

COMMENT

THIS month we open with a description of the Congress in New York to which the British delegates, headed by Professor Bernal, were refused visas. Unlike Wroclaw, this conference has received no publicity in England, and we print a report in full to give a picture, once and for all, of the proceedings at this kind of thing in case some of our readers and authors who receive invitations to attend them wish to know the form. Dwight Macdonald, editor of *Politics*, is a representative of the non-Communist extreme left. Christopher Hollis, whose article follows, is the Roman Catholic Tory M.P. for Devizes. A certain similarity in their point of view reveals the extent to which Communist policy is uniting Western thought by causing all those who make a study of the Ends *v.* Means fallacies of Marxism to contribute an alternative doctrine which invariably is based on a positive restatement of spiritual values and of the rights of man. To take our own example. The attacks on HORIZON from Communist sources always picture us as reactionary, decadent, lost elements who have no contact with the working class and whose extinction is a matter of minutes. These attacks are usually launched in a breezy, hearty manner, whether they proceed from *Pravda* or the English fellow-stragglers. There is a special voice for talking to decadents whether you address them as a Communist or a Fascist, as a key-jingling Conservative business man or a pipe-smoking Socialist planner, and it always makes the decadent feel thoroughly guilty. Suppose these people are right and that the only salvation for the artist lies in his representation of the problem of the working class? 'All we, like sheep, have gone astray.' Then where are the productions of those who have not gone astray and which we should take as a model? So far as we know they don't exist, or, if they do, our deviation has so intoxicated us that we don't even like them. We are driven on to the ultimate conclusion that 'decadence' is the only living force in the arts today, and that if the whole world were to go Communist tomorrow, despite all the commissars in the universe, it would cry out for 'decadent' modern art. The workers are just as tired and bored with themselves as anybody else, and, wherever they have a chance to exhibit their art and not what they are told ought to

be their art, it appears more 'decadent' than bourgeois art because its neurotic quality is not enriched by competent technique. How many times have we 'decadents' not quailed before the roar of our political sergeant-majors only to find they have a rejected poem in their pocket? So when we are attacked as 'decadent' we should go forward, confident that we are on the right track. 'Decadent', 'Reactionary', 'Morbid', 'Subversive', 'Unintelligible'. All these words applied to artists mean: 'You are getting warm, you are getting dangerous, you are approaching that ever-flowing fountain of passion, incandescent with intelligence, at the centre of the maze—the soul of man'.

In this number we publish a new story by Angus Wilson in which he enriches his decadence by a certain fantasy not found in the others (note the manly title) and which belongs completely to our time—and also a study of Léon-Paul Fargue, one of the least known of modern French writers, but one of the most poetical—in that he led a poetical life. And the poetical life is the true opposite of the totalitarian one. With an absolute love of beauty, a horror of cruelty, an utter devotion to the idea of freedom in ourselves and others, with a certain impatience with the crossword puzzles and double acrostics with which man, the two-legged tragedy, occupies his brief residence in the condemned cell, we can become thinking aesthetes like night-walking Fargue, who, although he did not produce very much art, lived in a state of aesthetic grace, always ready to receive inspiration. The fate of so many English writers is that, with the best will in the world and most of the talent, they gradually drift into a congenial way of living, regulated by good taste and professional respect, which extinguishes the spark that, in lives shorter and less well-spent, may never have gone out.

JOSÉ GARCIA VILLA

SEVEN POEMS

A NOTE ON THE COMMAS

THE reader of the following poems may be perplexed and puzzled at my use of the comma: it is a new, special and *poetic* use to which I have put it. The commas appear in the poems *functionally*, and thus not for eccentricity; and they are there also *poetically*, that is to say, not in their prose function. These poems were conceived *with* commas, as 'comma poems', in which the commas are an integral and essential part of the medium: regulating the poem's verbal density and time movement: enabling each word to attain a fuller tonal value, and the line movement to become more measured. The method may be compared to Seurat's architectonic and measured pointillism—where the points of colour *are* themselves the medium of expression, and therefore functional and valid, as medium of art and as medium of personality. Only the uninitiate would complain that Seurat should have painted in strokes.

Regarding the time movement effected by the commas—a pause ensues after each comma, but a pause not as long as that commanded by its prose use: for this reason the usual space after the comma is omitted. The result is a lineal pace of quiet dignity and movement.

I realize of course that this poetic employment of the comma is an innovation which may disconcert some readers: for them I can only say that they can *still* read the poems by ignoring the commas if they find these in the way; personally I find that they even add visual distinction. With the more poetically and texturally sensitive reader, I believe that he will see with me the essentiality of the commas: the best test, which I have myself employed, is to copy out a poem *omitting* the commas and then to read this text comparatively with the comma'ed version: the loss is distinctly and immediately cognizable. Therein lies the justification for this—true enough—strange innovation.

J. G. V.