Osbong. It is about the adventures of an American insurance salesman there, one Calvin Mullet, and begins as though it were a pure Bob Hope script. This scene, for instance, comes straight from *The Road to Blantyre.* A tall African has ordered Calvin, who is sitting in a bar with his black girl-friend Mira, to buy him a drink, but Mira has sworn at the man:

> The man leaned over and spat into Mira's beerglass.
> Calvin quickly exchanged glasses with Mira. He said, "He didn't mean it", hopefully.
> The man growled.
> "Hit him!" said Mira to Calvin. "He did spit! Beat him!"
> 'I couldn't do a thing like that", said Calvin. He tried to smile at the man, but his smile was that squinting grimace of a person swallowing hard.

This is the best thread in the book, and comes up intermittently. But Calvin's sentimental feeling for Mira and other humble African folk increases, while his scorn both for African politicians and African revolutionaries gets shriller, until the book seems to be bidding for ultimate seriousness, without offering anything more than a farcical scene to be serious about.

Jerzy Kosinski's *Being There*[4] is a short fable telling how Chance, an illiterate gardener who has acquired an expensive suit, gets caught up by accident in the world of American high finance and government. By uttering nothing except platitudes about gardening when asked questions about business and politics, he is soon inspiring the nation and being groomed for President. This is like a product of the literary-chemical industry, a seductively-flavoured pill of pure irony that dissolves smoothly and rapidly in the mouth. But it will not affect anyone's system for long.

[4] *Being There.* By JERZY KOSINSKI. Bodley Head, £1.40.

Damaged Instruments

By Douglas Dunn

THE POEMS in Sylvia Plath's *The Colossus* are largely flawed by a rhythmical and lexical vulgarity. However, many of them are very good poems, there is a powerful sense of them having come from a single, eccentric imagination, and they are full of strange and startling expressions. They are also identifiably by the author of *Ariel.* For example, there are forecasts of *Ariel*'s subject-matter, that evolution of psychological background, domestic oppression and public and private pain, into a private and ultimate specialisation. In order to achieve that unique and powerful poetry it was necessary to abandon the earlier clotted style. She herself said of the *Ariel* poems: " . . . I have found myself having to read them aloud to myself. Now this is something I didn't do. For example, my first book *The Colossus*—I can't read any of the poems aloud now. I didn't write them to be read aloud. In fact, they quite quietly bore me. Now these very recent ones—I've got to say them. I speak them to myself. Whatever lucidity they may have comes from the fact that I say them aloud." I doubt if many people find most of *Ariel* exactly lucid, but there is a quite obvious liberation of tone and freedom of movement in her later verse which is unlike anything in *The Colossus.* It will be reasonable to suggest that the compulsion to dramatise what she had come to see as her identity was so strong, and so artistically felt, that it was necessary to devise a way of writing that would be a literary version of the identity she was obsessed with fulfilling—in other words she had to find her "own voice", that unriddable cliché.

The poems in *Ariel* were written in 1962 and 1963. Between then and the poems in *The Colossus* (written between 1956 and 1959) Plath was perhaps feeling towards her final

PRODUCED 2005 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

style, although it seems more likely, bearing in mind that legendary remark about writing three poems a day seven days a week at four in the morning, that the final style was realised very quickly. In this new collection, *Crossing the Water*,[1] Ted Hughes has collected a number of poems written in this so-called "transitional" period. Many have already been printed in magazines and in two private press selections by the Turret Press and the Rainbow Press, and another volume, *Winter Trees*, is promised.

Crossing the Water is much freer in style than the first book. There is still something formulaic and precious about her phrase-making: ". . . a valedictory, pale hand"; or "Black, admonitory cliffs." However, there is more of that zany, accurate and unexpected imagery that is so central to the style of *Ariel*, and also the first book. Alert, nervous, and often domestic, it is one of her peculiar strengths:

Now, in valleys narrow
And black as purses, the house lights
Gleam like small change

The city melts like sugar
Now the pills are worn out and silly as classical gods

All morning, with smoking breath, the handyman
Has been draining the goldfish ponds.
They collapse like lungs . . . .

