

Remembering Isadora Duncan

Her stormy and generous career is seen as having been part of the democratic tradition in our art

By Michael Gold

DANCING is an art that dies with the artist. In America, there is a double death, since art, as an expression of the national spirit, is still rated far below the aluminum business.

There is a statue in New York to Samuel S. Cox, a minor congressman. But where are the monuments to Isadora Duncan? Does the younger generation of revolutionary dancers ever speak of her or remember the great pioneer?

It was ten years, this September 14, that the first creator of an American dance, Isadora Duncan, completed her generous and stormy life. Even before her death, she had begun to be "out of fashion" in America. The post-war generation in Europe was passing through a decade of shell-shock. Bourgeois war-mak- had betrayed all the human values; and bourgeois artists, ignorant of the social forces that contained a heaven as well as a hell, found refuge and protest in a new ivory tower that resembled, at times, nothing less than a padded cell.

Here, phantoms were mistaken for reality, and humanity was locked out as though it were an alien. This was the period that substituted geometry and technique for emotion and the spirit; that celebrated ugliness and death, using sneers, angularities, perversions, contortions, and mystifications for its medium.

Some called the period a waste land; others spoke of themselves as the lost generation. But never the forms, over all the chaos snickered the bawdy, crackpot face of Dada, father of confusion and lies.

Isadora had earned the right to such protest; in France alone a million young men had been slaughtered in the imperialist war. But what place had it in America, which offered little?

What right had any artist, American or foreign, to lose his faith in the people?

WITNESSED, however, in our country, the death of an art, talented enough, but sterile because it had no roots except in Montparnasse. If it was a negation of democracy, it was a complete secession from the American folk-life. Is it any wonder that during this time Isadora became a stranger in her own house, a naïve old devotee surrounded by the young philistines of a new sophistication?

Today some young revolutionary dancers continue the geometrical contortions of the post-war German Dadaists. They attempt to put the spirit of the native democracy into these strange and alien molds, and never know why they fail.

But Isadora Duncan did not fail; she had discovered a way of dancing democracy.

It was the old transcendental democracy of Emerson and Walt Whitman that inspired her. It is difficult today to realize what an effect she had on her time. The formal ballet of the czar's court ruled the dance world then; there was nothing else. Like feudalism, the ballet had frozen into a static pattern that

put an end to expanding life. At its worst it was a matter of wigs, corsets, and acrobatics; at its best, it had the soulless beauty of a machine.

Isadora stripped off the corsets and wigs, and all the feudal artificiality. She rediscovered the flowing line of the Greeks, a line that was not imposed on the human body, but was its most natural expression. She brought



spontaneous joy back to the dance, the sunlight, the serenity of Mother Nature.

Hers was, I believe, a complete vision of life and revolution. Let us admit that the pre-war democratic artists of her generation were utopian; the Carl Sandburgs, the Frank Lloyd Wrights, the Edward Carpenters. Perhaps it was because they had never faced the enormous and incredible brutality of this new period of war and fascism.

Their sin was generosity and a too easy faith in man. But it was a lesser sin against reality than some of the deliberate ugliness and despair of today, which allows itself to be crushed by the horrors of the struggle, and offers us no hope.

Marx said of the Proudhonists: "While they are still seeking science in their heads and drawing up systems, while they are only at the beginning of their struggle, they see only mis-

ery in the people's misery, and fail to realize the revolutionary side of misery which will overthrow the old society."

