

## After the Apocalypse

IS IT our fancy, or does this first issue of ENCOUNTER appear in a good season? Is there a breath of fresh air drifting through the fog which we have been accustomed to take for our normal atmosphere? Has the apocalypse we were waiting for come and gone—a pseudo-apocalypse of pseudo-prophets? Is it a time to remember that history moves to no end, but has many endings and as many beginnings?

Three men have died—Mussolini, Hitler, and Stalin; and with them, the mythologies of an epoch. The last surviving fable was exposed only yesterday in Eastern Germany and Czechoslovakia, where real factory workers unambiguously dissociated themselves from a hypothetical Proletariat, achieving by that simple action what a thousand subtle arguments could not do: the destruction of the Marxist-Leninist creed. Now, perhaps, words will once again mean what they say, and we shall be spared the tedious sophistry by which despotism could pose as a higher form of freedom, murder as a supreme humanism. Now, perhaps, we shall no longer be plagued by the rhetoric of a messianic arrogance of the spirit which has blithely perpetrated so many hideous crimes against the flesh.

PROBLEMS remain, of course, as they always do. The dark side of the moon may no longer be mistaken for the rising sun, but it is still there and still dark. And shadows move among us; almost too many to count and sometimes even hard to name. Indeed, it is possible that only now are we going to have the opportunity to experience those dilemmas which are blanketed under the phrase, “the crisis of our times,” in all their fullness, their concreteness,

their reality. The place of man and the arts in an industrial civilisation, the reconciliation of equality with liberty, the dominion of national pride in a world where the nation is plainly an anachronism, the intolerableness of hunger and degradation in a world that seems to have the resources to remove them—these problems survive the false solutions they provoked.

APPEARING at this time, and amidst these problems, ENCOUNTER seeks to promote no “line,” though its editors have opinions they will not hesitate to express. The Congress for Cultural Freedom, which sponsors this magazine, is made up of individuals of the most diverse views, as can be gathered from a mere listing of the names of its founding honorary chairmen: Benedetto Croce, John Dewey, Karl Jaspers, Salvador de Madariaga, Jacques Maritain, and Bertrand Russell. What caused them to come together? Two things: a love of liberty and a respect for that part of human endeavour that goes by the name of culture.

It is natural, therefore, that ENCOUNTER should try to represent both this community and this diversity; that it should regard literature and the arts as being values in themselves, in need of no ulterior justification; that it should be an international magazine, with a British and an American editor, and with the contributors to the first number coming from six countries; that it should aim, not at the slurring over of differences of opinion, but rather at the uninhibited exploration of them.

AFTER the apocalypse comes—another day. Just another day. But our own.

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|  |                              |    |
|--|------------------------------|----|
| After the Apocalypse                       | <i>Editorial</i>             | 1  |
| Pages from a Diary                         | <i>Virginia Woolf</i>        | 5  |
| A Postscript to the Rosenberg Case         | <i>Leslie A. Fiedler</i>     | 12 |
| A Ballad — after Villon                    | <i>Tom Scott</i>             | 22 |
| Two Stories                                | <i>Dazai Osamu</i>           | 23 |
| The Head of a Leader                       | <i>Christopher Isherwood</i> | 29 |
| Lake — a poem                              | <i>Alberto de Lacerda</i>    | 33 |
| Two Songs                                  | <i>Dr. Edith Sitwell</i>     | 34 |
| Looking for India                          | <i>Denis de Rougemont</i>    | 36 |
| Pegasus — a poem                           | <i>C. Day Lewis</i>          | 43 |
| The Wind at Djemila                        | <i>Albert Camus</i>          | 46 |
| No Cantatas for Stalin?                    | <i>Nicolas Nabokov</i>       | 49 |
| Opinions at Large                          | <i>Nathan Glazer</i>         | 53 |
| Men of Science — and Conscience            | <i>Irving Kristol</i>        | 57 |
| Books                                      |                              |    |
| American Diction <i>v.</i> American Poetry | <i>Stephen Spender</i>       | 61 |
| Counterfeit Freedom                        | <i>Mark Alexander</i>        | 65 |
| The Poor Countries                         | <i>J. K. Galbraith</i>       | 68 |
| Asian Nationalism                          | <i>Hugh Seton-Watson</i>     | 73 |
| About our Authors                          |                              | 80 |

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## Pages from a Diary

Sunday, July 25th, 1926

AT FIRST I thought it was Hardy, and it was the parlourmaid, a small thin girl, wearing a proper cap. She came in with silver cakestands and so on. Mrs. Hardy talked to us about her dog. How long ought we to stay? Can Mr. Hardy walk much, etc., I asked, making conversation, as I knew one would have to. She has the large sad lacklustre eyes of a childless woman; great docility and readiness, as if she had learnt her part; not great alacrity, but resignation, in welcoming more visitors; wears a sprigged voile dress, black shoes and a necklace. We can't go far now, she said, though we do walk every day, because our dog isn't able to walk far. He bites, she told us. She became more natural and animated about the dog, who is evidently the real centre of her thoughts—then the maid came in. Then again the door opened, more sprucely, and in trotted a little puffy-cheeked cheerful old man, with an atmosphere cheerful and business-like in addressing us, rather like an old doctor's or solicitor's, saying "Well now—" or words like that as he shook hands. He was dressed in rough grey with a striped tie. His nose has a joint in it and the end curves down. A round whitish face, the eyes now faded and rather watery, but the whole aspect cheerful and vigorous. He sat on a three-cornered chair (I am too jaded with all this coming and going to do more than gather facts) at a round table, where there were the cake stands and so on; a chocolate roll; what is called a good tea; but he only drank one cup, sitting on his three-cornered chair. He was extremely affable and aware of his duties. He did not let the talk stop or disdain making talk. He talked of father: said he had seen me, or it might have been my sister, but he thought it was me, in my cradle. He had been to Hyde Park Place—oh, Gate was it. A

very quiet street. That was why my father liked it. Odd to think that in all these years he had never been down there again. He went there often. Your father took my novel—*Far from the Madding Crowd*. We stood shoulder to shoulder against the British public about certain matters dealt with in that novel. You may have heard. Then he said how some other novel had fallen through that was to appear—the parcel had been lost coming from France—not a very likely thing to happen, as your father said—a big parcel of manuscript; and he asked me to send my story. I think he broke all the *Cornhill* laws—not to see the whole book; so I sent it in chapter by chapter and was never late. Wonderful what youth is! I had it in my head doubtless, but I never thought twice about it. It came out every month. They were nervous, because of Miss Thackeray I think. She said she became paralysed and could not write a word directly she heard the press begin. I daresay it was bad for a novel to appear like that. One begins to think what is good for the magazine, not what is good for the novel.

"You think what makes a strong curtain," put in Mrs. Hardy jocularly. She was leaning upon the tea table, not eating—gazing out.

THEN we talked about manuscripts. Mrs. Smith had found the MS. of *F. from the M.C.* in a drawer during the war and sold it for the Red Cross. Now he has his MSS. back and the printer rubs out all the marks. But he wishes they would leave them as they prove it genuine.

He puts his head down like some old pouter pigeon. He has a very long head; and quizzical bright eyes, for in talk they grow bright. He said when he was in the Strand 6 years ago he scarcely knew where he was and he used