

Despite raids and black-outs, all
cultural life cannot be suppressed

Letters and Arts in Wartime Europe

By EUGENE JOLAS

WHILE the war is continuing in Europe with increasing violence and bitterness, what is happening to the cultural values among the nations involved in the struggle? Is the creative spirit still active during the crash of bombs and the apocalyptic darkness of the black-out? Are the writers and artists continuing their intellectual and esthetic explorations? Are the theaters, the museums, the movie houses still open during the period of aerial terror?

From the conversations of travelers recently returned from the embattled zones, and from the perusal of periodicals and books published during the past few months, it can be inferred that literature and the arts have not entirely ceased to exist in Europe. On the contrary, the confusion which reigned in the early stages of the war is being replaced here and there by a clarity of outlook and a new militancy which, it is hoped, will dominate the

efforts of future creators. The material difficulties, of course, continue, and it is noteworthy that, in many cases, recourse is had to more primitive methods of production, particularly in the publishing world. The inventive spirit is managing to live somehow, despite the catacomblike existence which the intellectual shares with every other element of the social hierarchy. The absence of drastic censorship allows us to gain a good picture of conditions in England, where a marked spiritual renovation reveals itself today. It is more difficult, however, to obtain an unblurred outline from the Continent proper. The countries submerged in the Nazi flood, struggling, as they are under enormous technical difficulties, are now starting to revive their creative activities; but the conqueror's restrictions weigh heavily on free expression. Also, the dearth of print-paper, and the dispersion of publishing houses, has

forced many of the writers to silence. We know that they are working, nevertheless; that they are meditating, in the icy mood of the European night.

In the unoccupied zone of France an interesting theatrical revival is the chief fact to be recorded. While literary and artistic manifestations are at a low ebb, the dramaturgic rebirth which began in the Autumn of 1940 is assuming undreamed-of proportions. It is a vivid demonstration of youth. It is not so much the professional actors who had streamed into Toulouse, Marseilles, the entire Côte d'Azur after the débacle, who interest the playgoers. (For most of the better-known disciples of Thespis are still active, to name only a few noticed recently in Nice: Josephine Baker, Danielle Darrieux, Vivian Romance, Albert Préjean, Maurice Chevalier, Suzy Prim, Lucienne Lemarchand, Marie Bell, Marcel Achard, Paul Géraldy, Jean Murat, Tino Rossi.) It is rather the younger groups of amateurs who are touring the free zone with daring, often experimental dramas to which the people flock in great numbers. More than thirty *tournées théâtrales* are on the road today, appearing in cinema houses, on lecture platforms, in *cafés chantants*. One of these troupes even went as far as Tunis.

Their repertory is quite varied. Some play classical dramas, ranging from Racine, Molière, Corneille to Hugo. A troupe in Marseilles recently played Molière's *Le Malade Imaginaire* before an audience of 2,500 in a music hall. Experimentalists from the Paris schools of Jouvet, Dullin, Copeau, Baty, go in for audacious in-

terpretations, and the autocar of the *Comédie en Provence* is already a familiar sight in the Midi. It followed the Rhone river upward as far as the Haute-Savoie, where it appeared in the remotest villages with signal success. This troupe, called *une compagnie artisanale* by Jean Serge, the director, plays principally *Jeanne d'Arc*, a poetic drama by Charles Péguy, which had never seen the lights of the stage before. They have returned to the tradition of the Gothic community by doing everything themselves. They sketch, paint, sew their own costumes, produce scenery that is extremely simple and graphic. They also compose their own musical accompaniments and play and sing them. And all the players receive the modest weekly stipend of 300 francs.

