

disappeared. In this sense the mere words *chamber symphony* shows an effort to blend two styles. By diluting the solid, conventional instrumental apparatus and by reintroducing free combinations, Schönberg has found a possibility of getting away from the 'specialized' styles, and preparing the basis of a new, universal and absolute musical idiom.

Such a result is also confirmed by the twelve-tone technique, the formulation of which constitutes a technical apparatus of universal value. Any composer who is preoccupied with the advanced problems of contemporary polyphony can learn it and adapt it for his own purposes. Musicians like Webern and Berg have written their last works in the new technique. They do not resemble each other, nor do they resemble Schönberg himself, nor do they resemble any of the other younger composers who have adopted the same method of composition. One thing, however, they all have in common: that is, precisely, the musical idiom which they all use in spite of personal differences, differences of temperament, of inclination, and so on.

In this sense the Schönberg school is only a term one uses for convenience; factually, what Schönberg has done is much more than to found a school. He has made the world aware of the authentic laws of musicianship and, like every great master, has saved a tradition which without him might have been lost.

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If this article promotes an understanding of Schönberg's significance, its purpose will be fulfilled, although why one writes so much about Schönberg and does not play his music instead, is a question which I find difficult to answer.

VICTOR SERGE

LETTER FROM MEXICO

IN the second World War, Mexico played the part of Switzerland in the nineteenth century and that of France at the beginning of our twentieth century, before June 1940: the part of a haven of refuge. Thus, in our convulsed world, the Atlantic fulfils the former function of the Mediterranean. In spite of transport difficulties, Mexico is sheltering 15,000 Spanish Republicans, 1,500 Poles, at least 1,500 Jews, and several hundred political

refugees of various origins. To all these vanquished people Mexico offers liberty without restrictions, and such great facilities for adaptation that, with the exception of a few intellectuals and invalids, all have solved the problem of material subsistence in a satisfactory manner, and some have rapidly made fortunes. This emigration, considerable for a country whose urban population does not exceed three and a half million inhabitants, has proved extremely profitable. The influx of educated Europeans has made itself felt in business, methods journalism, and the university world. Nevertheless, two important factors prevented the European emigration from exercising a wide intellectual influence:

(1) Latin-America received its intellectual and ideological stimuli from the social laboratories of Europe. These laboratories revealed to it democracy, parliament, Socialism, Anarchism, Communism, social Christianity, and modern literature and art. Then, suddenly, Paris, Rome, Berlin, Munich, Vienna, Leningrad and Moscow were silenced by destruction: London lived under a bombardment; Madrid, it is true, was inventing the Falangist doctrine of *Hispanidad*, but this took place in the bureaux of a Fascism which could meet with sympathy only in the most fanatical of reactionary circles. Publications, literature and ideas ceased to arrive from Europe, and the result was intellectual apathy, followed by profound discouragement. The oldest capitals of civilization could now give the world nothing but the insane example of fratricide and suicide.

(2) The refugee intellectuals, several hundred of them, although they included some really talented men, were deeply divided by Communism. The Communist Party, having considerable funds at its disposal, had great advantages over its Socialist and Liberal adversaries throughout the period of emigration, and it continued to benefit by the support of sympathizing workers' organizations such as the C.T.A.L. (*Confédération des Travailleurs de l'Amérique Latine*) and the C.T.M. (*Confédération des Travailleurs Mexicains*). Communism multiplied the political groups, and facilitated the material subsistence of its affiliated bodies. There were, and still are, committees of Free Germans, Free Austrians, Free Poles, Free Yugoslavs, Free Hungarians (several have changed their names), and an extensive Press, which dissociated itself from Communism only in exceptional circumstances. The anti-totalitarian Socialist emigration,

consisting, for its part, of men without support or funds, and being in a minority, was subjected by these organizations to a real persecution, accompanied by bloody assaults. The tomb of Trotsky, at Coyoacan, serves as a permanent warning to them. Thus disunited, the European intellectuals were able neither to rally Mexican sympathies nor to set up creative cultural centres.

