

Saturday Review

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Don Pablo Revisited

SAN JUAN, PUERTO RICO.

ON THE edge of San Juan, in a trim, well-built beach house not far from a spanking new super-highway and the international jet airport, an eighty-seven-year-old man with exuberant ideas about life and work is getting ready to undertake one of the most strenuous tours in a professional career stretching over two-thirds of a century. He is Pablo Casals, cellist, composer, conductor, philosopher, crusader.

It was two years since my last visit. I could detect no slackening of his powers. His fingers are supple and his skin is firm. In spirit, he still seems to combine a youthful, almost innocent enthusiasm about people and things with a profound confidence in the human ability to make a better tomorrow. He is realistic about the size of the problems facing human life on this planet but is optimistic about the prospects. He sees no wall of separation between his music and his hopes for human freedom in a world at peace. When he goes on tour, the music becomes not just the manifestation of a highly developed art but the expression of his broader concerns. For the past two years, he has traveled thousands of miles, not just performing but talking about the nature of nuclear war and the need for new, workable approaches to the making of peace.

These trips are physically grueling, but he finds replenishment in the responses of people.

"When people come up to me after

the concerts," he said, "they shake my hand and tell me that they intend to work hard for the things I have been trying to talk about. It is the most wonderful nourishment in the world."

THIS spring Don Pablo's mission takes him to South America and Europe. He would like to include the Soviet Union in his tour, but this depends on factors beyond his control. He has not been in the Soviet Union until now as a matter of principle, having vowed that he would never perform in a dictatorship. Besides, an incident that occurred shortly after the Russian Revolution hardened him in this resolve. A friend of his in pre-Revolutionary Russia had been a famous benefactor of the arts. After the Revolution, the friend and his wife were thrown into a concentration camp and their property and funds confiscated. Years later, Pablo Casals saw his friend in Antwerp; it was as though the man had been through a human meat grinder. He wanted no part of a nation that could inflict such cruelty.

Don Pablo realizes that the situation in the Soviet Union today has changed from what it was in the early days. He is still strongly anti-Communist, however, and would go to the Soviet Union only if he could draw up his own program. That would mean including his religious composition, the oratorio *El Pessebre*, which embodies his message of peace. Last year, David Oistrakh, the outstanding Soviet violinist, came to Prades with an official invitation to

Casals to visit the USSR. Casals told Oistrakh he would accept on condition he could perform his oratorio. So far, Casals has not heard whether this condition is acceptable. Interestingly enough, Hungary and Poland have accepted these conditions and have issued a visa. He is certain that, if he is permitted to come to the USSR and perform his oratorio, the Russian people will respond sympathetically to it. "They are a deeply religious people," he said, "despite all the official opposition to the Church."

In this, the words were almost exactly the same as those used by Pope John XXIII, who, in a private conversation in December 1962, said he believed the essentially religious feelings of the Russian people had not changed.

In any event, if Casals goes to Russia, and if he has an opportunity to speak, he will make known his deep admiration and affection for the Russian people. He will praise them for believing as deeply as they do in world peace, and offer them every good wish for their continued economic betterment. He will tell them he is anti-Communist because he believes the most important thing in the world is liberty. And, in speaking to them in this manner, he feels he will be understood because this is what the Russian people themselves really believe, too.

