

ing the opinions of others as they demand that others respect theirs. But this one-way freedom of conscience is improper and unacceptable.

WHEN will we achieve real freedom? It can only come about gradually; it cannot come immediately, or in one fell swoop. Real freedom will only come in a classless society. A society without classes is being created; it is already on the road to realization in certain parts of the world. It is being built little by little, in proportion to the progress of science, in proportion as the power of man over nature progresses. And only a classless society can permit a freedom really worthy of the name, that is to say, a

freedom broad enough to include all humanity.

But this freedom among equals can not be achieved without certain victims. Some will see a lessening in what they call their freedom but which in reality is the freedom of privilege based upon inequality. There is no point in ignoring this. That is why when classes are abolished in capitalist countries certain people will see their privileges eliminated. This will not be "suppression of freedom" but an increase in the share of liberty of the great majority of people who have hitherto been deprived of it.

This, therefore, is the way Marxism approaches the theory of freedom. It is, to use a word in vogue, a dynamic

approach. For Marxists freedom is not a fixed or metaphysical reality. Freedom is not an immutable quality inherent in human nature. Freedom was not won without struggle against those who were not at all eager to share it with others. We have come into that epoch of history where mankind can really be free because science is showing us how to overcome servitude to nature. Man is succeeding in transforming the world to his own use. And the Soviet Union is the example of man's attainment of freedom by his own creative effort. This freedom is not complete; it is ever-expanding. Its guiding philosophy, Marxism, shows the way not only for the Soviet Union but for the whole of humanity.

AGAIN—THE BOOK BURNERS

An Editorial by CHARLES HUMBOLDT

IN AN editorial entitled "Gorilla in the Library," published in *NEW MASSES* on Sept. 10, 1946, Joseph North wrote, "The dominant class in all capitalist and feudal society has conjured up 'morality' as a peg on which to hang political campaigns." He was referring to the Hearst "clean book" crusade, which he identified as a deliberate fascist tactic and preparatory step toward the silencing of free expression in the United States.

On Thursday, November 28, two judges of the Special Sessions Court of New York, affirming charges brought by the New York Society for the Suppression of Vice, held Edmund Wilson's *Memoirs of Hecate County* to be obscene and fined its publisher, Doubleday & Co., \$500 on each of two counts of publishing and selling the book. A third judge, Nathan D. Perlman, submitted a dissenting opinion in which he cited Judges Learned Hand's and John M. Woolsey's acquittal of James Joyce's *Ulysses*. From now on, until and unless the decision is reversed in a higher court, anyone found selling the book can be sentenced to one year's imprisonment.

I am not unaware of the irony of this action. Earlier this year, I reviewed Wilson's book [*NM*, May 7], saying that his provocateur's philosophy could only have the effect of dividing the intellectual from the working class and the progressive elements in society. I shall go further to say that *Hecate County* is an ugly and corrupt book which we would not lift a finger to see published. It echoes, in refined tones, the Red-baiting lies of the yellow press, just as it parallels, in its own elegant fashion, the scandal pages of Hearst's *American Weekly*. One might be tempted, therefore, to find it amusing that Mr. Wilson's friends do not recognize him, and that the apes of Hearst howl for the author to be put behind bars too. But to find it so would be to forget Mr. North's warning, to ignore the larger context within which the decision falls.

We have often seen how reaction wears the hypocritical disguises of piety and elaborate concern for the family and education to cover up its cynical disregard for all human feelings and values. Thus the Catholic hierarchy defends child labor by citing the sanctity of the home: the parent has a sacred right to turn his young sons and daughters into instruments of production. The most obscene press in the world, surviving brother of the defunct Streicher's *Der Stürmer*, becomes the defender of public virtue and taste, which is supposedly being undermined by Communists and liberals alike. (The *Journal-American* has recently entered the field of art, to engage in buffoonery against the work of leading American painters, represented in the State Department's cultural exchange show.) The sanctimonious Clare Luce, by an apt use of dots and dashes, accuses Marx and the Communists of advocating the destruction of the very family ties which Marx describes as being torn asunder by the action of modern industry. And the Legion of Decency justifies its attacks on anti-fascist films by pleading Christian forbearance toward one's enemies.