This demotic kind of simile-making is very feminine. She mocks the masculine world with flurries of domestic detail. The irritation and peevishness of this is profound miles beyond the fashionable nonsense of Women's Lib, and it is an essential strand of what Alvarez has called "the terrible unforgivingness of her verse . . . violent resentment that this should have been done to *her*."

BUT BY QUOTING disjointed excerpts I don't want to give the impression that the book is a mere happy hunting ground of stray felicities, important only in relation to *Ariel*. Sustained poems of great quality are gathered in this book. "In Plaster", for example, is a monologue spoken by an invalid about the plaster mould that encases her, and which has become an image of her death. Despite the morbid whimsy on which the poem is founded, it is a remarkable poem objectifying a state of mind, and it leads her to frightening statements:

She wanted to leave me, she thought she was superior,
And I'd been keeping her in the dark, and she was resentful,

[1] *Crossing the Water*. By SYLVIA PLATH. Faber, £1.25.

The Poems of William Blake
Edited by W. H. Stevenson
Text by D. V. Erdman
All Blake's verse, including the scattered verses and epigrams. Fully annotated, giving whatever information is necessary so that the reader may interpret more easily for himself.
£4·25 Net

From Coleridge to Gore:
A Century of Religious Thought in Britain
B. M. G. Reardon
"There is so much one could praise in this book." Financial Times
". . . he has handled his mass of material so deftly that a reader follows him, happily held." Times Educational Supplement
£3·25 Net

Family, Class and Education: A Reader
Edited by Maurice Craft
An analysis of the complex relationship between home background and school performance.
Cased £2·50 Net Paper £1·25 Net

Britain in Balance
W. A. P. Manser
Calls for an end to the mistaken cult of the export surplus and to the persistent mood of self-denigration with which it is surrounded.
£2·75 Net

Longman

PRODUCED 2005 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Wasting her days waiting on a half-corpse!
And secretly she began to hope I'd die.

"Blackberrying" is a poem of menacing description. Like many others in the book it is made from direct statements—"The only thing to come now is the sea"—leading into surprising language and imagery—"and a din like silversmiths/ Beating and beating at an intractable metal." Above all, however, the new ingredient in her poetry of this period is an improved sense of drama, a much stronger narrative interest, as well as an accompanying thinning out of the clots that made that kind of writing impossible in *The Colossus*, although she came close to it in "The Disquieting Muses."

What struck me most after reading *Crossing the Water* was not just that it was so good, or that none of the poems there had been thought good enough for *Ariel*, but that *Ariel* itself represents such a unified stretch of work, such a strong and tragically magnificent working out of a single complicated theme. Only one poem in the new book might be at home in *Ariel*. "The Tour", a parable of a confrontation between the safe life and the terrors of endangered existence, set entirely in a female context, has all that harrowing vernacular directness of her best-known poems, "Daddy" and "Lady Lazarus". However, it is the imaginative power of a poem like "In Plaster" or "Insomniac" that forecasts what I consider to be her best poem—"The Bee Meeting." There is something shrill about "Daddy" and "Lady Lazarus" which, although understandable as overstatements, seem to attain a theatricality, an interior melodrama, that I find hard to take.

Nightlong in the granite yard, invisible cats
Have been howling like women, or damaged instruments.

Crossing the Water is an indispensable book, and Sylvia Plath one of that handful of modern poets whom intelligent readers will feel, more and more, that they have no option but to try and understand.

"SOMETHING is taking place," says the first line of "Rites of Passage," the first poem in Thom Gunn's *Moly*.[2] In the context of Gunn's poetry at this stage it is wishful thinking.