However, the participation of the United States in the war gave Mexico an opportunity for easy wealth. Dollars rolled in, and were amassed mostly by big business men and adventurers. Never before had things gone so well for those whose sole object was the possession and enjoyment of money. The prevailing atmosphere was definitely unfavourable to spiritual life. The great ideals of the Mexican revolution became obscured. The disorientation of the young people became more and more evident. A traditionally narrow catholicism and an anachronistic revolutionism sought to attract them, but never really animated them. Mexico has many cafés, but no literary café; a number of publications, but no review comparable to the N.R.F. of pre-war Paris, to HORIZON, to the *Partisan Review*, to *Politics*, or to *Sur* of Buenos Aires; no circle of poets or painters inspired by living conceptions; no Socialist movement. The Communist Party has organization, discipline, and an exaggerated influence due entirely to the prestige of the U.S.S.R., that is, it has not a shadow of an original idea. And yet, between 1910 and 1935, Mexico had a very intense spiritual life, as we may see from the impressive artistic, literary and political output. For those who know this spiritual life, it seems full of possibilities as yet unexpressed. The novelists, poets, fighters, combatants, and ideologists of yesterday are today members of the government, diplomats, high officials, financiers, directors of newspapers. . . . Academic activities are maintained at a high level, thanks to erudite men of letters like Alfonso Reyes and José Vasconcelos. The idealist philosopher, Antonio Caso, has just died suddenly. And I learn as I write that a most remarkable man, the historian of philosophy, Joaquin Xirau, a Catalan refugee, has just been stupidly killed in a road accident. . . .

Man is confronted by the problems of the present time with such terrifying harshness that he easily forms the tendency to turn away from them, be it to Greek philosophy, to historical studies, or to archaeology. Hence, doubtless, the activity of

academic thought, and its lack of creative spirit. In the archaeological field, however, fruitful work is being persistently accomplished in Mexico. Preparations are being made for excavations in the Constitution Square, built over the ruins of the pre-Columbian civilizations, whose architecture, arts and mythology were dazzlingly rich. For over twenty years, the exploration of this fund of culture has been undertaken with zeal and scientific faith; it leads us to a knowledge of the only civilizations of the age of polished stone and of bronze which persisted until the sixteenth century. In the provincial towns, at Oaxaca, at Morelia, museums of outstanding importance have been established. Treasures have been obtained from the archaeological zones of Monte-Alban, Tula, Testihuacan, and the Tarasca country. Others, no less rich, are as yet unexplored, owing to lack of means and man power. The only Maya civilization of Yucatan and Guatemala, moribund but already two thousand years old when the Conquistadors landed, merits comparison with the ancient Egyptian Empire in the grandeur of its creations. The archaeologist Alfonso Caso directs and co-ordinates these works with a systematic intelligence which has no fear of general ideas. A German refugee, Dr. Paul Kirchoff, has made a name for himself in these studies. A young American scholar, the author of an excellent work of synthesis on the Nahua culture (*The Aztecs of Mexico*), George Valliant, committed suicide a year after his very inaccurate comparison of the fall of Tenochtitlan with the defeat of France. The Americans supply funds, as well as some of the excavators. Monographs abound. So do discoveries. pre-Columbian art, which has greatly influenced the art of Mexico, seems to me to be destined, when it is better known, to enrich modern art.

I can think of nothing outstanding in the literary activities of Mexico during the war years. The German Communist writer, Anna Segers, wrote her novel *The Seventh Cross* here; it is highly praised, and has become a best-seller in the United States. Spanish writers have commented on the defeat of the Republic in terms of mystical philosophy, according to the precepts of St. John of Patmos, of course: Maximo José Kahn in *Apocalipsis Hispanica*, and Juan Larrea in *Rendición de Espiritu* (*Exhalation of the Spirit: to exhale the spirit, to die, to return the soul to God*). Other writers, boycotted because asphyxiating orders of silence were imposed

on non-mystical themes, accumulated their manuscripts: Benjamin Péret, Gustave Regler, myself . . . Michael Fraenckel, kept a journal of a meditative observer, as yet unpublished. Death struck us hard. The old German Marxist, Otto Rühle, a combatant of the German revolution, adversary of Lenin, biographer of Marx, author of fifteen works, died at the age of 68, in poverty and isolation. His wife, the psychologist and pedagogue, Alice Gerstel-Rühle, committed suicide on the same day (June 1943). The Berlin psycho-analyst Frederick Fraenckel died the following year, aged 52, without being able to complete his recent works, notably on the psychology of Nazism. The altitude of Mexico City, seven thousand feet, is certainly not propitious to hearts strained by too many experiences.

To return to art. . . . The great Mexican school of painting attained its apogee between 1920 and the beginning of the war, during the final struggle and the stabilization of the revolutionary regime. Diego Rivera and José Clemente Orozco covered the walls of public buildings with imposing frescoes. This was a mural literature, historic, assertive, satiric, and also philosophic, adapted for the eyes of multitudes, more static and descriptive in the case of Rivera, and animated by violent, even cruel, dynamism in that of Orozco. Both drew inspiration from ancient Mexican motifs and from the Indian soul, in reaction against capitalism and colonial catholicism—which must not be confused with Christianity. Both made use of, and sometimes abused, blood, torture, convulsive suffering and frantic revolt. A superficial analysis reveals in them, together with a knowledge of the Renaissance mural artists, the persistence of a psychological tradition which, in its barbarity and its elements of materialistic pantheism, reaches back to the pre-Columbian civilizations. (These have left us some drawings and paintings, the *Codices*, and several frescoes.) President Don Lazaro Cardenas has encouraged the penetration of this art to the population in the outlying towns and even in the country. At Guadalajara there is Orozco's monumental work expressing social drama with a desperate fury; Juan Ogorman's historical fresco at Patzcuaro; a fresco of Orozco's at Jiquilpan; and the carnal and planetary visions of fertility painted by Rivera at Chapingo. . . . You may suddenly find in a little town inhabited by Indian fishermen a whole mural poem, emphatic but eloquent, and immediately intelligible. In the