Many film stars have joined these troupes, and experiments combining the methods of both stage and film have produced delightful results. Their programs extend from Corneille to the radio sketch. Surrealist influence is noticeable, especially in the emphasis on a poetry of the marvellous or the grotesque. The *Comédiens de France* give scenic versions of all kinds of short stories, from Daudet to Maupassant, which is the first successful attempt to play the *nouvelle*. Other groups like the *Rideau Gris*, the *Bohème au Travail*, *Jeunes Comédiens Associés*, the cabaret groups who combine chansons, poems, dreams, folklore, film hits, poems by Carco, Verlaine, Appollinaire, operatic arias, piano recitals—these have been given a sensational reception. Already special plays are being written for this new genre, for the

young authors see great possibilities for poetic drama in these practical experiments.

LITERARY life in the Free Zone is only now beginning to revive. In August a single four-page number of *Beaux-Arts*, which had emigrated from Paris, appeared at Aix-en-Provence giving, for the most part, the addresses of as many artists as had then been heard from after the exodus. Since that time Marseilles would appear to have become the literary center of the unoccupied region, and it is there that André Breton has been living since the armistice; it is there that only recently he was engaged in surrealist experiments with his friends, especially in the automatic drawings known as *cadavre exquis*. The well-known advance-guard magazine *Cahiers du Sud* has never stopped appearing, and it continues to publish short stories and poems by the young men and women. A few "little magazines" of the type that always dominated the literary life in France are again being published. Their titles are new. There is, for instance, *Poésie 40*, edited by Pierre Séghers, a continuation of the wartime review *Poètes Casqués: 40*. From Algiers comes *Fontaine*, the first number of which presented translations from fragments of Gertrude Stein's *Ida*, along with texts by René Daumal, Pierre Emmanuel, René Guy Cadou. The sudden death of France's great symbolist poet, Saint-Pol-Roux, was recently announced from the Breton coast. Henri Bergson, France's greatest philosopher, and certainly one of the greatest thinkers in our age, died at

Clermont-Ferrand on January fifth. The visionary of *la durée*, the analyst of the *élan vital*, who influenced European thinking for the past thirty years as no one else did, was a Hebrew who became converted to the Catholic faith ten years ago and was baptized. When the New France inaugurated its Jewish registration orders, he insisted on participating in this process, and, despite his age, stood in line for the registration. Louis Aragon, who fought in the tank-corps during the war, was taken prisoner, escaped and is now in the southwest of France, where he is busy completing a novel about his war experiences, for an American publisher. Romain Rolland, after living in Switzerland for many years, has returned to his native land, and recently celebrated his seventy-fifth year in the town of Vézelay, Burgundy, where he had spent his childhood-years before adventuring to the outside world. The Vichy Government recently placed all his works on the *index* of the nation, because of the revolutionary quality of his writings in the past twenty years.

André Malraux, who was also taken prisoner and escaped, lives on the Côte d'Azur where he is writing a book. Jean Giraudoux, who was in charge of "public information" during the hostilities, has taken up literary work once more. André Gide is near Grasse, Edmond Jaloux in Lausanne, Switzerland, Louis Gillet in the Vichy region. The last two recently published penetrating appreciations of James Joyce's work, when the Irish poet's death was announced. Philippe Soupault is now in Tunis. He recently wrote his friend,

A. Alexieff, the Russian etcher now emigrated for the second time to this country, that "We know little of what is going on in France. I am reading a lot and meditating. But it is difficult to remain calm."

The painters are beginning to feel the nationalist onslaughts of the Hitler type against "decadent art." So far, however, no effort has been made officially to regiment their activity. Henri Matisse has wintered at Lyons, where he recently underwent an operation. Several of the other famous painters



—Feliks Topolski in *Picture Post*, London

are in Paris: Picasso, Braque, Derain. Although he is continuing his work, Picasso refused to take part in an exposition that was organized recently in Paris by the occupation authorities. The art review *Verve*, well-known in the United States, managed to issue a brilliant last number before the Fall of Paris, but has not appeared since. Juan Miro has returned to Spain, where he is living in Majorca. André

Masson is waiting in Marseilles to arrange for his emigration to this country.

