

in the hope of hamstringing the lend-lease machinery itself. This maneuver ought not be allowed to succeed. Jesse Jones, Secretary of Commerce and head of the RFC, told reporters the other day that he favored including the USSR in the lend-lease provisions; coming from such a hard-headed business man like Jones, there ought to be no grounds for hesitation in Congress. The appropriations must be passed, and in a hurry, giving full equality, in fact, priority, to the needs of the Eastern Front.

Louis Dembitz Brandeis

JUSTICE BRANDEIS was one of the "nine old men." During the first and second Roosevelt administrations, the Supreme Court became synonymous with the ugliest reaction, with the stultification of the democratic process. Yet Justice Brandeis, with his colleague Benjamin Cardozo, was never really identified with the nine old men. For, in the

whole controversy between the people and the Court, Brandeis maintained his liberalism, upholding an anti-monopoly outlook in support of New Deal reforms. Louis D. Brandeis was a more than usually consistent man: he had fought monopoly from his youth and he continued to fight what he called the "curse of bigness." His career epitomized the trend of liberal thought during the thirty years and more that he participated so creditably in public life.

But his outlook also illustrated the weakness of a liberalism based on philosophic idealism and motivated by hatred of "size." True, in Massachusetts politics and later on the bench, Justice Brandeis fought without respite against the incursions of monopoly and against the corruption it brought with it. He was an able crusader for minimum wage laws. He gave voice to consumers' needs, to the desperate struggle for survival of small business overwhelmed by huge and ruthless corpora-

tions. But Justice Brandeis, like his elder contemporary Senator LaFollette, Sr., had almost no understanding of labor's primary role in this struggle, and still less perception that monopoly was more than the "curse of bigness," not to be "cured" by denunciation or by plans to recapture the good old days.

It is sad that an indelible part of his record must be his refusal to grant a stay of execution to Sacco and Vanzetti. His excuse at the time was that his daughter Susan had been interested in attempts to stop the murder of the two working class victims, and his legal ethics prevented him from interfering lest a stay granted by him be interpreted as stemming from "undue pressure." Perhaps this terrible blot is lightened somewhat by subsequent actions in the Scottsboro and Herndon cases, by his firm stand against Munich, by his unwavering opposition to fascism. His death marks the passing of a great liberal of another generation.

An Issue Without Substance

IT IS unfortunate that in the wake of the successful Moscow Conference, which joined the economic efforts of the Soviet Union, Britain, and the United States for the war against Hitlerism, a diversion has been created that threatens to obstruct the Roosevelt administration's efforts to send all possible aid to the Soviet front. The Soviet attitude toward religion is no more an issue in this war than is the American government's attitude toward Communism. The governments allied in this conflict have a single common meeting ground: their determination to rid the world once and for all of the Nazi menace. On other questions they may and do have differences, but they have deliberately subordinated these differences to the central common aim. The attempt to make religion an issue in this war stems from sources whose own political activities are suspect. S. A. Lozovsky, Soviet spokesman, put his finger on them when he said that those "in the United States who put particular stress on the question of religion and who attack Roosevelt from this angle are those who support Germany and try to utilize the question of religion for this purpose." This is confirmed by the shrieking advertisement of the America First Committee which uses an anti-Soviet tirade of one of the arch-reactionaries in the Catholic hierarchy, Monsignor Fulton J. Sheen, to attack the President's foreign policy.

When President Roosevelt cited Article 124 of the Soviet Constitution guaranteeing freedom of worship as well as of anti-religious propaganda, he was calling attention to an elementary fact. Undoubtedly, he hoped that this would strengthen support for his policy by depriving the appeasers of one of their favorite weapons: the hoary canard that religion is persecuted in the Soviet Union. The President, however, underestimated the

lengths to which the appeaser gang would go. They have raised a hue and cry in order to weaken the struggle against the greatest enemy of religious and all other freedom, Adolph Hitler.

Freedom of worship in the Soviet Union is a fact. Correspondents who discovered 1,000 Soviet citizens attending services at the Yeslokhovo Cathedral in Moscow last Sunday were discovering the obvious. As Lozovsky's official statement pointed out, there are many religious denominations functioning in the Soviet Union. And he might have added that they have far greater religious freedom than under czarism when Russia was a hotbed of religious strife and dissident sects were persecuted by the corrupt Orthodox Church whose head was the czar. Undoubtedly there have been instances where overzealous local Soviet officials have resorted to high-handed measures to close churches. But such officials have usually been removed for exceeding their powers.