Mexican Hall of Justice you stop in front of the brutal compositions of Orozco, depicting a blind and drunken Justice carried away by a riot in the court, while a purple lightning flash pulverizes the stalls of the lawyers and judges. . . . (The American painter, Biddle, has just finished some tragic frescoes of war in the same building.) Orozco and Rivera are indefatigable craftsmen, who alternate obvious failures with most conspicuous successes. They continue to work, but without their former impetus. And how can they maintain an impetus which owes everything to the passion for social justice? A fresco of Juan Ogorman's was destroyed before the war because it denounced Hitler and Mussolini; another, the work of two young men, Vlady, a Russian, and Ivan Denegri, a Mexican, was destroyed during the war because it contained an unfavourable allusion to Stalin. . . . Amongst the new works inspired by the revolutionary romanticism of the day before yesterday, I must mention Alfaro Siqueiros' Republic, with bared breasts, breaking her chains. (This painter, whose talent as a mural artist is undeniable, was implicated in an attempt to assassinate Trotsky in May 1940. He is still under the shadow of prosecution.)

Foreign artists who came to Mexico in search of refuge or to escape from industrial America, have continued work which they began under the influence of Surrealism. I have visited in Indian villages studios in the best Montparnasse tradition. Since they have no public in Mexico, these innovating artists either exhibit in New York or not at all, like the German Impressionist Otto Butterlin, who lives in a village in Jalisco, and has taken to cultivating tropical produce. Wolfgang Paalen (an Austrian formed by French culture) edited in Mexico a review of Indian and modern art, *Dyn*, which sold mainly in the United States. His work in scientific philosophy has led him to an aesthetic conception which he has, to the eyes of an uninitiated spectator, translated to his canvas in visions suggested by atomic and cosmic physics. The result is very impressive painting, of high quality. Alice Paalen, a Frenchwoman, and also a genuine poet, has exhibited some imaginary landscapes and ornamental motifs inspired by the art of the North American Indians. Gordon Onslow-Ford, from London, lives in a village in the Michoacan country, where he has evolved, in the proximity of an immense landscape of take and mountain, some rigorously personal and carefully

meditated works, which, by abstract methods, seek not to reproduce the palpable world, but to summarize it in terms of emotional plastic forms. 'I have found', he writes, 'a language of forms, colours, lines and dots which expresses a vision of the world that, within its own limits, is a complete reality in itself, related to other realities through feeling.' Living in the same village, a young American painter, William Fett, has produced some striking 'non-objective' water-colours, directly inspired by the vivid and devastating harshness of the Mexican countryside, which have been very well received in the United States. After several years of hesitation, Eleonora Carrington has resumed her writing and painting, in a narrow little room in old Mexico, the most dream-saturated place I know here. Her present work, clearly revealing the influence of the Primitives, is, in my opinion, an astonishing example of the direct projection on to canvas of an intense, anguished, yet luminously adolescent inner life. Wolfgang and Alice Paalen, Gordon Onslow-Ford, Eleonora Carrington, and Esteban Francès (who is also working in Mexico) have all belonged to the Surrealist movement, which they left for various reasons. I have the impression that the doctrine of creative automatism and the super-real, culminating as it does in facility, not to say conventionalism, and sometimes even commercialization, has revealed too many intrinsic weaknesses to satisfy artists whose talent has reached maturity. The Surrealism which followed the last war was connected with the revolts of the epoch, but it is swallowed up in the upheavals of the present time, which call for a renewal of ideas in all fields.

Among the Spanish artists, a young deaf and dumb man, Garcia Narezo, has attracted attention by his exceptional virtuosity in combining in his already abundant output the techniques of Picasso, Dali and the Abstractivists with those of realist art, and this with a sense of drawing, colour and life which places him in the first rank. The Catalan draughtsman Bartoli has published a nightmarish book about the French concentration camps, and has proved himself an excellent interpreter of the Mexican landscape. And old man of nearly seventy, Francisco Tortosa, a Republican refugee, began to paint a few years ago, and has just exhibited about twenty canvases whose candour and spontaneity recall the style of the Douanier Rousseau: their youthfulness and vigorous clarity are most striking. Tortosa is

haunted by a dream of paradise. Straightforward, traditional Spanish painting, impregnated with reflections of Goya and Zuloaga, abounds ingloriously. From amongst the Mexicans, I would single out the vast landscapes of Dr. Atl, an old man, enamoured of volcanic solitudes; they evoke Nietzschean poems. The Indian, Maria Izquierdo, paints long canvases in colours which, beneath their evident clumsiness, have the simple vigour of good imagery. Frida Kahlo remains the initiator of a too widely imitated *genre*, which may be described as visceral. Roots become arteries and veins, flesh decomposes, and the anatomic incision obscures the portrait. The success of this 'school' has a psychological significance which it would be superfluous to analyse.