Under the Nazi heel, Paris presents a spectacle of intellectual poverty and chaos. Some time after the invasion, the Nazi-held station *Radio Paris* announced that Paris was again assuming its role of *Ville Lumière*. As proof of this they cited the facts that Sacha Guitry and Louis Jouvet were playing again, and that the Frankfort Opera would henceforth appear at the Paris Opera. Theaters and cinemas are open, to be sure, but they give mostly mediocre German films, tawdry musical comedies, boulevard dramas that were once flops, Hitler propaganda. The *Comédie Française*, under the direction of Bourdet, although having resumed its classical tradition, makes obeisance to the robots by adding Schiller to its repertoire. The important museums are still closed despite promises that they would be opened. From the theatrical pages of *L'Illustration*—now in the hands of a Nazi editorial board—I cull the following facts: Cinemas—*Pages Immortelles*, German film, at the Colisée; *Ménage Moderne*, German film, at the Lord Byron; *Campagne de Pologne*, German war film, at the Biarritz (according to the accompanying advertisement: "every French person without prejudices will want to see this film depicting Germany's crushing victory in Poland"); *Danube Bleu*, German film, at the Gaumont; and one solitary French film, *Regain*, at the Moulin-Rouge.

There is little news of musical activities. Via Switzerland we have heard

that the National Orchestra under the direction of D. E. Inghelbrecht—the entire orchestra was caught in Rennes during the invasion—may occasionally be heard over the Paris Radio. Thibaud and Cortot gave a highly successful concert some time back in favor of the *Secours National*. As for the musical creators, we know that Darius Milhaud is in this country. Poulenc has remained in unoccupied France, Stravinsky, has now joined the ranks of the “new Americans.”

There are no magazines of the experimental kind. The famous *Nouvelle Revue Française*, once edited by J. Paulhan, has gone into new hands, presumably more pliable to the totalitarian idea. Drieu de la Rochelle is the new editor. The January issue has a rather impressive, non-political table of contents, with Paul Valéry leading the list, with a poem he had recently penned in the pure Mallarmé tradition, Henry Montherlant and others. The young writers still meet in the cafés for discussion, but apparently little is allowed to be published. The printing presses, because of the dearth of paper, produce few books. The well-known publisher, Grasset, announced resumption recently of his activities (his first book to be a novel by Montherlant). A number of writers, among them some of the more gifted of the younger men, recently refused the opportunity to leave for America, because, they said, “they felt their conscience bids them stay with their wounded country.” Jean Cocteau, Colette, Paul Valéry, are still in Paris. Many members of the French Academy, which still meets once a week

for endless discussions about the Dictionary, have remained in the capital.

IT is difficult to get any precise information about the other conquered countries on the Continent. What trickles through here and there indicates that the writers and artists try to go on with the esthetic life as best they may. All free creation is, of course, impossible in Belgium, Holland, Denmark, Norway where Goebbels’ propaganda machine is tenaciously trying to influence the creative life. German newspapers and reviews are everywhere, but they are little read. The cinemas produce only drooling German films peppered with Nazi advertising. A carefully winnowed list of classical plays in French, Dutch, Norwegian and Danish is allowed in the State theaters. Concerts are still given in great numbers. The literary machines in all the occupied countries no longer function as before the invasions. Censorship has set in, and political and idealogical book publications are only permitted if they mirror the Rosenberg “myth of the twentieth century.” In Belgium the brilliant metaphysical revival, which Pierre Flouquet had been carrying on from Brussels for the past ten years, has apparently been discontinued. The reviews *Cahiers des Poètes Catholiques*, *Hermès*, *Courier de la Poésie*, have vanished. But recent information smuggled out indicates that the writers, after the first shock, are quietly busy again, and a poetic revival appears to be in the offing.