"Rites of Passage" is itself a poem of anticipation and defiance. A young satyr feels the first growth of horns, a sense of identity and purpose, a new generation's assumption of the world. Gunn has hidden this topical theme so well among the almond boughs of the antique garden in which the poem is set that his technique seems like the faded mastery of a conjuror who can still make things vanish but forgets how to bring them back. And the same can be said for the title poem. Moly is, of course, the magical herb with a milk-white flower which Hermes gave to Odysseus and with which he changed himself back from swinehood. Gunn uses the episode from Homer and, more significantly in the context of Gunn's interest in the poem, from Ovid, very skilfully to establish the pattern of his meaning—the search by men to get out of their bodies into a more elevated state of being. Possibly the moly is meant to be taken as LSD, and if that is the case such lines as these are banal beyond rescue:

I root and root, you think that it is greed.
It is, but I seek out a plant I need.

The poem's tone is insistent, the finish reached with great ease. But then Gunn's sense of dynamics has always been acute, although his inability to go beyond that is dispiriting. There is a failure of technique evident in almost every page of *Moly*. Gunn really needs that magic plant. His rhymes are dull, the rhythms limiting.

Gunn now seems a poet torn between, on the one hand, his insistence on the use of mind, on the intellectual enterprise of poems, and on the other hand a poetry that is rooted in concrete actualities, objects and people, and not thoughts. His poems often begin with exact descriptions:

In front of me, the palings of a fence
Throw shadows hard as board across the weeds. . . .

The effort in this poem—"For Signs"—as in many others with just as precise a setting in time and space—is to involve the objects in a process of mind, as objectifying props. In "Justin", for example, the concrete narrative devolves into this:

But waiting wears as hard as action,
And he perceived what he would be,
Transparent with dissatisfaction.

Or, at the end of "The Sand Man":

Dispersing with the sands
He feels a dry cool multiplicity
Gilding his body, feet and hands.

This dissipation of the poem into a gaseous metaphysicality is quite common, and is perhaps related to the metamorphoses recurrent in the book, part-changes or transformations. This may be a generous expression of search for

[2] *Moly*. By THOM GUNN. Faber, £1.00.

PRODUCED 2005 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

human perfection, the horizon of human possibilities, an optimistic poetry that offers solutions to human limitation in acts of poetic or meditative humility and intelligence. There are dangers in using this material that Gunn fails to avoid. Insistent and direct in tone, the rhymes and rhythms a simple gradient to the poem's climax, Gunn's dramatic fade-outs merely make him seem to disappear up his own entrances in a puff of blue smoke. Triumphant this may be, but it certainly leaves him open to a charge of negative feedback. Or just old-fashioned running on the spot.

ALAN DUGAN is an esteemed American poet, just under fifty and therefore of that same distinguished generation as Hecht, Nemerov, Simpson, Snodgrass, Bly, etcetera. His three volumes—helpfully entitled *Poems 1, 2* and *3* —have now been collected[3] to make his first appearance in this country, where his reputation seems a pleasure cherished by the specialists, probably because he is not in the Penguin *Contemporary American Poetry*.

In the main, I find his idiom, his general way of writing, acceptable if not always likable. His poems are carefully made, often witty, and his moral and visual perspectives are usually very sharp. His most pleasing quality is that professional disrespect of the urban wit, seen at its best in "How We Heard the Name", which I quote in full:

The river brought down
dead horses, dead men
and military debris,
indicative of war
or official acts upstream,
but it went by, it all
goes by, that is the thing
about the river. Then
a soldier on a log
went by. He seemed drunk
and we asked him Why
had he and this junk
come down to us so
from the past upstream.
"Friends," he said, "the great
Battle of Granicus
has just been won
by all the Greeks except
the Lacedaemonians and
myself: this is a joke
between me and a man
named Alexander, whom
all of you ba-bas
will hear of as a god."

The scene of Tony Connor's fourth book[4] is, mainly, the United States, and the Happy

[3] *Collected Poems.* By ALAN DUGAN. Faber, £2.50.
[4] *In the Happy Valley.* By TONY CONNOR. Oxford University Press, £1.25.

