

*The Saturday Review  
of Literature*

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## Treason: an Ugly Word

IN these days when the heads of this country's Communist Party have been arrested for conspiring to destroy by force the Government of the United States, and when the conscience of liberal-minded men and women is awake to the danger in suppressing freedom of speech, Rebecca West's book of last year, "The Meaning of Treason," should be read and reread. Her study of the lives and court trials of England's wartime traitors, William Joyce, John Amery, and the rest of that pathetic gallery of fanatics, failures, and international criminals, is deeply significant at this moment when Fascism, which she calls infantilism, is replaced in our minds by a more menacing and more adult philosophy, International Communism, directed by Soviet Russia.

In unraveling the story of Joyce, British Fascist, she disclosed "the sickness that was rife among the obscure," the inflation of the sick ego that treachery, if it is based upon secret allegiance to alien ideas, can bring to men who have failed to convince their own world of their importance. That Fascism, and so Communism, makes a man able to be a traitor "to his country, his county, town, street, and family" was proved in Great Britain's case by the fact that it was the Fascist minority in England from which Germany obtained most of the traitors who served it. Though the life of liberty depends on civil order, the courts of law provided, as do our courts today, "considerable encouragement for the ambitious traitor who was willing to sabotage or destroy his own country." "If men are regarded as chessmen," she wrote, "who can but win or lose a game, they cannot be loved;

they can only be assured of fair play within the rules of the game."

The United States is now scrutinizing the problem of treason, which the dictionary defines as "the violation of a subject of his allegiance to the state," on a far vaster scale than England, even in the midst of war. We are now aware through the experiences of other nations, if not as yet through our own, that there are hundreds, perhaps thousands, of Americans who would like to see the democratic system of the United States uprooted and destroyed. Treason is an ugly word which now lies heavily on the minds and conscience of all of us who believe in our Constitutional right to express our opinions, no matter how heretical they may be. Nevertheless, it should have been proved by this time to any thoughtful man that the Communist Party in other democratic nations, and quite certainly in our own, is allied to and directed by Soviet Russia with the aim of ending our political and economic institutions and substituting an alien dictatorship.

The Smith Act of 1941, under which the twelve men who head our Communist Party are accused of conspiring against the Government, has never before been applied against Communists. The indictment states that they are collectively "dedicated to the Marxist-Leninist principles of the overthrow and destruction of the United States Government . . . by force and violence," and, individually, "a society, group, and assembly of persons who teach and advocate" the same. Many of us honestly quail at these words. "Dedicated to a principle!" That has a fine ring to it, for do we not all hope that we are dedicated to principles? "Teach and advocate!" Why not? If a man honestly believes, no matter how deluded he may appear to the average American, that Soviet Russia has a better government than ours, why should he not advocate that form

of social system and government for our own country? There is nothing in our Constitution to prevent it. The inquiring and liberal man, trying to find the way through this morass, trying to shut out from his mind fear and anger created by Soviet aggression in national life everywhere, should remember only these words, the "overthrow and destruction of the Government of the United States by force and violence."

In this country we are not as yet familiar with the significance of mass treachery. The patriots of our Revolution were not traitors; they were honest revolutionists who believed that the American colonies should be free; they did not threaten the form of government ruling Great Britain. In our Civil War the Southern states did not contemplate the conquest of the North, nor, if they had won what they believed was their right to secede, would they have ruled the entire country from Washington, or afflicted the free states with compulsory Negro slavery. What we are viewing now with alarm and quaking consciences is a new form of wholesale treason. The average conscientious American, however he weighs his scruples, can only say that if these accused Communists, and others like them, have been planning violence and sabotage, or have been consulting the will of foreign advisors on how the Government of the United States may be overthrown in a time of crisis or war, then they will be proven to his satisfaction to be traitors, subject to whatever punishment the law permits. Let them confine their activities to peacefully teaching and advocating, until such time when the majority of the citizens of the country votes a Communist dictatorship into power. The rest of us then will advocate its removal until we are expurgated, or cheerfully go underground to plot its fall.