In the totalitarian states proper, cre-

ative-esthetic activity with the independence known to democratic states is almost impossible. Statism interferes with free manifestations at every step of the way. German publishers accentuate books with an ideological-political significance, and the reading public swallows the pseudo-philosophies with gusto, according to the advertisements. The true philosophers, like Heidegger, and those of the Marburg school, are silent. Klages, and his anti-rationalism, are in official favor. The drama is quite active, yet it has not produced anything of value, because of its subjection to the intellectual regimentation. There is a kind of collective philistinism, a nationalist assertiveness, a monotony of racial theorizing that repels. Recently there developed a strange interest in Russian dramaturgy in various German cities: Ostroszkij's *Forest and Storm*, Tchekoff's *Bear and The Sisters*, and Turgenieff's *Bread of Mercy* were produced. The Munich Theatre staged the play of the Irish poet Yeats, *The Unicorn of the Stars*, with the naïve comment that this drama describes the "struggle of freedom against England." The official insistence on a "purified" language, freed from "foreign" ingredients in the vocabulary, tends toward a linguistic monotony.

Poetry leans heavily on Hoelderlin, Rilke, George, without showing any technical or lyrical daring. The poets, wishing to avoid clashing with the official bonzes, flee into the rarefied atmosphere of a timeless classicism, or try to express folk subjects in a naïve technique. Purely literary reviews are rare and emphasize racist exclusive-

ness. The best of them, *Das Innere Reich*, *Corona*, *Europäische Revue*, continue but produce little that is original. In all of them there is a bombastic style, a language modelled on the ungrammatical word lore of Hitler, a plethora of Nordic platitudes which stem from Rosenberg, Darré, Hamsun.

The three leading novelists, Hans Carossa, Kolbenheyer, Wiechert, who have always opposed the Nazi practices in art, literature and religion, have been silent since the war, their humanistic conservatism evidently being at loggerheads with the apostles of the régime. The radio is as dull as ever, with a greater emphasis now being placed on political manifestations. The film, entirely under Government supervision, produces only scenarios with historic implications, scientific-documentary sketches, musical comedies of saccharine sentimentality.

In Italy, totalitarian racism and the war favor a general vulgarization in the arts. While the painters and sculptors seem to enjoy a relative liberty, (the aero-dynamic school is pushed officially), literary activity is static. No new schools have come to the surface, and even Marinetti, the futurist, who told a Paris audience some years ago that the word "Italy" was "sweeter" to his ears than the word "peace," has been relegated to the background. Writers with known anti-Fascist ideas are simply boycotted by the publishers, and Papini, who has rallied to the régime, uses his dominant position as president of the Italian Academy to "purify" the ranks of the literary dissidents. The theater, and especially the

opera, flourish, together with the cinema, but the repertories are monotonously what they always have been.

Switzerland seems to be the only country on the Continent where intellectual life subsists with a maximum of liberty. Zurich and Geneva vie with each other in the number of theatrical performances given, and the musical presentations in both cities are of a high order. The publishers issue poems and novels by Swiss writers of all three languages. Both Geneva and Zurich are filled with distinguished refugees from Germany and France. So far, however, no explosive literary and artistic movement such as Dada—which was born in the neutral crucible of Zurich during the first World War—has emerged. Otherwise, Zurich is apparently as lively as it was in the years from 1914 to 1918, when René Schickele, Hans Arp, Tristan Tzara, James Joyce, Lenin, Leonhard Frank and others lived there and worked feverishly on their creations. The recent death there of Joyce, who wrote *Ulysses* in that city, elicited impassioned expressions of regret from writers, above all the embattled frontiers. Even in the German press he was hailed as a universal literary figure. The Swiss newspapers—which in their prim, condensed form are among the best anywhere—appear as before, and emphasize intellectual movements throughout the world, publishing on their front pages long, erudite essays on theological, philosophical, anthropological subjects. Dr. C. G. Jung, the Swiss psychoanalyst, and erstwhile pupil of Freud, holds his distinguished semi-annual lectures before an international

audience once each week. Dr. Ludwig Klages, the anti-intellectualist, gave five lectures on the theme of *Animal Soul and Human Body* in Zurich and Berne. The concert season is exceptionally brilliant, since many of Europe's great artists like to appear in the Swiss cities. The cinema during this war retains the international quality it always had: American films, French hits, German documentary sketches. A marionette theater in Zurich is a great success.