What anti-Soviet propagandists have described as "religious persecution" have generally been police measures taken by the government against reactionary clerics who secretly conspired against the Soviet regime. These measures had no more to do with religion than had the counter-revolutionary political activities of the individuals involved. Even such cases have now become rare and it was at the insistence of Joseph Stalin that the new Constitution granted the franchise to priests.

At the same time no religious schools are permitted (nor, for that matter, any schools organized by private individuals) since education is considered the prerogative of the state. And it is quite true that the Soviet state seeks to imbue its citizens with a rational, scientific outlook; it is precisely for this reason that the

spiritual development of the Soviet people has reached new heights, as demonstrated by the remarkable morale of both soldiers and civilians. It is because in the USSR there have been fulfilled those ideals and moral values which sincere Christians have cherished throughout the ages that such distinguished clergymen as the Dean of Canterbury in England and Dr. Harry F. Ward in the United States have become warm friends of that country.

Those who seek to disrupt our national defense by concocting a false issue about religious freedom in the USSR prefer to keep silent about the real suppression of religious freedom in Nazi Germany. Sen. James Mead of New York, himself a Catholic, has performed a patriotic service by placing before the Senate documentary evidence of the persecution and looting of the Catholic Church in Germany. "Catholics, Protestants, and Jews have all suffered alike from the pogroms of Hitler," Senator Mead said. And he ridiculed Hitler's attempt to depict the Nazi attack on the Soviet Union as a crusade for Christianity.

In like vein four Protestant editors, Dr. Paul Tillich, Dr. James Luther Adams, Pierre van Paassen, and Kenneth Leslie, have protested the attempt to create a religious issue regarding the USSR. They have particularly singled out for criticism Rev. Dr. Edmund A. Walsh, vice president of Georgetown University.

In England, as Claude Cockburn points out in his cable on page 12, various religious denominations are joining hands in giving full support for the war and for the Soviet alliance. Whatever our opinion may be regarding religious freedom in the USSR, we in this country must likewise reject the attempts of those who play Hitler's game to divide us on what is essentially a fake issue.

ILYA EHRENBURG'S ART

Samuel Putnam recalls the great Soviet journalist in Paris in the days before the "Slow Curtain." The eyes that saw through a degenerate cafe culture. His essay on Unamuno.

Author's Note.—The other day, in rummaging through my papers, I came upon the following piece which I had written six years ago as part of a book on the European scene that was started but never completed. I was not long back from France at the time, and had just finished reading Ilya Ehrenbourg's collection of essays, published in 1934, and bearing the significant title *Zatyanuvshayasya Razvyazka*. Literally this title means something like *Long-Drawn-Out Denouement*, but it struck me that it could be admirably rendered as "Slow Curtain"; for that was what the author in reality was doing: watching the slow curtain that was falling on the culture and civilization of the France of the Two Hundred Families. It was a France I knew; and as will be seen, I had also known Ehrenbourg in a way, but it was not until I read his book that I came to understand him. At the same time, he gave me an understanding of the picture which, without grasping its deep, underlying significance, I had tried to convey in my *European Caravan* a few years previously.

Today, as I read Ehrenbourg's pages again and reread this little essay, which tries to give their substance, it seems to me that the author had the answer then, the answer before the event—that answer which, with all their sophistical stammerings, the Messrs. Romans, Maurois, and others are quite unable to give us. This, on the cultural plane, is the explanation of what happened to France in 1939. It is also the explanation of what is happening today on the Eastern Front.

BACK in the days when I was a resident of Montparnasse, I used to see almost every day, crossing the carrefour Vavin, going down the rue Delambre, or seated in the Dome, a figure that became extremely familiar to me, which yet remained strange and distant. One's first impression probably was the pronounced stoop of the shoulders, contrasting vividly with a body that held a feeling of strength. Young or old? Your guess would be from thirty to forty. Possibly under thirty, or over forty. One of those individuals with whom age somehow does not matter.