H. S.

## Diagnosis

By Marcia Lee Anderson

WE MULTIPLY diseases for delight,  
Invent a horrid want, a shameful doubt,  
Luxuriate in license, feed on night,  
Make inward bedlam—and will not come out.  
Why should we? Stripped of subtle complication,  
Who could regard the sun except with fear?  
This is our shelter against contemplation,  
Our only refuge from the plain and clear.  
Who would crawl out from under the obscure  
To stand defenseless in the sunny air?  
No terror of obliquity so sure  
As the most shining terror of despair  
To know how simple is our deepest need,  
How sharp, and how impossible to feed.

# LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

## Bangling Jingles

SIR: I was so interested in your editorial "Bangling the Language," July 10, that I was moved to attempt an arrangement. I spent two or three hours in an air-conditioned bar. Here-with the sorry result of my efforts:

### MISFARE OF A GAINLY THING

The jug-bitten taverner, lanken and  
sloomy  
Totlers and keeks through his hostel  
roomy  
He slomps his samely brew to felth  
And gowls at the lack of clientele,  
Berates himself for a jabbernowle,  
A spuddling dumble, a bangling mole,  
Reaved by slocksters, bereft of patrons,  
Sans nappy fry or fluttersome matrons.  
He kens the need to thrump and prog  
His lobby, and resorts to grog,  
He slomps his samely brew to felth  
The smithers of his wartime wealth.

RICHARD A. PURSER.

Washington, D. C.

SIR: You have probably received many responses to your good piece, "Bangling the Language." You have probably also received numerous examples, better than the one below, of readers' efforts to plant the words in their vocabularies by incorporating them in verse.

### FLINDERS WHILE STROMING

Forswat and forswunk at the end of  
the day,  
I toltor off on my homeward way.  
Feeling as sloomy as any one can,  
I gowl at the smatters afflicting man.  
I thrump the passersby in the street,  
And they thrump me, and step on my  
feet.  
The scroils and the bummels are constantly  
keeking,  
The jug-bitten dumbles pass by reek-  
ing.

One man is lanken, the next is a chuff;  
A few girls are gainly, but not enough.  
Each spuddler I meet is more of a  
mome,  
And I feel like a sumph by the time I  
reach home.

At any rate, I intend to try to do  
my bit to use some of these words,  
and get them back into our active  
vocabulary.

RACHEL BARD.

New York, N. Y.

### Paradox

SIR: Query re your note on Graham  
Greene [SRL July 10]: How can one  
simultaneously be "misanthropic, pro-  
foundly Christian, disdainful of the  
common man. . . .?"

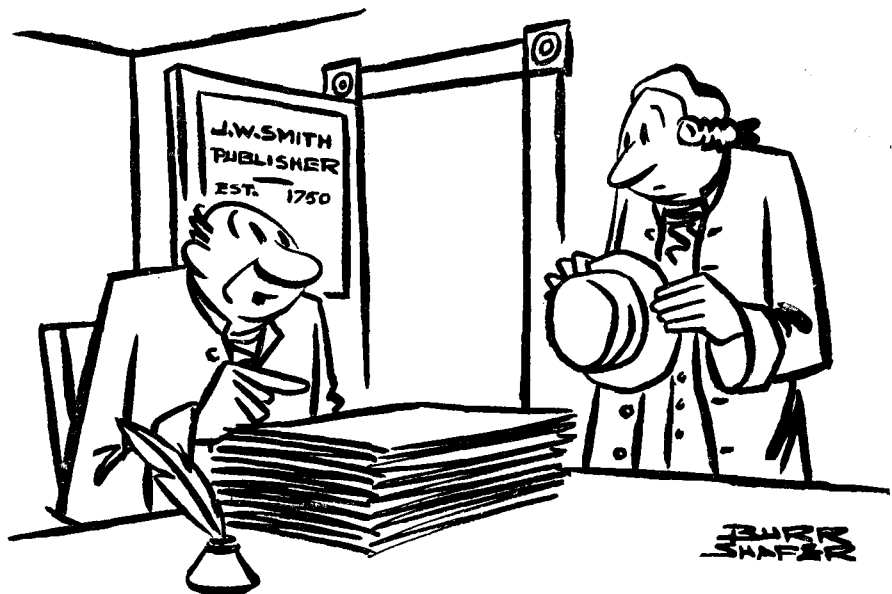
MILDRED B. MUNDAY.

