

fend him. An engineer, a businessman, can contribute to fascism as such. Why not a poet even as a poet?

It is clear why four of the poets draw this spurious distinction between the rest of humanity and the practitioners of their craft. They simply have lost all respect for the integrity and the power of the word. For a very long time now our poets have been bemoaning, supposedly, the state of mankind whose salvation awaits the sacred moment when poets will be taken seriously. Now the nation *has* taken a poet seriously and how do our poets react? With girlish fright mixed with claims to a sacrosanct inviolability such as no Indian witch-doctor would dare to invoke. A poet is taken seriously and they deny us the right to take him seriously. The only conclusion a sane man can draw from four of the six replies is that our poets are afraid of being examined too closely in the light of common sense, asking to be left alone by society to spin their personal, but not really serious, complaint. Can their stuff really be as empty as all that?

Indeed, I should have imagined that our four poets would have leaped like tigers upon the opportunity of asserting Pound's responsibility for everything he *ever* said. Especially since he was such a real poet, such a good poet. But they have treated him as though he were one of their legendary businessmen, a veritable philistine whose words are traditionally beneath the notice of intelligent people. To my mind, these five gentlemen have forfeited their own right to be taken seriously by mankind. In asking us to laugh away Ezra Pound they have demonstrated that they regard themselves as poseurs and harmless clowns, facile entertainers who really do not mean what they say but simply speak and write in a modishly elevated sphere of life. They who bemoan their separation from the public as the cause of poetry's demise have now made that separation complete in this, their final flippancy. For the real pay-off, of course, is that they had the incredible audacity to judge a question of treason without bothering to read the allegedly traitorous propaganda the accused is being held for! It was enough that the accused once wrote some fine poetry. For them no further proof of his irresponsibility, his silliness, is required. Thus they have defined "poet" for their age.

In conclusion may I say that without much effort one could find a thousand poets and writers who understand not only why Pound was dangerous and treasonous, but why he will be even more so if released. In a world where humanism must conquer lest humanity be destroyed, literature must nurture the conscience of man. A greater calamity cannot befall the art than that Ezra Pound, the Mussolini mouthpiece, should be welcomed back as an arbiter of American letters, an eventuality not to be dismissed if the court adopts the sentiments of these four poets.

Norman Rosten

THE case for and against Ezra Pound, as it is shaping up in such comments as those in *PM* of November 25, is for the most part based upon a general and shared confusion. No one at the moment is interested in Pound's



prosody or his contribution to art. He was a great poet and his poems will undoubtedly continue to be read. But all this is quite beside the point. We are not evaluating his poems. The case against Mr. Pound is a public and political one. Mr. Pound joined the war. He became a fascist hireling. He contributed to the murder of the innocent. He was a little fish, true, and maybe some of the big ones got away, and some of the native fascist fish still aren't caught and perhaps won't be, but Mr. Pound was caught with his words in his mouth, and let him be judged!

He was the poets' representative and he cheapened us, degraded us. Because he was a poet his crime is millionfold. Because he was a traitor, he should be shot. Or what else do we do with traitors these days? Send them on lecture tours? Have them write reviews for magazines? It was all a charming war, wasn't it?

Karl Shapiro, commenting in *PM*, dryly remarks, "If there is any principle involved, I should like to know what it is." The principle, Mr. Shapiro, is justice. Not poetic justice, just the ordinary prose kind, the kind certain poets have more difficulty in understanding than millions of people who damn well know the principle involved and will remember it for the rest of their lives. It is unfortunate indeed that Mr. Pound considered his poisonous mouthings akin to the innocence of poetry. It was not. And Mr. Pound shall find death no clever metaphor.

The fascists murdered the great people's poet Federico Garcia Lorca in Spain, without cause, and here we have the spectacle of American writers becoming apologetic for a known and proved fascist propagandist. It has the grisly humor of a surrealist dream. The tradition of the irresponsibility of the artist is very old, and it is not too surprising to find a defense of that shaky tradition with certain hesitations, explanations, reservations, numerous remarks, and other intellectual trappings. "As an eccentric he [Pound] must now be judged," says F. O. Matthiessen. Goebbels (haven't you heard?) was an eccentric playwright, Hitler an eccentric painter, Ribbentrop an eccentric diplomat. They are all eccentrics at Nuremberg, and some, like Hess, are even quaintly mad.

By their deeds, not by their eccentricities. By their words, gentlemen. By their evil openly practiced. For we assume the war that ended and the war continuing is a very serious one, and the dead far beyond Mr. Pound's imagery, and the reckoning must be serious and equivalent to the crime or else we are not worthy of being alive.

F. O. Matthiessen

IN RESPONSE to Isidor Schneider's comments I should like to say that I had read some of Pound's broadcasts before writing my comment for *PM*. I certainly believe a poet to be responsible for his political opinions. But it strikes me that my main function as a critic is—in this situation—to try to comprehend the total social context of Pound's views, so that we may recognize the danger signs in the drift of the Bohemian into the admirer of Mussolini, and thereby help prevent them from happening again. To explain how a man arrived at his views is not to explain them away. I believe, as my comment indicated, that Pound's broadcasts make him guilty of treason. However, as a civilian, it would seem to be no part of my function to bay for anyone's blood. I consider it my duty to try to make reasoned statements from which just conclusions can be drawn.

