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NATO and SEATO, as was Egypt). Sir Anthony Eden, poor fellow, and David Ben-Gurion are the vanquished heroes of the book, Nasser the victorious villain, egged on, armed, and supported by Russia at every step, and never faced down by Dulles; little Israel was resolutely fighting for her life.

Mr. Finer presents his indictment of his adopted country's Suez diplomacy in great detail and in bitter, biting language. He has put the supporters of Dulles and Eisenhower on the defensive. But his is not the last word. The

case for the United States has not been made. We must await the next volume of General Eisenhower's memoirs, presumably covering the Suez crisis, and the more scholarly study of John Foster Dulles and his diplomacy by Professor Louis Gerson in a forthcoming volume of the new series "The American Secretaries of State and Their Diplomacy." So far Herbert Nicholas of Oxford University has written the most balanced account, in his Albert Shaw Lectures at Johns Hopkins University, *Great Britain and the U.S.A.*

Time and the Political Tide

Suicide of the West: An Essay on the Meaning and Destiny of Liberalism, by James Burnham (John Day. 312 pp. \$5.95), spells out the dangers inherent in what the author regards as a lethal ideology. Frank Altschul is chairman of the Committee on International Policy of the National Planning Association.

By FRANK ALTSCHUL

PLOWING through *Suicide of the West*, it is hard to avoid the feeling that its author is in the grips of an acute obsession. Starting from the premise that "for the past two generations Western civilization has been shrinking; the amount of territory, and the number of persons relative to the world population, that the West rules have much and rapidly declined," he reaches the dismal conclusion that, unless an ideology which he believes presently dominates the thinking and the political life of much of the West is abandoned, the ideals and the influence of Western civilization are doomed.

To define this pervasive and lethal ideology is the task to which the greater part of this book is devoted. While James Burnham protests at an early stage that he will "not try to answer now or later" the question "why has the West been contracting," the whole drift of his argument is to fasten full responsibility on what he chooses to denote as "liberalism." This is the villain in the piece, and the obsessive villain which the author attacks with obvious relish.

By way of making his meaning abundantly clear, Mr. Burnham summarizes in the seventh chapter "nineteen liberal ideas and beliefs" which he has previously discussed. It is highly doubtful that many can be found who

would subscribe unconditionally to this whole body of doctrine, and dissent will surely grow as one follows the author in the development of his thesis. He protests that he does "not want to end up sticking pins into a straw man." Yet liberalism, as he defines it, is the veriest straw man even if the pin-sticking is left to others.

On rare occasions the author indicates some vague awareness of the changing aspect of the world of today. He admits, for instance, that "in our time, rapid communication and transport have made all nations neighbors to each other; and this fact as well as the existence of weapons of mass destructive potential must inevitably be allowed for in the practical exercise of sovereignty." But in spite of such casual admissions, it is clear that Mr. Burnham is governed by a nostalgic desire to turn the clock back—to return to the good old days. It is not the awakening in the twentieth century of slumbering masses, the gradual spread of literacy, the revolution of rising expectations, the population explosion, or, above all, the development of thermonuclear weapons that make any such return impossible. Rather it is the growing influence of the baneful encroachments of liberalism.

It seems safe to say that only a small minority predisposed to the cultivation of illusions would accept this as a realistic interpretation of the forces determining the evolution of political thought today. One may agree with Mr. Burnham's contention that colonialism has been liquidated at times with inadequate preparation, and yet be conscious of the fact that the era of Western imperialism had come to an inevitable end. One may regret the errors of judgment that have allowed a new Soviet imperialism to extend its domination well into Eastern Europe, and yet

(Continued on page 50)

Messages Written in Darkness



Milovan Djilas—idyls and platitudes.

The Leper and Other Stories, by Milovan Djilas, translated by Lovett F. Edwards (Harcourt, Brace & World. 247 pp. \$4.95), plumb the disasters of war and men's divisive emotions. Robert L. Stilwell teaches English and comparative literature at Ohio State University.