Lynchburg, Va.

EDITOR'S NOTE: *We don't know.  
That's the talk going around.*

### Fast Plea

SIR: I think your readers need to  
be told editorially that Howard Fast  
is under sentence to three months in  
jail—and why. The considerable like-  
lihood is that he will go to prison in  
October.



### THROUGH HISTORY WITH J. WESLEY SMITH

"You tell Adam Smith that I might accept this manuscript  
if he would put in a few amusing anecdotes here and there."

The facts behind his case are simple  
and clear:

Fast is a member of the executive  
board of the Joint Anti-Fascist Refugee  
Committee (JAFRC). For ten years  
this committee has been administer-  
ing relief to the Republican refugees  
from Franco Spain who are in France  
and Mexico. It has supplied them with  
hospital beds, physicians, bandages,  
clothes, medicines. This is Fast's first  
crime, his most obnoxious crime.

The charitable work of the JAFRC  
has been executed abroad by the Uni-  
tarian Service Committee and the  
Quakers. The records of the JAFRC  
have been regularly inspected and ap-  
proved by the U.S. Government agency  
that licenses the work of such relief  
organizations. This is Fast's second  
crime.

At this point it becomes necessary  
for your readers to know that the  
House Committee on Un-American Ac-  
tivities some time ago declared that  
opposition to the Franco Government  
was un-American and subversive. And  
that this committee then demanded  
by subpoena the books and records of  
the Joint Anti-Fascist Refugee  
Committee.

Howard Fast, as one of a board of  
honorable American men and women,  
refused to hand over to this commit-  
tee the names of thousands of other  
Americans who had contributed money  
to their medical aid fund. They did  
so in order to protect their donors  
from investigation, persecution, public  
calumny, and job blacklisting.

As anti-Fascists, the members of the  
JAFRC also refused to hand over to  
the declared friends of Franco the  
names of Spaniards in French camps  
who had received their aid, lest the  
names be transmitted through the  
Thomas Committee to the Spanish  
Embassy and the families of these  
men then be reached by Franco's exe-  
cutioners.

For these crimes, Fast and the other

members of the board of the Joint  
Anti-Fascist Refugee Committee were  
declared in contempt of Congress,  
tried in court, and convicted by a jury  
largely composed of Government em-  
ployees. Now, their appeals denied,  
they are to go to prison. A final peti-  
tion for judicial review has been  
granted them for the fall.

I think you need to urge your read-  
ers to reflect upon another fact. Fast,  
more than any other novelist in Amer-  
ican literature, has tried book by  
book to sing a hymn of American  
democracy. Whether or not he has  
been successful can be left to the  
judgment of the reader. But certainly  
he has tried. And now, while he awaits  
execution of sentence, some fifteen  
men and women who spoke treason  
during the war over the Italian, Jap-  
anese, and German radios, are walk-  
ing the streets at liberty. They have  
not been investigated by the Un-Amer-  
ican Activities Committee or charged  
with any crimes by the Department  
of Justice, not even contempt of Con-  
gress.

I believe further that you need to  
call upon your readers to honor How-  
ard Fast for his alleged crimes.

I believe you need also to call upon  
the leading literary men and women  
in America, calling upon them pub-  
licly by name—Sinclair Lewis, Ernest  
Hemingway, Pearl Buck, John Dos  
Passos, John Steinbeck, Louis Brom-  
field, Robert Sherwood, Carl Van  
Doren, Bernard De Voto, John Mar-  
quand, Edna St. Vincent Millay, Eu-  
gene O'Neill—and many others I will  
not set down here. I think you must  
ask them to interrupt their work and  
their lives in order to speak out on  
this issue, to agitate and split the sky  
with their indignation. And I believe  
deeply that you must insist that if  
they remain silent then they will be  
abdicating their moral responsibility.

ALBERT MALTZ.

Los Angeles, Calif.

AUGUST 14, 1948

23