Walther Rathenau and the Weimar Republic

The Politics of Reparations

DAVID FELIX

David Felix asserts that financial reparation was the most burdensome and unreasonable of the conditions imposed on Germany by the Treaty of Versailles. Besides the reparations—three times Germany's annual income—payment was further hampered because Germany was not allowed to accumulate trade surpluses. £4·30

The International Law of Civil War

Edited by RICHARD A. FALK

The Vietnam War has underscored the failure of international law as an effective means of regulating foreign intervention in civil wars. These six case histories focus on the facts and legal aspects of such intervention. £7·15

Alliances and American Foreign Policy

ROBERT E. OSGOOD

"Robert Osgood has written a brief but provocative book on the basic nature, philosophic background and practical realities of America's alliance systems"—*Key Reporter*
Paperback £0·95

Force, Order, and Justice

ROBERT E. OSGOOD and ROBERT W. TUCKER

"The authors undertake to relate the characteristics of military power to the problem of international order and the control of force." *International Law and Politics*
Paperback £1·40

Bridge across the Bosporus

The Foreign Policy of Turkey

FERENC A. VÁLI

Professor Váli analyzes the Ottoman Empire antecedents of Turkey's present foreign policy, relates her foreign policy objectives to internal politics, and examines the effects these policies have on Turkey's interrelationships with other countries. £5·95

THE JOHNS HOPKINS PRESS
2–4 Brook Street London W1Y 1AA

PRODUCED 2005 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Valley of the title is to be taken as "both a Realty Man's phantasy of the area of New England in which I had my home, and the valley of Ezekiel's vision, whose bones were not without the chance of new life." It is also the place of middle age, where Connor muses on powers spent, and the hopes of regeneration. Unfortunately, he has shed much of his native-bred style in order to write the book, and succumbed to a mild form of American disease—the pose of the poet as a sadly humming set of antennae, their tips glistening with cryptic messages. "Listening to Bach in Franklin County" is an example, ending,

The forfeiture of giant miseries to write
a small poem at midnight.

There are other examples of the ponderous poetical genitive such as "My sleep is haunted by the faithless multitudes of America", as well as a confessional tone, both of which I take to be symptoms of Connor's Americanisation. "Old Man" is a more solid poem altogether, rooted in someting much more firm than Connor's melancholia.

BEAUTIFULLY produced by the Edinburgh University Press, George Bruce's *Collected Poems*[5] gather thirty years of conscientious verse-making. The dominant flaws are prosaic description inadequately galvanised by freshness of word, or originality of purpose, and when he does try to get beyond that, a leaden forcedness, as in the dourly poetical "The Word." On the other hand, the compensating strength is clarity, especially in the poems set in the North East of Scotland.

Loutish rhetoric and unwarranted excess of practically everything blight Jeff Nuttall's *Poems.*[6] It will take an act of considerable affection to get through this book in the consecutive way recommended by its author, and I admit that I didn't make it. Frequently attempting a rhapsodical sexual impressionism, and often scatologically senseless, the book seems part of the main underground concern: making sure that co-mindblowers realise what a great guy you are.

FOR FORTY YEARS George Barker[7] has been a big bundle of joy on the British poetry scene, his fecund rhetoric and flamboyant imagery sprouting out all over in a consistently productive career. His reputation is established, and has certainly been worked for with dedication. Barker's high-flying kind of verse is now generally unpopular, although if Jeff Nuttall is anything to go by, it may still have its readers in that quarter. There is much in Barker's new book which I dislike. The flatulent tautology:

No matter how
brief or how small the
firefly spark or the
sparkling firefly, still
we burn also, Carthage, we
burn too.

The inane questioning:

What is the meaning of
the sea or the duty of the
west wind or the responsi-
bility of the flowering
chestnut tree in summer?