It is not hard to see where all this is leading—to the most elaborate array of bigot bell and book, fire and brimstone, cap and gown, hood and mitre, quill and nightstick, for the propagation of faith in capitalism and the establishment of human bondage as the will of God. As the crisis of capitalism grows more acute, and as people lose their belief in its everlastingness, as they come nearer to realizing it as the source of their suffering, the capitalists redouble their efforts to keep them in ignorance, turn them backward, pervert and vulgarize their standards and constrict their cultural outlook. Men must not only be made to think their interests lie where their oppression is planned; they must be persuaded to accept their oppression as a good. The honest writer, because he pursues reality and reveals, if only by implication, the decay of the existing social order, is willy-

nilly an enemy of the ruling class, which develops a paranoid horror of social truth. That class can always find agents among prurient fanatics whose literary judgment is confined to parlor, bedroom and sink, and to whom it will throw the rank bone of a *Hecate County* to whet their appetites for the feast of a new literature of protest. Already a book worth fighting for, the first novel of a young author and member of Contemporary Writers—*Shadow over the Land*, by Charles Dwoskin—has been banned in Boston as offensive to a morality which finds burlesque quite acceptable as good clean fun.

It is obvious that what the dissenting Justice termed "the complex influences of sex and of class consciousness on man's relentless search for happiness" will enter into any serious picture of contemporary life. But realism and pornography

have become synonymous to our native bookburners. And we cannot assume that their cultural terror will stop at the repression of individual books. It will also be exercised in the form of intimidation of publishers, who will hesitate to risk their money and reputation on a work which may offend the self-appointed guardians of mores and the existing order. Let these fake moralists dictate what Americans shall and shall not think and write, and every artist of integrity can be thrown to the dogs at a nod from the Caesars who rule the press as they do the mines, the mills, the factories and the land.

It is repulsive to see the old tart Monopoly, hounds yapping at her side, pretend to be a virgin and austere goddess. The defeat of the reactionary hypocrites on this issue is imperative.

***THE COMPLAINT OF THE IMMIGRANT FATHER* by A. M. Krich**

(Heard on the Radio)

At last I face this thing I dread.
Gladly I would turn
My back on this event:
Forfeit every hard-earned cent
To see my dearest enemy here instead.
My words sucked from my mouth
Into this public instrument
Tear my very entrails out.
Like a gutted horse
My poor English stumbles in the ring;
I drag my carcass and my rider too.
Blow blow across the roofs
Into my adopted country's parlors.
Perhaps the scarecrow of my sorrow
Will chase the black bird of their fears;
At least until tomorrow
Laughter out of tears.
Here I am a man without a name.
And this is my greatest shame
That I must go
Beyond the circle of my own lament
To borrow ears I cannot see;
To ask from strangers what
The Almighty has refused to grant.
A riddle a riddle—
Why is one man big
And another man little?

Can I make him grow?
My son, sir, for I have only one,
Drives this question
Into his parents' heart
Like a merciless bargain.
Comes landlord of my flesh and blood
To collect the answer like the rent.
Cruel is our torment
And our life never oversweet
Has become bitter as gall.
Can I make my boy grow tall?

Because I was short I must confess
I married a short woman.
Should I have married a giantess?
Together we had a son.
This boy, sir, for I have only one.
We are a small family.
Everything small except our troubles;
To them we are as David before Goliath.
And though I knew I never could be king
I found a small trade—tailoring.
Paid my way like any man;
Never on the installment plan.
Many live better
But few have more purpose
To live bravely
Big as the shadow a man throws
In the high noon of his hope.

Yet in the dusty geography of a flat
Hot with argument about this and that
I learned how tragic separation
Walls the second generation
From the immigrant.
And though we fight it back
Like nausea in a public place
The wish to erase
The emblem of the Pale
Hangs heavy in the air.

I understand this thing—
A poor prince if I am king.
Now the time is coming when
The boy becomes a man again
To recapitulate the race.
And I am gadfly to his anger
For I am mirror to his face.
O tell my son what I cannot say.
That there is night in every day.
The man is always smaller than his need.
The fruit must never curse its seed.