

His Nation Went to Prison with Him

U Nu of Burma, by Richard Butwell (Stanford University Press, 301 pp. \$7.50), details the political history of a newly independent country whose constitution was abrogated and Parliament dissolved in March 1962. As chief economic adviser there from 1953-1958, Louis J. Walinsky knew the now-imprisoned Prime Minister intimately. He is the author of "Economic Development in Burma."

By LOUIS J. WALINSKY

U NU, Burma's democratic, devout, idealistic, gentle, and imaginative Prime Minister, has been held prisoner, together with most of his former leading colleagues in government, since General Ne Win and his military followers seized power in March 1962, abrogated the constitution, and dissolved the Parliament. Since that time the free expression of political opinion has been stifled by terror, while a primitive and despotic totalitarian military socialism has been imposed increasingly on every aspect of the national life and economy. In a sense, all Burma has become a prison. Even the military despots seem themselves to be captive to their crude ideological obsessions and to mounting fears—fears of their own inadequacies, fears of their Red China-supported insurgents, fears of the tide of dissatisfaction and hate that is welling up within the populace at large against them, fears of the opinions of the free world outside, whose contact they shun. This situation cannot last indefinitely. Ne Win's Burma appears to be moving inexorably towards some dark, perhaps bloody, and almost certainly tragic crisis.

The story of post-World War II Burma, which achieved independence from England with such high hopes and potential, which undertook a large-scale, optimistic planned program to achieve democratic development and welfare in the decade that followed, and which indeed in many ways made considerable progress towards these objectives, only to come to this present pass, is closely interwoven with the story of U Nu. Burma's strengths and promise derived largely from him; so did her weaknesses and her present despair. In a profound sense, Burma's tragedy is



—Wide World.

U Nu—"democratic, devout, idealistic."

the personal tragedy of U Nu writ large. What sort of man is this, one asks, who played, and may yet again play, so fateful a role in the history of his country?

U Nu's great strengths were his courage, his buoyant optimism, his simple goodness, his humility and tolerance, his honesty and candor, his humanity and wisdom, his quick intelligence and readiness to learn, his dedication to peace and welfare, his charismatic appeal and his gift of leadership. His great weaknesses were his lack of practical experience and executive-administrative ability, his failure to recognize the need for priorities or the need to follow through on the many actions, projects, and policies he initiated, his imperfect appreciation of the essentials of a functioning democratic society, his susceptibility to flattery, and the polarity that led him alternately to seek the hurly-burly of political action and the withdrawn meditative or creative life.

His inner contradictions were important too. By turns naïve and shrewd, sweet-tempered and irritable, reflective and impetuous, wise and headstrong, candid and devious, trusting and suspicious, energetic and indolent, self-critical and self-deceiving, steadfast and volatile, extroverted and withdrawn, progressive and traditional, U Nu perplexed, frustrated, and increasingly alienated those who knew, trusted and loved him best. These traits were re-

flected in the aspirations, programs, successes, and failures of U Nu's government in the 1950s, and in the eventual collapse, which opened the door to the military despotism that followed.

One turns therefore to Richard Butwell's *U Nu of Burma* for an understanding of how the man and his milieu interacted upon one another with such disastrous results. Butwell has not attempted anything so ambitious. His intensively researched, concentratedly factual account of U Nu as boy, university youth, political apprentice, wartime politician, and independence Prime Minister, political leader and world figure does not evoke the quality of the man, portray his personal tragedy, or relate it significantly to the larger course of events. U Nu stands at the same distance from the camera in Butwell's panorama as do the host of other figures in the evolving picture, which itself flattens out in a blur of unselective detail.

Butwell's book is thus less biography than a party and political history of independent Burma. Even here, although he has consulted many primary sources and interviewed on the spot numerous observers of and actors in the drama, Butwell adds no significant new facts (other than a slim first chapter on the early years), no enlightening interpretations, emphases, or evaluations to the previously published accounts of Cady, Tinker, Maung Maung, Pye, Johnstone, and others, including the present reviewer, on all of which he has also relied. Of his relatively few independent judgments, some are infelicitous, to say the least; and, not unnaturally, an occasional error of fact appears. While Butwell's book will be of value to researchers and specialists concerned with Burma, it is not, unfortunately, the study that U Nu merits and a world seeking better understanding of the problems of the newly developing nations could well use.

FRAZER YOUNG'S LITERARY CRYPT NO. 1061

A cryptogram is writing in cipher. Every letter is part of a code that remains constant throughout the puzzle. Answer No. 1061 will be found in the next issue.

C DH DNTDCS ZAHWCXEXL
FQBCAR CR DR DB QMXCB-
FACRZQT XL D YDBSWQ.

RZQBRXLBQ

Answer to Literary Crypt No. 1060

Everyone has talent at twenty-five. The difficulty is to have it at fifty.
—DEGAS.

A Holiday for Fine Arts

By GEORGE HEARD HAMILTON,
professor of history of art at Yale University and Robert Sterling Clark
Professor of Art at Williams College.