Barker offers answers equally unconvincing, and no doubt this will please admirers of Barker's hot-footed to heaven utterance. One line of Barker's work which I endorse asserts itself in "Drumtochty Castle School," a mellow poem of the writer in later years among schoolchildren, and "In Memory of Robert Macbryde" is also a controlled poem of age, affectionate and assured. Generally speaking, though, holy George Barker is once again on fire, after his other latter-day collections had seemed to indicate that the rampant visionary had at last been tamed.

William Price-Turner has been writing his clever and genuine poems for almost twenty years, but a wider reputation continues to elude

CITY OF LONDON
POLYTECHNIC

BA DEGREE
POLITICS AND GOVERNMENT

A new three year full-time undergraduate course leading to a CNAA honours degree will commence in September 1971
Further details may be obtained from the Registrar City of London Polytechnic School of Business Studies, 84 Moorgate, London EC2M 6SQ

[5] *Collected Poems.* By GEORGE BRUCE. Edinburgh University Press, £1.50.
[6] *Poems 1962-69.* By JEFF NUTTALL. Fulcrum Press, £1.70.
[7] *Poems of Places and People.* By GEORGE BARKER. Faber, £1.50.

PRODUCED 2005 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

him. This third collection,[8] an advance on the admired *Flying Corset*, should help. His style is uncluttered and expository, his concern with moral realities rather than the mysteries promoted by emotive imagery. The fable-loaded vignette is his standard form, and the one he uses best. There are clichés in this book, for example "Full Supporting Programmes'" expression of life in terms of entertainment. But throughout the book there is ample evidence of a minor original nagging at the verges of satire with explorations of the contemporary dilemma. This is a good book, and I recommend it.

Alan Bold, already convicted of "mainline careerism" by Edward Pygge, writes too much for his own good. *A Pint of Bitter*, Bold's fourth collection,[9] is an ill-considered book. Its poems vary from the banal "My First Sweetheart" to the vapid narrative of "Chance Encounter", a story of sex murder that ends on lines as clumsily unwrought as these:

And he noticed her knickers were red,
The colour that seeped from her temple
As she lay spreadeagled and dead.

There is also a goal-less "Football Triptych", and a "Dance Suite" that contains "scientific" exposition in the unpoetic style of MacDiarmid:

Astonishing images suggest themselves, sustain
Themselves only intermittently, then prove
evanescent
As the butterfly. . . .

And so on in as tediously expansive a manner. Prosiac, boring, unoriginal, flat, clumsy—Mr Bold can be all of these at practically the same time, a real one-man band. Yet there is one poem here—"Departure"—which indicates that Bold possesses real, even if minor, gifts. Heavings of his self-fascinated personality damage the rest of the book.

MARTIN SEYMOUR-SMITH'S *Reminiscences of Norma*[10] is a pleasant surprise, collecting poems written in the last seven years. It is much better than I expected, although the blurb is over-confident, as, of course, is their way: " . . . one of the most original and versatile poets of his generation."

A series of effective satires opens the book. "I Have Never Felt" is a direct hit on John Fuller, although one wonders if he really deserves shooting at anyway, while "The Cruel Gravy" bastes the *avant-garde*. This poet possesses an imagination sensitive almost at the same time to both the satirical and the macabre. The same area of imagination has produced the title poem, a long and difficult monologue about an imagined or remembered girl who fulfils the darker fantasies of the speaker. It is a tantalising poem, undoubtedly authentic and yet yielding its meanings slowly, the typical movement of dramatic monologues, as interesting as they are sometimes irritating. Seymour-Smith has learned from the Eliot of *Prufrock* rather than Browning, and there is sense in suggesting that "Reminiscences of Norma" will have its niche in future discussions of the form. An enthralling, morbid poem, it ends:

Nor you nor God nor His cold secretariat
Can know my journey, not of miles,
To find in nothingness the love I can.

Perhaps the blurb-writer was not wrong. Perhaps the blurb-writer was Seymour-Smith?

