

Medusa Was No Respector of Politics

The Underground, by Mario Tobino, translated from the Italian by Raymond Rosenthal (Doubleday, 419 pp. \$5.95), portrays members of the Italian resistance in a small fishing port during the twilight of Fascism. Herbert Mitgang's novel "The Return" was set in postwar Italy.

By HERBERT MITGANG

AFTER twenty years of cultural impalement under Mussolini's Roman numerals Italy's long Dantean night ended. Her first outbreak of fresh ideas was in motion-picture form; the neo-realism of *Open City*, *Paisan*, *Shoe-Shine*, and *The Bicycle Thief* became the signature of the activist on film. The novels followed the cameras.

One of these novels about the Italian resistance arrives rather late in the game, but its impact still shows what the twilight of Fascism meant to many people. *The Underground*, by Mario Tobino, is in the documentary fiction tradition that struck us so strongly in the movies. The classic scenes are played out here carefully and thoroughly. As with many modern Italian novels, there is a regional quality dominating the story. Tobino, who received the Strega Prize for it several years ago, comes from the coastal town of Viareggio, and obviously draws upon his own experiences in the underground.

Although his Viareggio is here called the fishing port of Medusa, that renaming is about all the symbolism the author imposes. It is appropriate. The Greek maiden violated the temple of Athene and her hair was transformed into serpents; the petty mobsters who thrived under Fascism also behaved like reptiles whose presence caused stonelike behavior. However, the story continues with real people who behave normally, almost too normally compared to the larger-than-life heroism and characters we have met in the French Maquis and Italian underground films.

Only one character stands out: Admiral Saverio, a man of old-fashioned bravery who admired the glory that was symbolized by the king rather than the dictator. He and his mistress, the Countess, form an unusual combination of anti-Fascists. When the local Black Shirt heavy says to him, "You may be an admiral but you're a coward, you found the



Mario Tobino—a Strega for resistance.

right company, a bunch of snotnosed Communists," the imprisoned admiral replies, "They are Italy's noble youths."

When it is a Fascist's turn, there are echoes of Mussolini's own death at the hands of partisans. "I want to be shot in the chest," he says. "I'm from Medusa like you." And that may be the theme of this rather too cool novel (at least for the American reader and moviegoer who by this time knows the story well): Fascist and anti-Fascist in Medusa lived foolishly and dangerously and yet both

were Italians. In *The Underground* the times are larger than the story.

COMSA and DISCUS: A prolific writer for many years, J. B. Priestley, now in his seventies, is becoming a natural candidate for the select club of grand old men of English letters. He wouldn't be the first quite minor writer to gain admittance and the public reverence that goes with it; among recent predecessors, for example, are poet John Masefield and novelist Frank Swinnerton. But, somehow, Priestley would appear out of place in such company. Behind the bluff Yorkshire façade and the blunt public opinions—natural trappings for a grand old man—there lies still a healthy, impish irreverence. It can be seen clearly, as often before, in his latest novel, *Sir Michael and Sir George: A Comedy of the New Elizabethans* (Little, Brown, \$4.95).

Sir Michael (Stratherrick) and Sir George (Drake) are directors of rival bureaucratic agencies which are supposed to aid and comfort the arts. The names are almost enough to reveal the contrasting characters of these two men. Priestley likes to keep things broad and simple, particularly when he's writing comedy. Stratherrick, something of a bouncer, heads up COMSA (National Commission for Scholarship and the Arts); Drake, a pompous Establishment Blimp, controls DISCUS (Department of Information and Culture Services). The two agencies' functions overlap completely in a classic example of civil service redundancy, and this fact having become obvious to the British Treasury, Sir M. and Sir G. are locked in a battle for survival of the fittest (i.e., the least incompetent).

Mingling the two disparate worlds of the civil service and the arts (very

Your Literary I. Q.