Pass him in the street, and he would dart up at you a quick, instantly lowered glance. Save when sitting in the cafe, he always appeared to be going very definitely somewhere, which in itself was something of an anomaly for the Quarter. His glance was a hasty one. It might be taken for evasive. But after you had encountered it once or twice, you came to be almost afraid of it; at least it made you a little uncomfortable, made you squirm a little, inwardly. That distance, that intentness, that cold unconcern—but was it coldness or unconcern?—were rather annihilating in effect. One felt oneself included in a none too flattering scene to which those eyes were all too accustomed.

Another picture, and a frequent one. He is

seated in that indiscriminate rendezvous, the Dome, usually alone and with a French or Russian newspaper in his hand. But is he reading? Reading what? The eyes lift from moment to moment over the top edge of the paper, roam over the noisy, at times blaring, room. They are reading still, reading that scene. Their distance—a defensive distance, one begins to sense—is pierced now by a human interest in the spectacle.

Ilya Ehrenbourg is watching, watching the death of a civilization, the ugly death agony and contortions of a once great culture, the bourgeois culture and civilization of Occidental Europe. And unlike M. Celine, for example, he does not find the sight amusing.

Celine, the author of the *Journey to the End of the Night*, had to see "Monsieur de Paris," the Paris executioner, at work. He was unable to resist the temptation to wisecrack. "The guillotine," he observed, "is the Prix Goncourt of crime." Even the headsman was shocked at such levity on the part of a supposedly distinguished writer and had to turn away to hide his disgust. Ehrenbourg sees nothing funny in such a "party."

Personally, I met him just once, being introduced to him in a magazine office. We exchanged the usual meaningless commonplaces. I often afterward wanted to go up and talk to him; but as I have said, I was more than a little intimidated, especially after I had seen those eyes above the newspaper surveying an obstreperous American "artist" or two and had noted the abashment, for such it seemed, with which Ehrenbourg hastily dropped his gaze. He was not invariably alone. I would see him sometimes with a group of French writers. But I do not believe (I may be wrong) that any of the Americans came

to know him well. We were quite too busy in those days with *transitions*, *Revolutions of the Word*, and what not.

It is only now, after having acquired a reading knowledge of Russian and after having read his collection of essays and sketches (the *Zatyanuvshayasya Razvyazka*) that I feel I have at last made the acquaintance of Ehrenbourg the man, the very, very human and saddened individual, as well as that of a new writer, differing from the creative *fantaisiste* whom I had previously enjoyed, but with much of the old fantasy and humor, a humor that is never out of place and which is often close to satire, or becomes satire, carried over into a critical form to help mold a merciless and brilliant new technique of literary reportage from which any progressive writer might learn a great deal. I now know the meaning of that hastily lowered glance under the hat brim or over the newspaper's edge in the clamorous cafe du Dome.

I can now perceive that Ehrenbourg saw the scene as we others, most of us, French, Americans, Icelanders, or Argentinians, failed to see it. He not only saw it—we did that, or thought we did—he saw through it, to the social, economic, political implications and meaning behind it all. Yes, behind the degenerate antics of a cafe du Dome. Behind the childish pranks, the "enquetes" and perversions of the Surrealists. He saw the relation between the Dome and the "rout" given by Monsieur and Madame Andre Maurois for their daughter at the Ritz, with, in place of guessing games, Jean Cocteau providing the amusement by actually baptizing, in due sacerdotal form, his newborn godchild.

Or it might be the *mondain* Paul Morand, gliding through life on a cushioned diplomat's passport and depicting the eternal feminine in the same eternal bourgeois setting, whether as of London or Siam—Morand, who wanted his hide when he was dead made into a traveling bag, but who, in the world's present state (1935), is terribly concerned with saving his hide, and who sees no better way of doing it, no better means of accomplishing the "moral regeneration of the West," than by looking to Herr Hitler. Yet M. Morand resents the intrusion of politics into literature, of the stormtrooper into the Ivory Tower. He wants "clean corpses," so he says.

Or it might be a "machine-fighting" Duhamel, taking time out to worry over the quarrelsomeness of the French bourgeois family. It might be a "choking" Mauriac, pottering over original sin. It might be a Spanish Unamuno, dean of quibblers, in that weird no man's land of the mind which he inhabits



Ilya Ehrenbourg