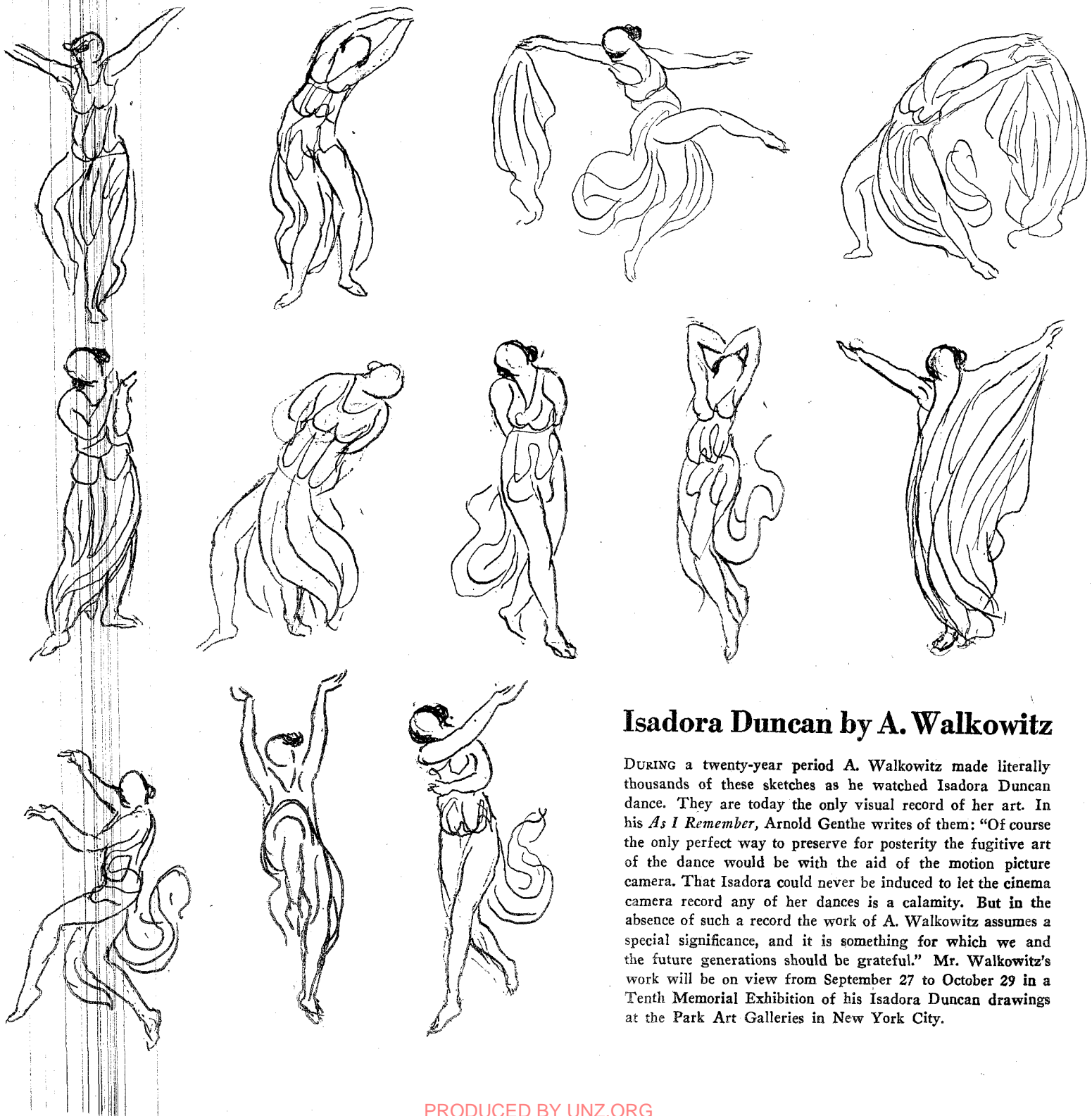
Isadora, in the darkest days of the Russian revolution, came out for it with all her ardent soul. But she saw more than misery. She knew that here at last was being born the shining world-democracy of the future. Her dancing was an attempt to create images of what this future would mean for humanity; a time when each human body would take on the splendor and freedom of the Greek gods.

Do our young revolutionary dancers and poets create such images of a new human beauty toward which the race may strive in socialism? To my old-fashioned mind, some of them need to go back to such American democratic sources as Walt Whitman and Isadora Duncan, not to imitate, but to learn an ultimate faith in the body and spirit of

man. Emerson had it, but T. S. Eliot does not have it, and it has led him, as all such fear and hatred of the masses must lead, to the last negation called fascism.

We are Communists, because we believe in man. We are Communists, because the world was made for human joy. We are Communists, because within each member of the human race are contained all the seeds of perfect moral and physical beauty.

This is what Isadora Duncan said in her dancing. I am glad the *NEW MASSES* is remembering her—she belongs to us forever. And I am glad that Walkowitz, the artist who spent happy and devoted years recording the dancer and her dance, is represented in this memorial. All that I could wish now would be a dance festival by the young dancers in honor of Isadora to testify that struggle is not enough, there must also be a vision and goal.



Isadora Duncan by A. Walkowitz

DURING a twenty-year period A. Walkowitz made literally thousands of these sketches as he watched Isadora Duncan dance. They are today the only visual record of her art. In his *As I Remember*, Arnold Genthe writes of them: "Of course the only perfect way to preserve for posterity the fugitive art of the dance would be with the aid of the motion picture camera. That Isadora could never be induced to let the cinema camera record any of her dances is a calamity. But in the absence of such a record the work of A. Walkowitz assumes a special significance, and it is something for which we and the future generations should be grateful." Mr. Walkowitz's work will be on view from September 27 to October 29 in a Tenth Memorial Exhibition of his Isadora Duncan drawings at the Park Art Galleries in New York City.

Juan March—Franco's Money Man

A career of small- and big-time banditry has given him much to defend against the onset of democracy and social welfare

By David Loth

BEHIND the bloody horror of Spanish fascism with its junta of feudal generals and medieval politicians is a ruthless organizing intelligence that is as modern as poison gas. It belongs to Juan March, the almost illiterate hog farmer who became the leading racketeer and then the leading industrialist of his country.