LIFE in Great Britain is, of course, disrupted by the barbaric raids incessantly carried out, but the vigor of its creative dynamism is in no way diminished. The confusion that reigned in the early part of the war is now over, and the writers are determined to face the reality of a struggle which the majority of them feel must be fought to a final conclusion in order to "change the world once and for all." But no real big direction has as yet been taken. It is merely a suggestion of one. Yet the new spiritual attitude of the writers, especially poets, should be noted. Others apparently still live on the impulse of ideas brought over from the surrealist and abstract decades and from the impact of left-wing naturalism. In general it is apparent that a revolution is taking place in the minds of the young men, whether they be with the fighting forces, or on the home front. It is a mystic vitalism that reacts on their creative spirits.

In London are concentrated the efforts of both the young and the old writers who gather around such re-

views as *Horizon*, edited by Cyril Connolly; *Poetry*, edited by Tumbumutti; *Life and Letters*, edited by Bryer and Hubert Hering; *Now*, edited by Nicholas Moore, and others. *La France Libre*, the London organ of General de Gaulle's followers, presents a brilliantly edited defense of his cause, and attempts to give voice to free expression of the French spirit. Here such English and French authors as Georges Bernanos, Philippe Barrès, H. G. Wells, Charles Morgan, André Labarthe, Denis Saurat, Joan Griffin meet in the cause of Free France. Hamish Hamilton, the publisher, announces a plan for publishing books in French, "until France's liberty has been restored." There are also the established magazines, still quite lively, like *The Listener*, *The Spectator*, *The New Statesman and Nation*, *Contemporary Review*, *The Nineteenth Century and After*. Most of these magazines are published under very arduous conditions, with the threat of being bombed out of existence constantly staring editors in the face. Yet they manage to maintain a high standard. Several of them have had to be evacuated a number of times, and many contributors have joined the colors. The astounding thing is that they do go on. Anthony Dickins, who edits *Poetry* during the absence of the editor, now with the fighting forces, and who is a lance-corporal himself, states in a recent issue: "We are pleased to be able to produce *Poetry* again, in the midst of a war and under the very nose of Hitler's bombers. We feel sure that our former friends and subscribers in Great Britain, the United States of America, and

other parts of the world, will be as pleased to see us again as we are to greet them through the hail of bombs which rock our little office in Bloomsbury." The war poetry that is being published is of a high order. It reveals a metaphysical awareness, a revolutionary feeling for a metamorphosis of the old social and intellectual order.

Cyril Connolly, in a recent issue of *Horizon*, states his changed views concerning the role of the writer in this war. In an early issue of the magazine in 1940 he had written that "the poet's function in this war is to be preoccupied with the investigation of spiritual possibilities." Now he goes further and adopts a more positive attitude toward the conflict. He now supports Churchill and says: "We all agree that the world must be changed, that capitalist society is decadent. I do not think that losing the war is the way to change it." The interest in D. H. Lawrence as a precursor of a new vitalism is becoming more and more pronounced. Connolly says: "If a revolution ever takes place in England, it will owe something to D. H. Lawrence as a precursor." A demand for a return to the natural man, to the primitive nexus with the earth forces, is the basis of the philosophy in question. The new writers are on the quest, they want to know whither they are bound in this voyage of the night. There are other directions: Herbert Read's new philosophical anarchism, for instance; the search of the men of the Popular Front persuasion, such as Stephen Spender and W. H. Auden, who were overwhelmed by the Nazi-Soviet Pact,

and are now exploring new myths in a metaphysical orientation.

