in the Basque country, where Basque nationalists proved more independent and (in those days) more fastidious.

Spanish Anarchism has frequently seemed a romantic cause to Western liberals. Anarchists were free of Marxist dogma, repudiated centralization, and appeared spontaneous and individualistic in behavior. They often saw the dangers of Popular Front alliance more clearly than many middle-class liberals. More than other leftist revolutionaries they behaved like free men.

Yet Anarchism was a Jekyll-and-Hyde phenomenon. The other side of Spanish Anarchist behavior, frequently overlooked by admirers, was a penchant for large-scale political violence and direct action of the most arbitrary sort. Spontaneous collectivism was not necessarily spontaneous at all, but involved the imposition of local dictatorship in every plant and district where a majority did not happen to favor Anarchism. As Horacio Prieto, one of their national leaders, wrote afterward, "We went straight to a dictatorship; even the Bolsheviks themselves, in their first historical opportunity, were not so quick to establish absolute power in Russia," a conclusion that was, *sensu strictu*, correct.

Before and during the Spanish Revolution, Spanish Socialists tended to divide in three. The largest group supported immediate revolution, but a social democratic minority strove to moderate the revolution and return to Republican legality. The smallest

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### Democracy and Leadership

By Irving Babbitt

A penetrating work of political and moral philosophy, first published in 1924, *Democracy and Leadership* is packed with wisdom. Irving Babbitt was a distinguished professor of French literature at Harvard and a leader of the intellectual movement called American Humanism. This was his only directly political book, and in it Babbitt applies the principles of humanism to the civil social order. He summarizes the principal political philosophies; contrasts Rousseau with Burke; describes true and false liberals; distinguishes between ethical individualism and destructive egoism; and stands up for work and duty. *Democracy and Leadership* joins the broken links between politics and morals—and that accomplishment marks it as a work of genius. With a foreword by Russell Kirk.

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minority joined forces with the Communists.

Communist policy and power in Spain have often been misinterpreted, in part because it was assumed that Communist policy must have been uniform and unidimensional, the same inside and outside Spain. In fact, then as in other periods and countries, it was politically heterogeneous. Internationally, the Popular Front regime was represented as a middle-class parliamentary democracy; within the leftist zone in Spain itself its declared goal was to make collectivist revolution more disciplined and responsible; in Catalonia, the most revolutionary region of all, Catalan Communists had sometimes to compete with Anarchists in revolutionary appeals and fervor. While Republican constitutionalism was championed abroad, the Popular Front government of the Republican zone was defined by March 1937 as a "People's Republic of a new type," from which all rightist influences had been eliminated.

Apologists have often claimed that whatever the Communists' shortcomings or ultimate designs, theirs was the only program of discipline, centralization, and organization (backed up by massive Russian arms shipments and technical advisers) that could have won the Civil War. Although Communist military activities were often much less efficient than sometimes painted, this judgment is probably correct in that the Communists were the only leftist party willing to subordinate the revolution almost completely to the requirements of military power; a standard Communist policy throughout the world. Thus a large section of Bolloten's book—nearly 120 pages—is devoted to the struggle between the revolutionary militia program and centralized Communist policy, a struggle that the Communists won almost completely.

Just as Communist policy within Spain was adjusted according to regional, national, or international levels of propaganda, so the political goals of the Civil War were at least twofold for Soviet strategy. The commonly accepted view is that the main Soviet concern in the Spanish war was strategic, and that Soviet intervention was designed to counter German and Italian influence as well as to rally the Western powers to join with the Soviet Union in an agreement for collective security. There is little doubt that Soviet strategic concerns overrode all other interests, yet it also seems clear that leadership and domination of the Spanish Revolu-

tion was a major Soviet goal within Spain itself. Bolloten explains in detail Soviet-inspired efforts to fuse the Spanish Socialist and Communist parties into a main instrument of Communist hegemony. This specific target was not achieved, but during the last two years of the struggle Communist influence at most levels of Republican operations was pre-eminent.

Since 1945 Soviet historiography has dubbed the Spanish Civil War the "Spanish national revolutionary war," thus assimilating it to post-

World War II "wars of national liberation." In the late 1940s while the People's Democracies were being established in Eastern Europe, wartime Republican Spain was sometimes hailed as the first example of such a wartime revolutionary transition regime. How the Communists managed to bend the Spanish Revolution to this end has been recounted by Bolloten in masterful and telling detail. Students of contemporary history and of the revolutions of the twentieth century will long be in his debt. □

THE STRETCHFORD CHRONICLES:  
25 YEARS OF PETER SIMPLE  
Michael Wharton with an introduction by Kingsley Amis  
The Daily Telegraph Press / 6.75 pounds (\$16.20)

Aram Bakshian, Jr.