The bombs that fell on Guernica, the shells that go screaming into the workers' quarters of Madrid, the bullets that massacred the best men of a province in the Badajoz bullring are the bitter fruit of his unrelenting fight to overthrow the republic. Every missile that has carried death to a Spanish heart should be tagged "From Juan March to the Spanish people."

This man, whom one of Azafía's ministers once called "the republic's biggest single enemy" and whose role in fostering the revolt proves the justice of the remark, has kept himself almost entirely unknown abroad. Only a few casual references to him as one of the financiers of the fascist *movimiento* have crept into the press dispatches. But Spaniards know that in event of rebel victory Franco will bear the title of *jefe*, Spanish equivalent to Führer or Duce, but March will hold the real power.

The generals mouth such phrases as "national honor," but March has organized them to fight for something more tangible—for his fortune, the largest in Spain and one of the largest in Europe, for the political authority he lost in 1931, for new privileges that he can turn into domination of economic provinces that have not hitherto acknowledged his rule.

He has been the admitted economic genius of his party ever since he was financial adviser to the Primo de Rivera dictatorship, which gave the country a brutally repressive administration still remembered as ideal by Catholic Action leaders, landed proprietors, grandees, fascists, and big business interests, domestic and foreign.

An amazingly checkered career has converted this peasant's son into a champion of reaction. From the moment the republic was established on promises of many reforms, one of which was to shorten the stature of such giants as March, he has directed his resources steadily against all the parties on which the new regime was based. Part of the time he carried on his share of the debate from prison—the thunder of guns today is his last loud, illogical argument.

The prospect of March's supremacy in the feudal revival, which is the goal of the revolt, pleases few Spaniards. Their wealthiest com-patriot, although fervently hated by the Peo-



ple's Front, has never been cordially welcomed by the aristocracy of land, birth, and trade. Yet his personality so powerfully affects his countrymen that they have invented enough tales about him to furnish the legends for a Napoleon. They have been unable to improve upon the delirious record of his actual history, which could be paralleled in this country only if both Andrew Mellon and Al Capone had been the same man.

NO WEIRD PORTENTS were reported at his birth sixty years ago; the supernatural plays no part in the March saga. In the little cottage at Santa Margarita on Mallorca his advent was as little heralded as that of the litters of pigs which provided his parents with the principal part of their livelihood.

He had the usual schooling provided by the church. That is to say, together with other boys of the village he repeated in concert stray items of secular or religious learning. These included none of the three R's, although March has since learned to sign his name, read a bit for profit if not for pleasure, and achieve phenomenal virtuosity in arithmetic. This last was of service when he embarked upon a career, for he became a dealer in swine.

At the close of the century March was known throughout his native countryside as a shrewd bargainer. From one farmer he would buy, after interminable conversation, two pigs. An afternoon's diplomacy worthy of an arms conference would result in the purchase from another of three or four hogs. When he had collected thirty or forty, he would take them to Palma, Mallorca's metropolis, to sell.

There he discovered the racket that was to make his fortune.

This was nothing less than bootlegging, an old Spanish custom which *contrabandistas* had developed into an exact science generations before their American imitators made it notorious throughout the world. The only difference was that the racket was based on tobacco instead of liquor.

It began more than a century ago when the government leased to a private company the monopoly of selling inferior cigarettes and trashy "makin's." Smugglers hastened to embrace this new opportunity. Factories were established in neighboring countries, primarily in Algiers because of the obliging nature of the authorities and the convenience of transport. Fleets of small vessels ran the contraband to the Spanish shores. Beggars, waiters, shoe cleaners, porters, all sorts of humble folk were the ultimate vendors. They made a few pennies a day; the entrepreneurs made millions.

Mallorca is an island whose coast is dotted with isolated caves, coves, and inlets. It had, consequently, always been a smuggling center. So it was not surprising that March should have become acquainted with the racketeers. One of the rising young men among them, Jaime Grau, hailed from March's own village.

Grau introduced his townsman to bootleggers who were willing to accept the insignificant sums he could invest. It was still possible in Spain (as it was in England in the days of Drake) for respectable folk to back a slightly piratical venture for a share in the profits. But March was not content to trust his money to the business acumen and daring, not to say honesty, of others. Ignorant of formal finance, he instinctively knew that it is not the small stockholder who wins power and wealth.

He and Grau, perceiving that it was neither necessary nor desirable to risk handling contraband in person, formed a partnership. Both were ruthless without ferocity, calm, decisive. March, however, had more effrontery and daring. Soon it was remarked that the voyages he and Grau planned were safe investments; every contingency anticipated, every risk reduced to a minimum. The automobile, still new in Spain, helped. March was the first to see that police who plodded their rounds on foot were helpless against motor trucks. Me began to talk of the March luck.

Soon they began to talk of the March quarrels, for neither he nor Grau could accept the other as an equal. The ranks of the *contrabandistas* were divided. Gangsters who had worked in harmony for years began blazin-