Conducted by John T. Winterich and David M. Glixon

HERE COMES THE BRIDE

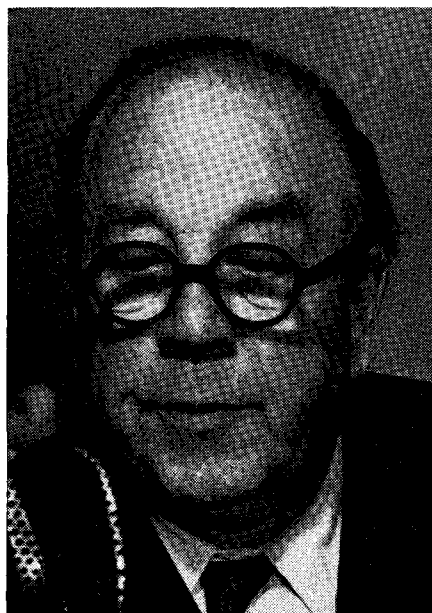
Charles Dickens saw to it that none of the characters listed below remained single (and all but one of the marriages are believed to have turned out idyllically). Lorraine Wise of Winnipeg asks you to unite the brides with their lawful grooms and to name the novels in which the nuptials took place. The registry is on page 52.

Susan Nipper ()	Joe Willet ()	1. <i>A Tale of Two Cities</i>
"The Marchioness" ()	Tim Linkinwater ()	2. <i>David Copperfield</i>
Rose Fleming ()	Nathaniel Winkle ()	3. <i>Bleak House</i>
Estella Havisham ()	Tommie Traddles ()	4. <i>Dombey and Son</i>
Lucie Manette ()	P. Toots ()	5. <i>Nicholas Nickleby</i>
Arabella Allen ()	Harry Maylie ()	6. <i>Great Expectations</i>
Esther Summerson ()	Bentley Drummle ()	7. <i>The Old Curiosity Shop</i>
Dolly Varden ()	Charles Darnay ()	8. <i>Oliver Twist</i>
Sophy Crewler ()	Dick Swiveler ()	9. <i>Barnaby Rudge</i>
Miss La Creevy ()	Allan Woodcourt ()	10. <i>Pickwick Papers</i>

loosely defined) enables Priestley to bring together the kind of gallery of characters for which he's been famous ever since *The Good Companions*. Key figures among them are a wily, boozy, irresponsible little charmer named Kemp, who is slow death as an ally, and a gorgeous, teasing typist named Shirley, whose charms, in their sexual way, are almost as devastating as Kemp's. The rest of the cast includes an artist who'd rather fight than paint, a wildly eccentric old gal who wants to set up a foundation, some stuffy suburbanites, an exuberant family of Irish vaudevillians, and, so help me, even a Middle Eastern prince. Throw in some pretty varied scenes (provincial repertory theater, seamy London night club, etc.) and some fairly mechanical plot construction, and you have the basic ingredients of this head of froth, whipped up with routine Priestleyan competence.

I seem to remember, a long time ago, Priestley admitting in one of his rash public moments that he wrote novels only to keep himself comfortably in funds while he was writing plays, which he always considered his major contribution to letters. He was, at that, once a pretty fair dramatist, even a mildly experimental one for his day, producing plays like *Johnson Over Jordan* and *Time and the Conways*. But his novels, even his better early ones like *The Good Companions* and *Angel Pavement*, have never been anything more than honest, mechanically competent entertainment. The later novels are still mildly entertaining, if even more routinely produced, and *Sir Michael* and *Sir George* is a fair sample of the standard product—sometimes funny, always harmless, completely ephemeral.

—ERIC MOON.



—Camera Press.

J. B. Priestley—behind the bluff façade, a healthy, impish irreverence.

SR/February 5, 1966

SHE NEEDS YOUR HELP



Life for this child is like a miracle. Her father died shortly after she was born and her mother tried to provide for the little girl by begging. Finally a pastor brought her to our Faith Love Home for care.

