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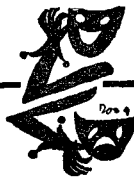
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BROADWAY POSTSCRIPT

The Dispassion of Paddy C.

ALTHOUGH forty-six years have passed since the Russian Revolution, it is still difficult to regard it dispassionately. But Paddy Chayefsky has made an admirable attempt to do so in his latest play, *The Passion of Josef D.* Furthermore, this play represents a considerable advance for Mr. Chayefsky in the use of theatrical devices to tell a large story. To demonstrate how the Russian people made a painful and illusory advance from worshipping a Czar as divine to revering Lenin as God, Mr. Chayefsky begins his play by having the peasants sing a facetious hymn to the Czar just before being shot down by his soldiers, and he ends up at Lenin's bier with the peasants singing exactly the same hymn, except for the substitution of Lenin's name. In the play's second scene we watch the young exiled Josef Djughashvili (later known as Stalin) cold-bloodedly stab a friendly Siberian prison guard in order to steal his boots. At its end the mood shifts abruptly as Stalin steps out of the play and says directly to the audience, "The moral of this episode is: When a barefoot fellow tells you he is revolting against tyranny, watch out; he's only after your boots. There you have the class struggle in a nutshell."

As the play moves on chronologically through the events of the Russian Revolution, Mr. Chayefsky continues to highlight the absurdities and paradoxes that attended it: the hopeless factionalism of the many leftist groups, the Marxist nun whose high principles make her willing to do more ruthless and bloody acts than the worst thug, and the irony that in retrospect Lenin felt they hadn't achieved anything original enough to justify the blood-letting and heroic effort. In two instances, however, Mr. Chayefsky becomes distractingly broad. One is an inserted vaudeville act in which, to a patter song titled "Nothing Has Changed," we are shown in farcical terms the period of the Kerensky government. The other presents us with a satirical portrait of Trotsky as a clownish and intellectually snobbish *régis seur* imperiously staging the revolution as a calculated series of crowd scenes and scene-shifts.

The play's most interesting and compelling scene is one in which we see Lenin talking with Stalin in much the same way that the Angel of the Lord conversed with Gideon in Mr. Chayefsky's previous play. The difference here

is that Stalin has made a god out of Lenin so that Stalin can be a prophet. But as in *Gideon*, the god mocks the prophet for his human presumption. He tells him that his new-found faith in the socialist order is silly because it is predicated on the idea that greed, cruelty, and violence are unnecessary to man's condition; that democracy is no more decent than monarchy; and that socialism—which insists that men are moral and are progressing toward some eventual perfection—is really one more religion sustained by an aspiration to godhood. He concludes, "Like all religions, ours is just a contrivance to satisfy our presumption to be meaningful. Like all religions, socialism will hound its heretics and massacre millions."

THEN the playwright has Lenin demote Stalin for having gone too far in his religious zeal. But before he can carry out his demotion, Lenin has a stroke and Stalin is left with the power. Since Stalin, just before this moment, had appeared completely crushed by Lenin's iconoclasm, we wonder what faith sustained him through his ensuing career. Was it faith in himself (the personality cult)? Or was it, as the playwright seems to suggest, that Stalin somehow regained his faith in precepts that Lenin ultimately questioned?

While all this is frequently stimulating, the many shifts in mood and style keep catching us unprepared. It would be an easy matter for the playwright to repair this fault by, for instance, making Trotsky a constantly reappearing character who supplies the audience with the comic insights into actions that the other characters take more seriously. Though this might be unfair to the real Trotsky, there is an element of truth in the incompatibility of intellectualism and tragedy, and this is all the justification a writer needs.

One hopes that Mr. Chayefsky will not be discouraged by the probable short run of this play, and will make the revisions that could turn this work into a more effective theater piece. For even in the present production as directed by the playwright himself, there is much to appreciate: the scope of the material, the fresh insight, the performance of Peter Falk as Stalin (which is so well motivated that we almost come to like the late tyrant), and here and there stretches of the sort of superior dialogue that has made Mr. Chayefsky one of our best playwrights.

—HENRY HEWES.



A Market for Ideas

HOLLYWOOD.

