

seems to me, for example, that opera, that most impure of the musical genres, the one that relies most upon "lived reality" and makes most reference to the erotic emotions, is now again being permitted to be a source of fully legitimate pleasure; the belief, once so full of prestige, that only "pure" music, pre-eminently the string quartette, was appropriate to fine sensibilities no longer has its old unqualified authority.)

But if Sir Kenneth challenges the idea of purity, if he in effect establishes the æsthetic legitimacy of the "lived reality," he doesn't in the least fortify Mr. Selden Rodman, who, in his recent *Conversations With Artists*, exhibits so uneasy a yearning for an art which shall be "human" and "humanist" and shall present again, for our comfort and faith, an "image of man." Mr. Rodman's attitude is analogous to that of those scholars and philosophers and religious personalities who annually meet in conferences to ask that mankind affirm the Western tradition, the Hellenic tradition, the Hebraic-Christian tradition. Why do we instinctively know that nothing living can come out of these demands for the establishment of the "human"

and the "humanistic"? Is it not because William Blake is never invited to the conferences, because it is always *papers* that are read, and not encausticated copper plates, because everyone speaks of "Heaven" and no one of "Hell," because the virtuousness and the explicit social idealism of the meetings have no knowledge of energy as endless delight or of the charm of the lineaments of gratified desire or of the danger of the unacted desire—of, in short, all the things that Blake knew and that Sir Kenneth takes account of when he speaks of the "human" and "humanism"?

*The Nude* will, in all probability, have a very considerable effect upon modern taste. I can't imagine anyone reading it and not learning to look at the art of the past with bolder and more affectionate and more demanding eyes, and an unembarrassed readiness to accept the æsthetic propriety of an avowed "lived reality." This will not necessarily depreciate our relation to the "dehumanised" art of our time, but it will almost certainly change that relation. And probably for the better, making it less inert, more active and articulate.

Lionel Trilling

### Quest

I seek the sky that lures me to a pond,  
 The kind of sky that would not stay in place  
 When I have set some tree to point it out in space  
 And come beneath and found it far beyond;  
 The boats sailing upon the water, loaned  
 Only in movement the changeful form of grace,  
 Those I could not take in my embrace,  
 Without my losing what I put in bond;  
 Whatever reflection there I see afar  
 Gone when I come by (and that that lingers  
 On the pond all my hand may ever mar);  
 And the children on the bank who are astir,  
 Their boats pushed preciously beyond their fingers  
 To where that thing is dear that still is far.

Nathaniel Zimskind

# L'Affaire Djilas

R. H. S. Crossman: **STANDING MARX ON HIS HEAD**

**I**MPORTANT books about politics are normally written not by important politicians, but by minor participants or, even more frequently, by observers on the sidelines. Milovan Djilas' *The New Class: An Analysis of the Communist System* (Thames and Hudson, 21s.) is an exception to this norm. Here is a treatise on Communism which may well prove as epoch-making as John Locke's treatise *Of Civil Government*. Yet it is written (and it gains from being written) by one of the outstanding leaders of Yugoslav Communism.

The American publishers compared Milovan Djilas with Karl Marx, and called his book "*the Anti-Communist Manifesto*." I am glad this comparison has been removed from the British dust-cover, since it is both unfair to Djilas and misleading to the prospective reader. Nothing could be less like a manifesto than these abstruse, elliptical reflections on the nature of Communism. In the *Communist Manifesto*, Marx was vulgarising his theories and proclaiming to the outside world the articles of his Communist creed: in *The New Class* Djilas has composed an esoteric work, a Marxist polemic against Communism. I fear it will be largely unintelligible except to those who have been thoroughly grounded in Communist methodology. Indeed, the reader must be well enough acquainted with international Marxist jargon to extract what Djilas means from a semi-literate translation.

Who is responsible for this translation? The publishers only express their gratitude to Messrs. Morton Puner and Konrad Kellen for "editorial assistance"; but I gather that Djilas wrote in Serbo-Croat and these two Ameri-

cans are entirely responsible for the English version. From what I know of Djilas' literary background, I cannot believe that his original text deserved the treatment Messrs. Puner and Kellen gave it. Here is a not uncharacteristic paragraph of their "translationese"!

"Numerous features which distinguish contemporary Communism from other movements in the use of methods can be found. These features are predominantly quantitative or are actuated by varied historical conditions and by the aims of Communists."

Mr. Djilas himself, however, must take the main responsibility for the obscurity and incoherence of his book. No doubt the conditions under which it was written explain a lot. If he had had access to Western libraries, and if he had had the opportunity to test generalisations based on his personal experience against a wider experience, he would probably have filled in many of the gaps in his argument and removed some of its minor inconsistencies. However that may be, this English version is a book which an examiner on either side of the Iron Curtain would have to reject if it were submitted as a thesis for a doctorate of philosophy. It is, in fact, a bad book: repetitious—despite its brevity—and full of contradictions.

Nevertheless, like Locke's *Of Civil Government*, it is one of those bad books which may well become a classic. If Djilas is deeply self-contradictory in his main argument, it is because he is grappling with real contradictions. If he is incoherent, it is because he is trying to formulate new ideas in an old terminology and to transcend Communism while his thought still runs in the categories of the dialectic. Indeed, the fact that this is a