I have long suspected that most economic writers are broke, most pornographers are impotent, and most humorists suffer from chronic bouts of spleen and melancholy. All of them choose their subjects more from frustration than inspiration. No less a humorist than Mark Twain seems to have agreed with me. "The secret source of Humor itself," he wrote, "is not joy but sorrow." Thus the best and most forceful topical humor usually comes from writers angry or aggrieved at the way things are going, whether what they yearn for is a return to lost orthodoxies or a departure into fresh heresies.

The best American example in this century was probably H.L. Mencken who lived long enough to lambaste both the petty bourgeois crassness of pre-Depression America and the collectivist, levelling excesses of the centralized welfare state. Since Mencken's departure, however, most of our topical and political humor has turned anemic. The predictably plastic inanities of Art Buchwald and the genteel tittering of Russell Baker seldom register strongly as either entertainment or social commentary. Tom Wolfe comes much closer with his precise razor wit and one R. Emmett Tyrrell, Jr.'s rollicking fulminations in the pages of this journal

Aram Bakshian, Jr., a Washington-based writer and aide to several Republican Presidents, is co-author of *The Future under President Reagan* published last January by Arlington House.

and the *Washington Post* are almost always apt and well-aimed. But there is precious little else.

The fault, I suspect, lies not in our language but in ourselves. English is one of the world's richest tongues for comic invective; since Chaucer's day it has been unsurpassed as a humorous literary medium. But while this remains true in England, something has gone wrong in America. My own theory is that, shortly after we became the leading free world power toward the end of World War II many of us began to take ourselves a bit too seriously. The funny bone of the liberal cultural and political establishment atrophied.

Thank God for England and Peter Simple, for 25 years and over four million words now, the outrageously funny and occasionally profound "Way of the World" columnist for London's venerable *Daily Telegraph*. Equal parts Lewis Carroll, Dean Swift, George Orwell, Evelyn Waugh, and P.G. Wodehouse, the worthy Simple (whose real name is Michael Wharton) has created a brilliantly eccentric gallery of characters—politicians, bureaucrats, trendies, freaks of the literary, academic, and theatrical worlds, pop psychologists, left-wing social scientists, and other charlatans—to populate his own fictive field forever English, the imaginary communities of Stretchford and Nerdley, nurseries for what Kingsley Amis has rightly called "some of the funniest writing of our time." The

best of it is now available in *The Stretchford Chronicles: 25 Years of Peter Simple*, orderable from international booksellers or directly from the *Daily Telegraph* in London.

The variety is rich; each of Simple's four-a-week columns includes several individual items ranging from boorish advice to the lovelorn dispensed by the bombastic Clare Howitzer to mind-boggling tidbits such as the discovery of a fourth Brontë sister by Simple's stock literary hack, author-critic Julian Birdbath. The fourth Brontë, whose name, Birdbath tells us, was Doreen, "had little in common with her sisters. She was a brisk, bouncing woman whose insistence on keeping all the windows of Haworth Parsonage open may have contributed to their early deaths. . . . Her own interests were mainly in dog-breeding, ballistics and light engineering."

Trendy cinematic monstrosities of the Ken Russell variety come in for harsher handling, as in this mock interview:

"What did Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart do in the struggle for social justice in feudal, class-ridden 18th century Austria, even then ripe for take-over by the Nazis? What did he do to protest against the racist horrors of the slave trade? What did he do to fight against the evils of organized religion?"

"I'll tell you. Nothing! He just spent his time writing music and sucking up to the crowned heads of Europe. At one time he even worked for a reactionary clergyman, the Prince Archbishop of Salzburg—later, needless to say, one of Hitler's favorite haunts!"

"It makes me sick. And when you see my film it'll make you a lot sicker." . . . Ron Fussell, the brilliant producer, was talking of his new film about the life and work of Mozart. . . . As he spoke he danced brilliantly up and down, occasionally hacking at the furniture with an axe or setting his desk on fire in a frenzy of compassionate hatred.

In his own words, the film will really "put the boot in." Fussell makes no secret of his determination, at whatever cost—actually he's getting a special producer's fee of 150,000 pounds—to "shock viewers out of their complacency and make these wretched, boring little suburban shopkeepers sit up."

One highlight is a daring scene where Mozart, as a sexually precocious child prodigy, is dandled on the knee of Marie Antoinette, or Maria Theresa, or Catherine the Great or somebody. "Though dandling is not exactly the word for it," chuckled Ron.

Then there is Simple's archetypical clerical trendy—a sort all too familiar on both sides of the Atlantic in recent years—the Reverend Doctor Spaceley-Trellis, "go-ahead Bishop of Bevingdon," whose grovelling before the cult of left-wing youth goes so far that he castigates God Himself for being "out of touch with current trends. His attitudes on such vital matters as