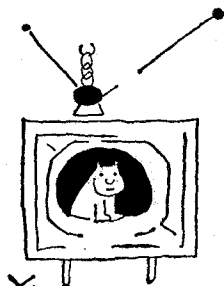
ONE hardly expects to encounter the ideas of Thomas Hobbes, the seventeenth-century English political philosopher, on *Kraft Suspense Theatre* (NBC Television), a film anthology series of mystery melodramas. Yet it happened recently. *Leviathan Five* was the title. Some viewers may have recognized the allusion to Hobbes's classic work, *Leviathan*. Roy Huggins, who produces the series (under the pseudonym Thomas Fitzroy), told me that the second word in the show's title represented five men in the story who faced the Hobbesian dilemma: Is man required to obey the law under all circumstances?

Hobbes and *Leviathan* were not mentioned directly; they hovered over a courtroom drama that flashed back to a tragedy involving four top scientists and a security guard trapped underground by an explosion at a high-level nuclear project. The guard is killed as the result of a survival lottery; the scientists, when rescued, are tried for his murder. The defense argues Hobbes's formula for mankind's deliverance from the human predicament in society: trapped men, cut off from conventional law, can create their own commonwealth, consenting to obey the law that one should perish in order that four should survive. The prosecution argues that the scientists' estimates of rescue probabilities were guesses and that the survivors violated the law of the real commonwealth.

The story was provocative on two levels—the trial itself and the abstract moral ideas involved. The script, written by Berne and David Giler and William P. McGivern, had precision and clear structure. The authors had in mind for their story men like Einstein, Oppenheimer, and Szilard. Earlier drafts attempted to humanize the scientists, but the limitations of a forty-eight-minute television hour filtered out all but the barest suggestions of individuality. The actors had few lines with which to project stature or warmth. David L. Rich's generally suspenseful direction erred in permitting the judge to overdraw grotesquely his hostility to the defendants. The scientists emerged, unfortunately, as the bad guys—rational to an inhuman extreme, concerned only with selfish survival, although one masked his passion to live under the rationalization of the great contribu-

tions the scientific majority could make to society because of its superior brains. The security guard, in contrast—the inferior, common man—excited sympathy with his simple, courageous morality: he participated unwillingly in the lottery, refused to commit suicide, and would not kill.

The polarity of types was too sharp. Common men can panic, too; scientists can be religious or humane. The alacrity with which the scientists, once they realized their predicament, jumped to the lottery was unbelievable—too automatically unanimous to be convincing. But the play was able to stimulate controversy among viewers. Was the jury right in rendering a verdict of guilty of second-degree murder with a recommendation for leniency? Would Hobbes have agreed? The original *Leviathan* offers ambiguous guidance. Hobbes proposed an unbreakable moral-political covenant, yet spoke of "silences in the law" that could permit

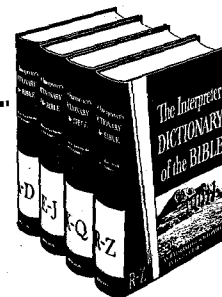


men to resist death, the ultimate evil, at the cost of breaking covenants.

Producer Roy Huggins (who also collaborated on the script under the McGivern pseudonym) said the original outline dealt with survivors in a submarine. A student of political science, he seized upon the chance to inject Hobbes into Kraft and changed the characters from sailors to scientists. In so doing, he and his collaborators undoubtedly lifted the intellectual level of the tale, but they created new problems for themselves that they could not resolve satisfactorily. Still, *Leviathan Five* was an occasion on television where split cultures could meet—not only the two cultures of science and the humanities, but also the allegedly "higher" and "lower" cultures of television taste. Perhaps more Hollywood television producers ought to study political science. There is, it would seem, a market for ideas.

—ROBERT LEWIS SHAYON.

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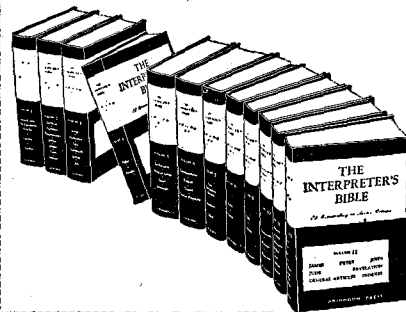
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