[8] *The Moral Rocking-Horse.* By WILLIAM PRICE-TURNER. Barrie & Jenkins, £1.05.
[9] *A Pint of Bitter.* By ALAN BOLD. Chatto & Windus, £1.00.
[10] *Reminiscences of Norma.* By MARTIN SEYMOUR-SMITH. Constable, £1.50.

TRANSATLANTIC REVIEW 40

Fiction—Poetry—Interviews

John Arden
John L'Heureux
Morris Lurie
Maggie Ross
Zulfikar Ghose
Paddy Kitchen

176 Pages for 25p
from:
Dillons, Better Books, Blackwells
and other bookshops
or 85p for 4 issues
from:
33 Ennismore Gardens
London SW7

PRODUCED 2005 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

This is certainly a stylish book, mature and confident.

The recent numbers of Penguin Modern Poets offer selections from nine poets, all interesting, some much more than that. Gascoyne, Graham and Raine are handily gathered in No. 17,[11] considering that Gascoyne continues to be undervalued, and that most of Graham's and Raine's output is out of print. In No. 18[12] Alvarez, Roy Fuller and Thwaite make a fairly conventional trinity. A gathering of Alvarez' poems is helpful, as he has written, or at least published, only a little and that in magazines or pamphlets, while Roy Fuller's opus is now sufficiently major and extensive to make a selection necessary and important. Anthony Thwaite's selection begins with the old favourites "Mr Cooper" and "The Boys", while a large part of the remaining space is devoted to his impressive North African poems. The most recent issue of the series prints Ashbery, Harwood, and Raworth.[13] This is for people like me who don't actually like poetry of that trend but will buy the paperback as a cheap way of trying to mellow our prejudices.

What I dislike about this series is the magical authority it seems to carry with readers who don't read much contemporary poetry in any other form. Half the reading public seems to put its faith in that antarctic imprimatur. The series has become as institutional as elevenses, and I find the prospect of its multiplication almost deadening.

[11] *Penguin Modern Poets 17*. By W. S. GRAHAM, KATHLEEN RAINE, DAVID GASCOYNE. Penguin, 25p.

[12] *Penguin Modern Poets 18*. By A. ALVAREZ, ROY FULLER, ANTHONY THWAITE. Penguin, 25p.

[13] *Penguin Modern Poets 19*. By JOHN ASHBERY, LEE HARWOOD, TOM RAWORTH. Penguin, 30p.

[14] *Modern Poetry in Translation*. Edited by TED HUGHES and DANIEL WEISSBORT. Published from 10 Compayne Gardens, London, N.W.6, £2.00 for 1 year, 50p per issue.

BRITISH POETS have been consistently maligned for their insular habits, but it seems to me that the general interest in foreign poetry is now so confirmed that the old accusations can be safely forgotten. If this is an improvement on the once fiercely maintained self-reliance (and I don't see that it necessarily is unless it results in some improvement in contemporary verse) then some of the credit must fall to *Modern Poetry In Translation*.[14] This excellent magazine has, since 1965, sustained an unmodish and professional interest in the literatures of other languages. It is now once again published by its editors—Ted Hughes and Daniel Weissbort—after a spell with Jonathan Cape. Recent issues have been an anthology of modern Slovene writing (No. 8), translations of the Ukrainian poet Ivan Drach and a story by Zamyatin (No. 9), and an anthology of modern Turkish poetry. (No. 10).

One admirable emphasis of *MPT* is its stress on being informative and helpful. There are good notes to each poet (many of whom will be completely new to readers), while the issues devoted to Slovenia and Turkey contain helpful background information. There is also a refreshing absence of this searching abroad for a culture hero that is currently indulged in by recondite youths and elders who should know better, and although some discontent with the local product is perhaps implied, no one at *MPT* seems to be suggesting that a poet's range can be stunningly altered by swallowing a few handy translations from the Ukrainian.

Today's Bulletin

On the papyrus a few scrawls:
This was thrown down in a corner,
Calculations for a shelf of ibis mummies,
Journeys inside the rotting head.