The public has renewed its interest in reading novels, although the output since the declaration of war has not been on an especially high plane. Most of the important story tellers, such as Priestley, A. Calder-Marshall, are engaged in war work, and the publishers have become less daring than they were in peacetime. But the output is enormous, and the readers are pleasantly favorable to the minor literature produced. The eclipse of the Auden-Isherwood-Spender group of Marxist poets is analyzed in a brilliant essay by Virginia Woolf which appears in John Lehmann's *Folios of New Writing*. This anthology presents stories by Pritchett, Phelan, B. L. Coombes, Peter Viertel, Julia Strachey, Dereck Clifford, and poems by Day Lewis, Laurie Lee, Rex Warner. The poets in general have an easier time finding publishers. New work has recently appeared by Robert Graves, Siegfried Sassoon, William Empson, T. S. Eliot, the American Richard Eberhart, R. N. Currey, Christopher Hassall. Herbert Read has continued his autobiography.

In all, fourteen theaters are now open with shows that range from Shakespearean repertoire to children's pantomimes. Such revivals as Ford's *'Tis a Pity She's a Whore*, or the *Beggars' Opera*, not to mention more recent plays, such as Barrie's *Dear Brutus*, would appear to indicate a need on the part of the public to pass a few hours, anyway, in some less hideous epoch than our own. *Wanderer*, a new work by Frederick Ashton, and *Enigma Variations*, were the two ballets

that found almost universal critical approbation recently. The movies still go on, but they close early. Most of the films shown are American, such as *The Thief of Bagdad*, *The Great Dictator*, *Gone with the Wind*, *Gold Rush Maisie*, *The Gay Mrs. Trexel*, *Spring Parade*, *All This and Heaven Too*. A British film, *Freedom Radio*, was given with success at the Royal Theater.

The galleries stay open despite continued bombing, and are crowded in the afternoons. Both old masters and modernists are shown. The late-eighteenth-century painter Constable had an exhibition, and the show of the modern London group at the Cheltenham was a success. The Surrealist painter, Henry Tree, presented fantastically deformed figures in shelters, where the Bosch-like horror of the scene is heightened by its contemporary allusions. The abstractionists, among them Ben Nicholson, and his wife, are continuing their work near London. The radio, of course, is extremely lively, and audacious. It often presents discussions on creative topics, such as the recent debate between Frank O'Connor, Stephen Spender and Edith Evans on *Verse and Prose in Drama*, that seem almost unreal to the American listener.

THE blackout in Europe has not succeeded in destroying the eternal hunger of mankind for the high cultural values which Hitler is attempting to abolish. But it is interesting to note that it is only in England, in the last stronghold of freedom in Europe, that anything approaching peacetime cultural activity is to be found.

The British blockade and seizures by Germany make substitutes imperative

Defeated France Turns to Ersatz

National Zeitung, Basle

FRANCE today is getting more than a mild taste of ersatz. The growing development of substitutes in France has, until recently, been smilingly denied at Vichy, but it now must be admitted that the country has been forced into involuntary autarchy, due mainly to the effects of the British blockade.

France has the advantage of being able to profit by the experience and research of Germany and Italy in the field of ersatz. The chief problem is to find a substitute for gasoline. Confident for many years in the strength of her railroad system, the country never gave a thought to developing synthetic gasoline for motor vehicles, in the event of a shortage of coal. There are few plants in France equipped to undertake the liquefaction of coal to produce gasoline; the few that exist are experimental establishments set up jointly by coal and chemical concerns in northern France, and their capacity

is negligible. Moreover, the great coal reserves of the country were either destroyed, during the blitzkrieg, or they have been expropriated by the occupation authorities.

In the unoccupied area, however, attempts are now being made to liquefy coal, using the lignite (soft coal) deposits in the departments of Gard and the Bouches du Rhône, as well as other inferior deposits in the French Alps and Pyrennees. But months will be required before hydration plants, now in the blue-print stage, can start operations. Until that time, the country must obtain internal-combustion fuel by means of the gasogene process, which extracts liquid fuel from wood. But here Nature raises an obstacle in the development of this ersatz. France is relatively poor in forests, and has only slightly more than 25,000,000 acres of woodland. At best, only some 500,000 tons of fuel could be produced annually, a supply sufficient for