By ROBERT L. STILWELL

THE FLIGHT of the Yugoslav writer and political figure Milovan Djilas furnishes analogies, however oblique, to that of the broken revolutionary Rubashov in Arthur Koestler's novel *Darkness at Noon*. A member of the Communist Party in Yugoslavia since 1932, Djilas rose quickly to a place among its ideologues and highest officials, establishing himself after World War II as one of the three or four most powerful presences within the Tito government. Then began his period of intransigence, of unhealed conflict with the system for which he had served as an architect. And from 1956 to the present, excepting brief respites, he has been in Mitrovica Prison, under protracted sentences for his "revisionism."

Of course, this sort of progression has become an old story by now, a parable hardened into a paradigm. From one of

its re-enactments to the next the names remain as interchangeable as so many Volkswagen parts. Yet in Djilas's case an important result of his severance from the Party has been that he is now discussed, and at least nominally read, in the West. He has come to be accepted—with that self-righteous judging and labeling to which the cant of our times impels us—as one of those vaguely respectable disillusioned visionaries, as a potentially redeemable penitent detained by the yahoos with whom he hobnobbed during his less regenerate days.

Among English-speaking readers Djilas is likely to be known principally for his autobiography, *Land Without Justice*, and for the polemical books *The New Class* and *Conversations with Stalin*. It was through his stories and poetry, however, that he first gained literary recognition in his native country; and since his imprisonment he has continued the writing of short fiction. *The Leper and Other Stories* exhibits ten recent or fairly recent specimens of his work in this genre.

It would be gratifying to admire them unequivocally. Each of the stories gathered here aspires to seriousness and compassion—in the best senses of those much-battered words; several of them are idyls, although the majority deal with the disasters of war and with the internal struggles of men's divided emotions. By most accounts, furthermore, their author is a brave and humane man who has suffered deeply and who evidently wishes to make "the human spirit" something more than just another sudsy catch-phrase. Then, too, documents produced in prison lay special claim on any but the toughest sympathies. For these reasons, therefore, it seems a detestable circumstance that all the pieces in *The Leper* should be second-rate and that a few of them should possess, as literary art, virtually no merit whatsoever. Yet such, I am afraid, is the case.

Where do their flaws lie? Why have so much pain, so many decent intentions, issued in so little? One problem is that most of these stories are distractingly outmoded, even reactionary, in technique. Aside perhaps from "Sudikova" and "The Song of Vuk Lopusina," which test the boundaries separating fiction from the nostalgic essay, not one of them could be said to enrich the possibilities of form by wrenching the traditional limits of those possibilities. To be

sure, literature shall not live by innovation alone; but neither is there much virtue in concocting warmed-over imitations of early Turgenev.

Another difficulty is the curious, watered-soup flatness that pervades these stories. They contain little genuine resonance of pity and horror; nor is their plainness the kind that annihilates through its very starkness. Some idea of this lack of dimension can be obtained by contrasting Djilas's sketch of an aged refugee and his small granddaughter (in the tritely titled "Old and Young") with the searing pictures of refugees in Hemingway's dispatches from the Spanish Civil War.

Still another objection is that Djilas's rhetoric of persuasion—or his didacticism, to haul out that blunter term—constantly impinges on his artistic imagination. The reader is forever being told what he ought to think about this or that, rather than being allowed to decide for himself. In this respect the fable called simply "War," in which a peasant couple witness the behind-the-lines execution of their soldier son, is probably the worst offender; however, none of the pieces escapes this intrusiveness of predigested "messages." And I might add, without being able to determine whether author or translator is responsible, that the exposition of these "messages" comes close to forming one endless skein of platitudes ("No man can escape eternity"), shameless clichés ("He was ready to give the shirt off his back"), and unarguable truisms ("Every man must create for himself some way of life by the very fact that he is alive").

None of these blemishes need imply that the volume is totally without distinction. Some of its evocations of nature, as in "Woods and Waters," have a pleasant lyricism. Toward its conclusion the long title story becomes quite moving, and so do "The Execution" and "The Foreigner." Nevertheless—to put the case uncharitably—the more disappointing pages in *The Leper* almost make one wish that Djilas had spent his time studying astronomy, as Rubashov hoped to do, instead of fashioning a collection of homemade fiction.

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