Today—thanks to the loving care of the Faith Love Home in Hong Kong—this little girl is alive and well. In Christian Herald homes and projects in Hong Kong, Korea, and Taiwan, hundreds of suffering innocents like her can be saved. But not without your help.

Only through your help can we take the rags off their feet, the fear from their eyes. You can do it for 33¢ a day. For

\$10 a month you can give one of these children food, clothing, shelter, education, and a substitute mother to give loving care.

You will receive a picture and the child's history. Know that you are changing despair to hope and want to wanted. Write to your little one. The child will know who you are and answer your letters. Let one of these waifs know you care—with words and deeds.

Do you want to help a little girl or boy? For \$10 a month you, or a group, can "adopt" a child. Whatever you give, do it now. YOUR CHILD IS WAITING! THE NEED IS GREAT!

CHRISTIAN HERALD INDUSTRIAL MISSIONS IN CHINA • Room 133
27 East 39th Street, New York, N.Y. 10016

MY NAME _____

ADDRESS _____

CITY, ZONE, STATE _____

Please enroll me as a "sponsor" for a needy child and send my child's picture and case history as soon as possible.

☐ I enclose \$10 as my first month's gift. I will endeavor to give \$10 each month but I understand I may cancel the arrangement at any time.

☐ I enclose \$120 for a full year's care.

☐ I cannot provide complete support for a child, but I wish to have a share. Please accept my gift in the amount of \$ _____

YOUR GIFT IS TAX DEDUCTIBLE

**OH,
THAT PICASSO!**

.....

If your perfect relationship
palls over painters,
try sharing a copy of

Art in America
Magazine

The one that makes
sense out of art.

Interested? Write us at
635 Madison, or call
MU 8-7500

*Don't sign on any line
UNTIL YOU READ BARRON'S
BUSINESS LAW*

BY LOWELL B. HOWARD
PROFESSOR OF LAW, OHIO UNIVERSITY

Translates "legalese" fine print into simple English for the layman. Helps you understand the lawyers when you buy a house, enter a partnership, form a corporation, contract for services, go into business, and much more. **602 pages on the legal facts of life.** For only \$2.50 postpaid. Enclose check or M.O. If not completely satisfied, return book within 10 days for full refund.

Dept. SE-1, BARRON'S
WOODBURY PRESS
Woodbury, N.Y. 11797



LITERARY I.Q. ANSWERS

Column One should read: 4, 7, 8, 6,
1, 10, 3, 9, 2, 5. Column Two: 9, 5, 10,
2, 4, 8, 6, 1, 7, 3.

SR's Check List of the Week's New Books

Anthologies

THE BOOK OF NEGRO HUMOR. Edited by Langston Hughes. Dodd, Mead. \$5.

Anthropology

THE NEW PEOPLE: The Eskimo's Journey Into Our Time. By Edith Iglauer. Doubleday. \$4.50.

Business, Economics

MANAGER'S GUIDE TO MAKING CHANGES. By Arnold Judson. John Wiley. \$4.75.

MINISTER'S FEDERAL INCOME TAX GUIDE. By Sydney Prerau. Channel Press. Paperback, \$2.95.

PROGRAM BUDGETING. Edited by David Novick. Harvard Univ. Press. \$6.50.

THE STRATEGY OF SUCCESSFUL RETAIL SALESMANSHIP. By Allen Zimmer. McGraw-Hill. \$5.95.

Crime, Suspense

POST MORTEM. By Harry Carmichael. Crime Club. \$3.50.

Current Affairs

GROWTH AND GOVERNMENT IN SACRAMENTO. By Christian L. Larsen and others. Indiana Univ. Press. \$6.95.

THE PHILIPPINES. By Onofre D. Corpuz. Prentice-Hall. Hardbound, \$4.95. Paperback, \$1.95.

POLITICS IN LEBANON. By Leonard Binder. John Wiley. \$7.95.

SOUTHERN AFRICA. By Brian Fagan. Praeger. \$7.50.