AS THE holidays approach and the beautiful, bright books pile up on his desk, even the most charitable reviewer may want to invoke his own Parkinson's Law to the effect that the better the illustrations, the worse the text. Happily, this year we need not fear all those who come bearing gift books. *Great Drawings of the Masters* (Putnam, \$25), for instance, will adorn anyone's drawing room, but it is more than merely ornamental. It is both pleasurable to examine and profitable to study. The editor, J. E. Schuler, has selected more than 100 drawings from notable public collections in Europe and America, and they have been unusually well reproduced in color offset, often in facsimile size or nearly that. Short explanatory paragraphs by Dr. Rolf Hänsler, set well away from each drawing on the opposite margin, provide a continuous commentary on the history of art as well as pertinent facts for each individual drawing. Many of these have long been familiar, but they are good to see again, and there are surprises even for the well-informed. Bernini's *Sunrise in Berlin*, although described as his only surviving theatre design, is a stunning seascape freshly observed within the conventions of seventeenth-century landscape painting. A *Woodland Scene* by Van Dyck, from the Pierpont Morgan Library, is so true an interpretation of the morning sun striking through an autumnal wood that, having seen it, one wants to look again into the landscape backgrounds of his portraits. And art historians should think twice before dismissing Rosalba Carriera as a tedious eighteenth-century pastellist after looking at the *Head of a Child* from Leningrad. It is good to have an anthology that not only enlarges but even revises one's understanding of an art.

In his *Graphic Arts in the Twentieth Century* (Praeger, \$30) Wolf Stubbe, the curator of prints and drawings at Hamburg, has brought together a generous selection of fine modern prints with many reproduced in good color. In his text Dr. Stubbe examines technical and stylistic developments in relation to changing esthetic concepts. Thus we

can follow the course of etching and lithography in France from their revival as independent rather than reproductive media, through the German emphasis on wood engraving for more declamatory expression, to the present multiplicity of technical experiments for the projections of less specific psychological experience. The argument is solemn, closely reasoned, and elegantly sustained. This is German philosophical scholarship at its best, a texture of abstraction constantly vitalized by reference to the material and stylistic actualities of the work of art.

Contemporary art is served by another handsome volume *Modern Sculpture: Origins and Evolution*, (Braziller, \$17.50), by Jean Selz, a French critic and novelist. Mr. Selz and his publishers have taken exceptional care to find crisp, new photographs and to give them room on a squarish page so that objects can be seen for themselves as well as in provocative combinations. Certain well-known sculptures appear in unexpected aspects, especially in the sixteen color plates, which prove for those who may have forgotten that sculpture is executed in other tones besides photographic gray. Stones, metals, plaster, terra cotta, and wood come chromatically alive. The supporting text is informed, thoughtful, and often enlivened by the author's personal feeling



—From "Great Drawings of the Masters."
Portrait of a Girl, by Albrecht Dürer

for or against his subjects. Even when one disagrees with him, this is a relief from the usual routine historical survey. It must be said, however, that Mr. Selz is to some extent a victim of his own history. He takes up a position so completely inside the modern movement that when faced with the unfashionable he finds only fashionable things to say. His pictorial survey of nineteenth-century sculpture is so provocative to look upon that it is disconcerting to be told once more that the works of David d'Angers, Barye, and Meunier are "limited" and "monotonous," when the photographs belie such judgments. But as a broad survey of technical and formal developments his book may be read with profit, tinged with regret that his method obliges him merely to mention in passing artists so significant as Lipchitz and Gabo, and to confine Henry Moore to a single example. Fortunately, the biographical dictionary contains additional useful information.

Not so much can be said for a weighty and lavish volume, *Mannerism: The European Style of the Sixteenth Century* (Holt, Rinehart & Winston, \$27.50), by the Viennese art historian Franzsepp Wörtenberger. This is the fourth in a series of books commemorating the large international exhibitions arranged at intervals by the Council of Europe, in this instance "The Triumph of Mannerism," held at Amsterdam in 1955. The vivid color plates and copious black-and-white illustrations kindle one's curiosity to learn why so tortuous and grotesque a style dominated so much artistic production through the sixteenth century. Mannerism had its great and graceful practitioners in Tintoretto, Pontormo, El Greco, and Primaticcio, and to mention their names is to suggest the complex psychological and stylistic character of Mannerism at its best. Yet it also had its horrors, some of which jump out of the pages of this book, and these it would be interesting to have explained; for to know Mannerism at all is to want to know it better. And to know it better might be to like it more. But the text is sadly ill-contrived for this purpose. It is as ambiguous and indirect as Mannerism at its most intense, and leads us around rather than into the major problems of sixteenth-century art. The reader would do better to start with the excellent bibliography, and pursue the earlier but still indispensable studies of Friedlaender, Panofsky, Pevsner, Blunt, and Benesch, who defined the stylistic and intellectual principles clearly and succinctly.

Two other picture books may be mentioned here. In the illustrations for her *Delacroix, a Pictorial Biography* (Viking, \$6.50) Yvonne Deslandres has happily emphasized the artist's paintings