The most extraordinary Mexican artist, and the most productive too, is anonymous and multiple, and does not know himself. It is the humble Indian of the villages, who, following age-old traditions, makes, for the country markets, small, everyday masterpieces—toys, masks, earthenware, wickerwork amulets, magic ornaments, costumes for ritual dances. It is a universal characteristic of this popular art, whose creations are sold for a few centavos, that its medium is perishable, valueless material: wood, straw, feathers, vegetable fibre, cardboard, paper, clay, glass, manipulated with an instinctively gifted workmanship, to which time counts for nothing. The bird made of coloured straws will last only a few hours, but it is perfect. The sugar Death's Head will be eaten on All Saints' Day, but it is magnificent, and is a direct descendant of the rock-crystal Death's Heads made by Zapotec craftsmen about the year one thousand. The funeral procession, in cardboard and tissue paper, with a white figure in the little coffin, evokes the lovely works of the Middle Ages, but it costs a few cents, and will disappear. It is a manifold ephemeral and living art, which passes unnoticed. The beautiful durable materials, metal or textile, are increasingly monopolized by an industry which standardizes mediocre products for the use of tourists. . . . One must leave the buildings and banks of the capital behind in order still to find, in the country, native woven materials, artless embroideries, and noble feathered tiaras like those worn in the time of Montezuma.

[Translated by NATALIA GALITZINE]

SELECTED NOTICES

Language, Truth and Logic. A. J. Ayer. Gollancz. Second edition, 1946.

THIS is a delightful book, to which I can give the sincerest praise possible, namely that I should like to have written it myself when young. Like Hume's *Treatise*, it is enthusiastic, iconoclastic, hopeful, and good-humouredly pugna-cious; fortunately, unlike Hume's *Treatise*, it did not 'fall still-born from the press'. The Introduction to the new edition displays admirable candour, and shows that Mr. Ayer has spent the intervening years to good purpose: what has been lost of early *élan* is more than compensated by the gain in maturity.

As a first approximation, the book has my sympathy, but taken as a final statement it seems to me in some points to take an over-simplified view, partly as a result of polemical zeal. If, in what follows, I dwell upon disagreements, I wish the reader to remember the background of general agreement, and not to forget my admiration of Mr. Ayer's very exceptional clarity.

Let us tackle first a very vital question, that of the connection of verifiability with significance or meaning. If a sentence which is not a tautology is not to be 'completely senseless', Mr. Ayer demands 'not indeed that it should be conclusively verifiable, but that some possible sense-experience should be relevant to the determination of its truth or falsehood'. One may question both the criterion, and the use that is made of it. To begin with the definition of 'significance' of sentences: I should myself define it syntactically. I should say that a sentence is significant if its words are understood and they are put together according to correct rules of syntax. Many sentences that obey this rule are not capable of verification—for instance, 'there are distant nebulae receding from us with a velocity greater than that of light' or 'Napoleon was unhappy in St. Helena'. The question of the definition of 'significance', however, may be regarded as purely verbal; more substantial is the question of the interpretation of Mr. Ayer's definition.

In what sense, for example, is physics verifiable? Mr. Ayer argues that all sentences which seem to mention unperceivable physical objects can be translated into sentences mentioning only Mr. Ayer's experiences. I do not think either that this is true or that it follows from his criterion. The argument for the probable truth of physics is that, whenever its principles lead to a verifiable conclusion, the conclusion is verified if the necessary steps are taken. It is held (somewhat optimistically, I admit) that if the principles were false the verifiable conclusions would probably sometimes be false. There is, therefore, sense-experience relevant to the truth of physical principles, but that does not mean that the principles themselves can be interpreted in terms of sense-experience. We look for simple laws, and in order to make laws as simple as possible we do not hesitate to assume occurrences which we not only do not, but cannot, perceive. I do not believe it possible to state the laws of physics without assuming such occurrences.

Mr. Ayer speaks with approval of Mill's definition of 'matter' as a 'permanent possibility of sensation'. But what is a 'possibility'? It can only mean something that would occur if something else occurred which in fact does not occur. But how are we to know what would have happened if . . . ? This does not substantially mean more than what does happen when . . . And I think this trouble