THE SOVIET POLITICAL SYSTEM. By Alfred G. Mayer. Random House. \$8.50.

THE U.N. AND THE SUPERPOWERS. By John G. Stoessinger. Random House. \$3.95.

Education

STUDENTS, SCHOLARS AND PARENTS. By Stephen White. Doubleday. \$3.95.

Essays

ANGER, AND BEYOND: The Negro Writer in the United States. Edited by Herbert Hill. Harper & Row. \$5.95.

Fiction

THE CRACK IN THE TEACUP. By Michael Gilbert. Harper & Row. \$4.50.

HELMET AND WASPS. By Michael Mott. Houghton Mifflin. \$3.95.

THE JOHN WYNDHAM OMNIBUS. By John Wyndham. Simon & Schuster. \$5.95.

History

THE FALL OF PARIS. By Alistair Horne. St. Martin's. \$6.95.

Literary History, Criticism

HISTORY OF ASSAMESE LITERATURE. By Birinchi Kumar Barua. East-West Center Press. \$4.50.

POETIC METER AND POETIC FORM. By Paul Fussell, Jr. Random House. \$3.95.

THE SONNET. Edited by Robert Bender

and Charles Squier. Washington Square Press. \$5.95.

Miscellany

THE AMERICAN BIBLIOGRAPHY OF RUSSIAN AND EAST EUROPEAN STUDIES FOR 1963. Edited by Fritz Epstein, Albert C. Todd, and Stephen Viederman. Indiana Univ. Press. Paperback, \$3.50.

ANATOMY OF LETTERING. By Russell Laker. Revised Edition. Viking. \$6.95.

THE LAST EAGLE. By Dan Mannix. McGraw-Hill. \$4.95.

MYTHS OF CREATION. By Philip Freund. Trident Press. \$4.95.

PAGEANT OF TOYS. By Mary Hillier. Taplinger. \$10.

THE TRIUMPH OF THE THERAPEUTIC. By Philip Rieff. Harper & Row. \$5.95.

Personal History

BERTRAND RUSSELL: A Life. By Herbert Gottschalk. Roy. \$3.75.

JIM BISHOP: Reporter. By Jim Bishop. Random House. \$6.95.

A CHOICE OF WEAPONS. By Gordon Parks. Harper & Row. \$4.95.

THE COURAGE OF EARLY MORNING. By William Arthur Bishop. David McKay. \$4.95.

THE CRICKETS ALL LOOK ALIKE. By Bill Davidson. Harper & Row. \$4.95.

ALDOUS HUXLEY, 1894-1963. Edited by Julian Huxley. Harper & Row. \$4.

IN SEARCH OF SANITY: The Journal of a Schizophrenic. By Gregory Stefan. University Books. \$5.

MEN OF RESPONSIBILITY. By Dirk U. Stikker. Harper & Row. \$7.95.

THE YELLOW EARL. By Douglas Sutherland. Coward-McCann. \$6.

Political Science

ELECTIONS AND THE POLITICAL ORDER. By Angus Campbell and others. John Wiley. \$7.50.

Religion

THE ANCHOR BIBLE: Psalms I (1-50). Translated by Mitchell Dahood. Doubleday. \$6.

THE ETERNAL PROMISE. By Thomas Kelly. Harper & Row. \$2.95.

FINDING THE HISTORICAL JESUS. By J. S. Peter. Harper & Row. \$4.50.

Sociology

MENTAL ILLNESS IN THE URBAN NEGRO COMMUNITY. By Seymour Parker and Robert J. Kleiner. Macmillan. \$9.95.

Theater, Music

BASSOON AND CONTRABASSOON. By Lyndesay C. Langwill. Norton. \$7.50.

20TH-CENTURY PLAYS IN SYNOPSIS. By Evert Sprinchorn. Crowell. \$6.95.

WHAT MUSIC IS. By Herbert Weinstock. Doubleday. \$5.95.

—Compiled by NAID SOFIAN.