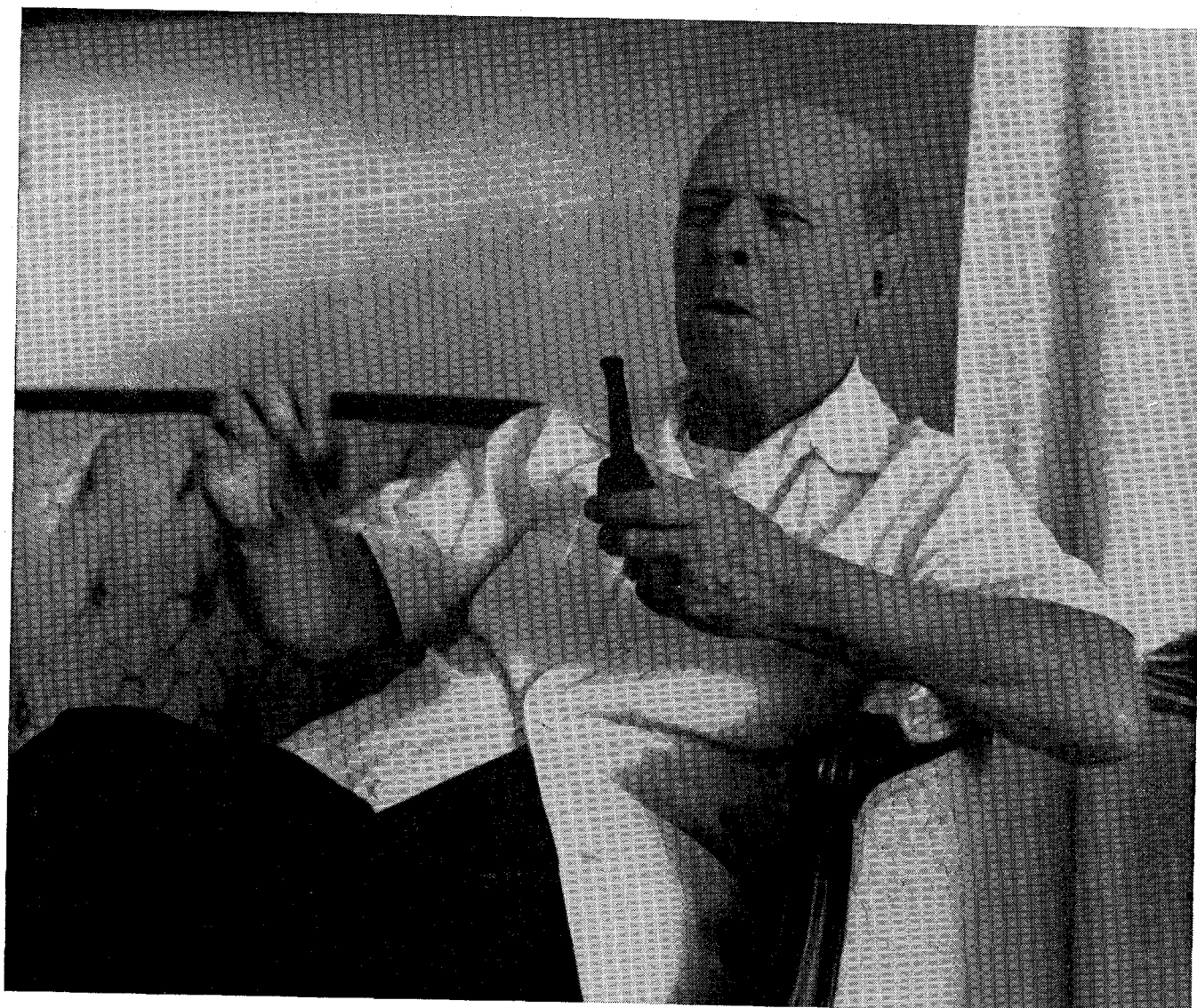
If the Soviet government permits him to come and to give his oratorio, he will not bring a choral group of his own but will train Russians for the performance. "They have excellent singers and they will do superbly." Will the oratorio be performed in Russian? "No; it will be sung in the language in which it was written—in Catalan." Won't this be difficult for the Russians? "No more than Italian or German or French or any other operatic tongue." And how will the Russians understand? "They will understand by reading the program notes, which will contain a complete translation."

This has been the method used wherever the oratorio has been played so far. The oratorio is performed in connection with Don Pablo's peace mission. He wants to use his music—the only power at his command—to persuade people that the biggest job on earth in a nuclear age is to find the way to create a just and workable peace. "We must not only eliminate war but the things that lead to war—injustice, tyranny, poverty, indignity."

And how has the mission been going?

"Wherever we go, people respond. They respond beautifully. We all deeply believe and want the same things."

Isn't the projected trip to South Amer-



Pablo Casals—"Now my hope seems on firmer ground than it has been for many years."

—N.C.

ica and Europe a rather ambitious undertaking for a man approaching his eighty-eighth birthday?

"I am well now. I take my walks every day. I play the piano and the cello off and on during the day. I read and talk with my friends. I am in good health now, but it has been a difficult winter."

President Kennedy's death, I learned from Mrs. Casals, was a profound jolt to Don Pablo's nervous system. For weeks afterwards, he was out of kilter, which prevented him from receiving in person the Presidential Medal of Freedom awarded him by President Kennedy.

"All over the world, people felt the same way," Don Pablo said. "In my life I have seen many great and terrible events concerning individuals that have affected people deeply. There was the Dreyfus case and the assassination of Gandhi and a few other events of similar magnitude. But in recent history—

and I am thinking of my own lifetime—there has never been a tragedy that has brought so much sadness and grief to as many people as this. How President Kennedy was loved. He was in office a very short time. Yet people understood somehow—even people in far-off places—that he intended to use his great office to try to make a better world."

PABLO CASALS played the cello at the White House for President Kennedy. He had resolved some years ago he would conduct but would not be soloist any more—except for very special purposes. He made an exception when he appeared before the United Nations. Then he was invited to a special reception at the White House at which he would play.

"I accepted and agreed to play—even though I had promised myself earlier not to do so. But I had good reasons for wanting to speak to the President. About peace. Of course, he

agreed. I went to Washington and met with the President for an hour, alone. I have never known anyone who listened more carefully than he did. And I was happy I went. When I played at the White House, I was very happy in my heart.

"There was someone else I was especially pleased to meet after I played. An elderly lady came up to me and asked me if I remembered playing in the White House once before. Of course, I did. It was when Theodore Roosevelt was president in 1904. She heard me then, too. It was T.R.'s daughter. How glad I was to meet her and talk to her.

"I liked Mrs. Kennedy very much. Lovely, sensitive young lady. I should like to invite her to come to Puerto Rico as my guest for a special concert in memory of President Kennedy during our music festival here this year, maybe in June. Do you think she would come?"

(Continued on page 56)

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

The Smoking Debate (Contd.)

THE SMOKING HABIT has many rewards which, in my opinion, far overshadow the danger from cancer. . . . If you are going to campaign against the evils of tobacco, why not against liquor, coffee, rich foods, and sleeping pills?

The interference by government in people's personal habits seems to be out of order. The noble experiment with Prohibition should have demonstrated the futility and narrow-mindedness of trying to regulate what is strictly a private concern. . . .

A. DOHRSEN.

Bronxville, N.Y.

SR IS TO BE congratulated for its forthright stand in declining to accept cigarette advertising. Let's hope that this will be the start of a trend.

A. R. SMITH.

Los Angeles, Calif.

THAT A RELATIONSHIP exists between cigarette smoking and cancer, as well as other pathological conditions, has been conclusively established through statistical documentation and laboratory research. The exact mechanism whereby pathology results is currently a matter of speculation. To avoid disease, however, it is not essential that every secret of nature be fully revealed beforehand. Persons were practicing vaccination generations prior to elaboration of the germ theory by Pasteur and formulation of Koch's principles. Man can ill afford to wait for all the evidence to be collected; but as a rational being he must follow the course suggested by the balance of the evidence that is available.

Irrationally, smoking has been singled out for special consideration from among a variety of popular and often socially accepted means of self-destruction such as overeating, excessive drinking, speeding, promiscuity, and glue sniffing. All of these have been identified as "basic, fundamental" problems, and extensive means of coping with them have been developed whose measurement of success depends largely upon subjective data. The obese contend with smoking, the smoker with obesity, and all, including the promiscuous, with promiscuity. Little thought is ever given that perhaps the problems are symptoms and the treatment purely palliative.

Commendations for penetration of the smoking smoke screen!

E. D. LYMAN, M.D., M.P.H.,
Health Director,
Omaha-Douglas County
Health Department.

Omaha, Neb.

ARE YOU NOT perhaps attaching too much importance to the question of giving up cigarettes?

I feel that the fact that many people choose to continue the habit is no more suggestive of a crumbling of the moral fiber of the country than the fact that they also continue to drive automobiles; travel in air-



planes, trains, and boats; go hunting; shovel snow; and do all the other things that lead a certain percentage of the population to their death earlier than they had hoped.

Perhaps it is not a question of indifference so much as the knowledge that life—not only at this time in our civilization, but for the whole span of human history—is a chancy thing at best, and that it is each person's privilege to determine for himself his own odds for survival, and indulge or not indulge in certain activities.

MRS. RALPH P. LEWIS.

Briarcliff Manor, N.Y.

The Panama Problem

CONGRATULATIONS ON N.C.'s editorial "What Have We Learned from Panama?" [SR, Feb. 1]. It should be read and reread by every thinking American.

CHARLES A. STANTON.

Pasadena, Calif.

I READ "What Have We Learned from Panama?" with interest, because it expresses the message Southerners have been trying so vainly to get through for the last 125 years.

Let me paraphrase you. If we (Yankees) are troubled by the racial situation in the South, one start on the problem might be to take the wax out of our ears. The Southerner has something to say, even though he has no organ through which to say it. Policies promulgated and enforced by the dominant Yankee majority affect other people, who want to be represented in the debate leading up to these policies. The people of the South would like to think that their achievements and opinions, not just their headline-making crises, are worth notice. As

a political factor, they may be impotent alongside the wealthy Yankee majority, but their aspirations and dignity are large. No amount of advice (or decrees) that we Yankees give will make for genuine friendship unless we also give Southerners continued respect and all the things that go with respect.

The burden for maintaining good relations, therefore, lies less with the weak South than with the powerful North.

I am perfectly aware that when N.C. so properly asked Americans to consider foreigners as people, he by no means meant to imply that any American who questions the efficacy of the Yankees' policy of coercive juxtaposition as the panacea of the South's problems should not also be considered as people. Nonetheless, I would humbly submit that just as surely as we must one day come to accept Panamanians as human beings, so you must one day, although perhaps a more distant day, come so to accept Southerners.

Why should not understanding, as well as charity, begin at home?

ECK G. PRUD'HOMME, JR., M.D.
Fort Worth, Tex.

Fins That Got Away?

EDOUARD MANET's painting of the fish on page 45 of your January 18 issue poses a problem.

Is the "salmon" mislabeled, or did Mr. Manet discover a new species? The poor fish displayed lacks pectoral fins.

I've fished salmon more or less successfully for fifty years and never saw one like this.

GREVILLE HASLAM,
West Edmeston, N.Y.