THE DEAN: CANTERBURY PILGRIM

By REV. WILLIAM H. MELISH

READING *The Soviet Power* by Hewlett Johnson did to me what it did to countless others. It awakened an interest in a new form of society that would eliminate the wastefulness and the contradictions all around us and permit of a broader application of modern technology to human needs. That this book was written by a churchman identified with the sedate and slumbering mother-shrine of the English-speaking world seemed a paradox. I took a personal interest in Hewlett Johnson. And when I learned that he was flying to America to spend ten days in our midst, I quite unashamedly solicited the job of serving as his companion, private secretary and assistant.

Our plans to greet him did not work out. Fog blanketed the entire coast. Word came that the Douglas transport we were expecting had been downed at Presque Isle in the northern tip of Maine. A phone call to the station master at Presque Isle revealed a train would leave in an hour, the commanding officer at the Army airport promised to help with the clearance, and then the Dean's voice came over the telephone: "Just get me on that train. Don't bother about a compartment. If need be, let me ride on the buffer."

I met him in Boston at dawn. The Bangor Express—dignified title for a string of milk cars with a work-coach and a Pullman at the end—puffed into North Station. It was gray, drizzling and penetrating. Then there he stood smiling, the now familiar, tall, lean, athletic figure in apron and gaiters.

We breakfasted on the train to New York. With a touch of envy he looked at the menu and I was filled with a sense of shame. That they didn't have the bacon that was printed there eased us both, and from that point on we frankly enjoyed the luscious Arizona honey-dew, cream with our cereal, sausages and eggs (I had heard dreadful tales of flour sausages and dried egg powder in Britain), and good black coffee. That morning he was hungry, though later he constantly complained that we gave him far too much to eat. "In England in wartime," he counselled, "we older people by and large were healthier than ever before, in spite of the limited diet. All of us eat too much."

I had to edit the manuscript of his Madison Square Garden speech and have it ready on our arrival at Grand Central. I was impressed by its utter simplicity, its condensation of experience, its essential rightness of belief. It set us talking and we began then a series of conversations which were to last throughout the week, in which I deliberately sought to set my own painfully acquired impressions of the Soviet Union over against his firsthand experience. Perhaps I shall be forgiven if I say that his confirmation of my basic views profoundly gratified and reassured me. I had brought an English pamphlet by Bogoleroov on "The Soviet Financial System" to read in the train. No sooner did he see it than it was in his hands and he immersed in it. And I learned the tremendous fascination which social theory has for his quick and inquisitive mind. Knowing that he would be challenged for his pre-war interest in Social Credit, I asked him how he felt about the Alberta Plan now. "It wasn't a failure," he replied. "It was scuttled at the very start. I still believe in it, but my experience in the Soviet Union has taught me that the most important elements of Social Credit are incorporated in the Soviet financial system—the control of money by the state so that it cannot be a commodity subject to private manipulation and speculation, and the pricing of goods."

When we stepped out of the train at Grand Central, Police Commissioner Wallender and a trio of detectives were on hand to receive us in the name of Mayor LaGuardia and we were all bundled into a waiting limousine and rushed with screaming sirens down Forty-second Street to the East River Drive and Triboro Bridge. The Dean was obviously pleased as Punch. At LaGuardia Field in the Admirals' Club, the first of innumerable press interviews took place. The Dean answered all questions coolly and concisely.

AFTER luncheon at the airport we flew to Washington. There we were taken at once to Mr. Davies' fantastic mansion—a stately house with elegant rooms filled with such a wealth of Russian art and portraiture that one felt as if one were in some great international museum. The uniformed

butler called out the names in quick succession of the Speaker of the House, the Secretary of Commerce, five Justices of the Supreme Court, five internationally-minded Senators, the chairman of the House Foreign Relations Committee, four foreign ambassadors, and a score or more of other important personalities. Thanks to Mr. Davies, the Dean was meeting key persons in Washington and I fully realized the importance of this introduction to the United States which the ex-ambassador to Russia was making possible. It was striking to see the Dean speaking on his experiences in the Soviet Union, in Berlin, in Poland and Czechoslovakia with these men, and doing it in a direct and utterly candid manner that was obviously impressing them. Some had undoubtedly come because Mr. Davies had asked them to, and were both skeptical and a little curious about this much-talked-about world figure in the ancient dress, yet he was speaking with them in a way that could scarcely fail to dispell their feelings and command intellectual respect. I was to see this happen again and again during the ensuing days.

Next morning in Washington, the Dean asked to be taken to Howard University to meet Dr. Mordecai Johnson, and to the Washington Cathedral to pay his respects to Bishop Dun and Dean Suter. At Howard he looked admiringly at the portraits on the wall—Julius Rosenwald, Franklin Roosevelt and George Foster Peabody, the university's chief benefactors—and the famous Aggrey of Africa whom the Dean had known in person. He spoke of his deep interest in Booker Washington. The president of Howard quizzed him on the Soviet Union. "Do you feel the Soviets have got hold of a really new and superior form of civilization?" He replied laconically, "I sincerely do." At the Washington Cathedral, he looked at the huge carved pulpit which came from Canterbury and then was fascinated by the elaborate electric light and sound push-button system in the verger's stall. "How my children would love to play with this!" he said. When Dean Suter observed that his verger could cut him off at will, the Dean of Canterbury chuckled, "How my verger would like to do that to me!"

He was surprised by the rank of the