"There are some three or four
Creatures I love and now they look like
Pictures on mass-produced stamps from
A Banana Republic. I am quite alone."

Peter Porter

PRODUCED 2005 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

EAST & WEST

Lessons of Prague

A Conversation with

EDUARD GOLDSTÜCKER

PROFESSOR GOLDSTÜCKER, *three years ago in March 1968, you told us that the Czechoslovak movement might at worst suffer setbacks, but it could never again be completely crushed or wiped out of history. But in Czechoslovakia the movement for a socialist democracy has been crushed.*

GOLDSTÜCKER: From the historical point of view, the future historian of the socialist revolution will put the events in Czechoslovakia in 1968 on the same level as, say, the Paris Commune of 1871, which also lasted a very short time, was crushed, but nevertheless retained its significance as the prologue to the whole revolutionary socialist movement.

IT IS THREE YEARS *since the Soviet military invasion of Czechoslovakia put a sudden and dramatic end to the "Prague Spring," the historic attempt to give socialism "a human face." Eduard Goldstücker was one of the leading figures in that movement, and in this interview (with two "Spiegel" editors, Fritjof Meyer and Klaus Reinhardt) he tries to reflect on the lessons to be learned. Professor Goldstücker is now a refugee in England, lecturing at the University of Sussex. It is the second time he has gone into exile, the first being in 1939 when he escaped from the Nazi occupation of his country (his family perished in the concentration camp of Auschwitz). He studied in Oxford, and after the war returned to his native Prague. He first served as the Czech Ambassador to Israel, and then during the Slansky Trials was condemned by the Stalinists to life-long imprisonment. He was "rehabilitated" in 1956, and subsequently became Rector of the Charles University as well as a leading literary figure (Chairman of the Writers Union and the "rehabilitator" of Franz Kafka as a Czech man of letters). He has since been officially attacked, denounced, and excommunicated by the present government under Gustav Husak, with whom he worked during the "Prague Spring." But he would, as he says, "go back immediately—if the direction of 1968, so violently interrupted, becomes possible again. . . ."*

—So you regard the Prague model as still relevant?

GOLDSTÜCKER: If you consider only two documents of the time of the so-called Prague spring, the April programme of action of the Communist Party and the draft party constitution—those two documents will remain as models. The problem has been posed, and it becomes more urgent from day to day. Look at developments in Poland.

—The intellectuals who assumed the leadership in the "Prague Spring" did not appear at Gdansk and Gdynia. There the working class acted by itself.

GOLDSTÜCKER: Nevertheless it has been shown yet again that the lack of democracy in socialist society necessarily leads to crises. That is a terrible tragedy. Gomulka was a great political figure, a great tribune of the people, but he forgot he was ruling over living human beings, and he broke off communication with those in whose name he ruled and whose vital interests he had undertaken to fulfil. His successor Gierek talks of the necessity of democratisation.

—And can the Prague experiences serve as a model for that?

GOLDSTÜCKER: Socialism in Europe has only two alternatives: either it finds the path to which we showed the way in 1968 or it runs the risk of exposing itself to catastrophic developments. The experiences of Czechoslovakia in 1968 will be harked back to in all future attempts to solve the vital questions of socialism.

—That sounds a little euphoric. . . .

GOLDSTÜCKER: I have also left open the possibility of a pessimistic alternative. When the Moscow leadership and its allies crushed the Czechoslovak experiment beneath their tanks, they crushed their own future too. That is the most absurd thing that could happen, that the so-called "ruling working class" should be shooting at itself, as on the streets of Danzig (Gdansk). . . .

—But then the working class rules neither in Poland, nor in Czechoslovakia, nor in the Soviet Union.

GOLDSTÜCKER: That is why I say that the conflict between ideology and reality is becoming plain for all to see. From the beginning of the 1930s, the unemployment years, one of our most effective arguments in the Communist

PRODUCED 2005 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED