

GUARDIAN MAGAZINE

The Defenders Of Culture

BY ILYA EHRENBURG

For thirty years the rulers of the capitalist world have been contrasting their culture to ours. We have the right to look back and point a few conclusions.

WHEN the Soviet Republic was born, German guns were still pounding the Gothic Cathedral of Rheims, and blood was flowing from the English Channel to Salonika. Today, 30 years after, blood is flowing in Greece and in China, in Viet-Nam and in Indonesia. But perhaps in the intervals between wars the capitalists built, instead of destroyed?

No, even in peacetime they smashed machines, stained wheat with excrement to render it unfit for consumption, slaughtered cows and made bonfires of cotton. There were kings in their world—I am referring not to the comic-opera kings that have been left in some countries as a memento of the past, but to the kings of capital. But these are kings, too, and they splinter in the raging sea of capitalist anarchy.

Let us recall the obituaries of 1932. Scarcely had Ivar Kreuger, the match king, shot himself, than George Eastman, the camera king, followed his example. A fortnight later came the suicide of Kulrich, the safety-razor king, then of Donald Ryerson, the steel king, then Swift, the meat-packing king, took leave of his wife and jumped out of the window. These crowned suicides were written about in the newspapers. But their startling subjects ended their lives quietly and inconspicuously. What had the morrow to offer them? Another crisis? Another war?

A LONGSIDE with the manufacture of synthetic silk and synthetic honey went the manufacture of synthetic art. The Hollywood conveyor belt turned out, in the same way, its invariable murders, detectives, lords in love with Cinderellas, and bums who win the hands of wealthy beauties.

Midnight jazz defened the ears and drowned the voice of reason and conscience; the doomed danced, and the mechanical foxrot resembled the movement of automatic toys. The theatres staged vaudevilles and melodramas. The books of real poets were printed in three hundred copies. The novels in the street were few, detective novels and the cheap love stories of the weekly magazines.

Children were brought up on simple maxims, such as, "beware of your neighbor," and "fool, or be fooled." The States betrayed one another; good morals could hardly be expected of youngsters who watched the pranks of the "Non-Intervention Committee" and the despicable farce of Munich.

AND so their West arrived at fascism. It is vain for the present-day worshippers of "Western culture" to try to dissociate themselves from the Nuremberg laws, from Goebbels' book bonfires, from Majdanek and Oswiecim. (German gas-chamber camps.—Ed.)

Fascism did not fall from the skies. It is not a microbe to be found only in German blood. Fascism is but the violent phase of that terrible and whole disease with which the Reich was mortally afflicted. This point is not only that the German industrialists who supported Hitler are the blood brothers of the British American and French industrialists.

It is not even that the champions of "Western culture," from Foch to Bullitt, and from Chamberlain to Hoover, egged on Hitler to all that followed. The point is that there is too much in common between the hypocritical sermons of the imperialists of 1947 and "Mein Kampf," between the imperialists of 1947 and fascism.

A. S. H. Luncheon Lecture

Miss Rachel McLaren, who attended the two World Youth Congresses held in Europe last year, will give a luncheon address on "MY VISIT TO PRAQUE AND CZECHOSLOVAKIA" at Australasia Soviet House on Wednesday, March 3. These lectures, which are open to the public, will be held every Wednesday at Australasia Soviet House, 12.50 and lectures commence at 11.30.

The modern defenders of "Western culture" are in a state of confusion. They are the survivors of some, the failure of others. They are the survivors of some, the failure of others. They are the survivors of some, the failure of others. They are the survivors of some, the failure of others.

Between the imperialists of 1947 and fascism. The patrons of Franco are all for freedom; the butchers of Greece are outraged by violence; those who were military heroes on all the five continents condemn expansionist tendencies; the slaveowners brand racism. They may celebrate the victory over Germany—I do not recall just how they fought for it and how they won it—but, surely, it does not benefit them to celebrate the victory over fascism; there is a rope that it is better not to mention in the house of devotees of Lynch law.

THE journalists of "Combat" (a reactionary Paris paper—Ed.) are deceiving their readers when they say that we damn and reject everything that comes from the West. You cannot overdo your worship of Shakespeare or Rembrandt—however low you bow before such as these you will not humiliate yourself.

But we refuse to worship even the finest American vacuum cleaners—we make them ourselves, however indifferently; but we are not disposed to make a god of them. We know that there is no "Western culture" in the West today; there is the barbarism of the bourgeoisie and the culture of the peoples. We know that all the great-hearted and living forces of the West are with us. We are proud of the cultural achievements of our friends everywhere, in France and Britain, in America and other countries.

OUR society is only 30 years old, and the years have been hard ones; more than once we have had to take up arms to defend the independence of our Republic. But in this short span of history we have conferred no little on mankind. Western scientists are acquainted with the work of ancient and modern scientists, the West reads the books of Soviet writers, and there is no country where Soviet films are not shown. Our science, our literature, our music exercise a beneficial influence on the scientists and artists of the West.

But the most substantial contribution of all to world culture is the very existence of the Soviet state; it has changed the spiritual climate of the world.

(From New Times, Soviet Weekly.)

CLIFFORD ODETS PLAY FOR NEW THEATRE

Hollywood Purge Victim

Included in the long list of progressive writers sacked by Hollywood studios for "un-American" activities is Clifford Odets, whose plays of social protest swept America during the depression 30's.

ODETS is pictured here in the role of Dr. Benjamin, one of the characters in his first and most successful play, "Waiting For Lefty."

The play made theatrical history in many countries. Following its premiere in an American Group Theatre production, which aroused such widespread comment and enthusiasm that the play could not be buried or ignored, 20 leading American theatres played it simultaneously in a coast-to-coast presentation.

New Theatre gave the play its Victorian premiere in 1936 at the Central Hall (now the Grovernor), and the first night established it as a top-flight theatrical success with Victorian audiences.

"WAITING For Lefty" is set against the background of the New York taxi-drivers' strike in 1934. It is a powerful, human exposure of the type of "company union" used by American Big Business to suppress and sabotage the growth of the militant unions built by such working class bodies as the Congress of Industrial Organisations (C.I.O.).

U.S. Red-Baiters Deport Composer

NEW YORK.—Deportation proceedings against Hans Eisler, Austrian refugee composer accused of "Un-American activities," were completed in less than half-an-hour.

Leading British musicians, artists and actors signed an appeal to President Truman for Eisler's admission to France when the House of Representatives' "Un-American Activities" Committee recommended his deportation last month. The appeal said that Eisler had been granted a French visa to write the music for the film "Alice in Wonderland" and asked that Eisler and his wife be allowed to use the visa.



March 8 is International Women's Day, cele to remind the world of the horrors of war, ar people's need for peace.

This is the story of No. 31885 in the Oswiecim camp—Marie-Claude Vaillant-Couturier (left), a now general secretary of the Women's Interns Democratic Federation.

To a man who suggested the figures 31885 to on her arm were a sad souvenir she should get, Marie-Claude replied: "Myself, I do not need, it to remind me of fascist barbarity. But to you, it is prove that those things really HAPPENED."

HEROIC WOMAN FIGHT FOR PEACE

By Nadexhda Chertova

MARIE-CLAUDE Vaugel was only seventeen, and just in school, when she set out for Berlin, in the spring of 1942, to continue her study of painting and German.

IN those days, of course, it never occurred to the slender, blue-eyed, impulsive young Parisienne that fourteen years later she would be travelling through Germany in quite a different capacity; on her way to be registered as Oswiecim prisoner No. 31885.

But it must be said that, even then, her girlish happiness was jarred to its very foundation by the sights of poverty and abject misery she witnessed.

On day when she spoke of these things at her lodgings, her landlady replied: "That's nothing new. We have seven million unemployed, in Germany."

"But it means there's something wrong with the world!" cried Marie indignantly.

ONE day, after she had returned home to Paris, her father brought home a card and welcome from Paul Vaillant-Couturier, writer and Communist and editor-in-chief of L'Humanite, the Communist daily.

In these first hours of their acquaintance, Marie-Claude was inspired with a reverence towards Vaillant-Couturier, as his wife, and as his widow, and finally, as his successor in the post of people's deputy from the 4th Seine District.

All too soon she lost her husband, so dearly loved. But the life he had opened to her remained always here.

After his death, she worked for L'Humanite, becoming the paper's chief camera reporter.

In 1938, at the very outset of the shameful "phoney" war with the Germans, L'Humanite was banned. Early 1940 marked the beginning of underground existence for the young widow of Paul Vaillant-Couturier.

Underground activity grew difficult. The pro-Hitler Vichy traitor "government" and the German Oestapo were on the alert. Now one, now another of the underground fighters, of the Maquis and members of the Resistance, would disappear—caught in the net of the Gestapo.

Such was the fate of Marie-Claude Vaillant-Couturier, too. On February 9, 1942 she was arrested by the Pétain police.

SIX weeks later the police servilely turned her over to the Gestapo. She was transferred to the Sante prison. It was in the Sante—a men's prison in ordinary times—that Paul Vaillant-Couturier had been confined in 1928-29 for his first against the reactionaries.

Thus, Marie-Claude replaced her husband even in the prison cell. On August 20, forty women were transferred from the Sante prison to the Camp de Gurs at For-les-Bains, in the main camp of the "internes" Marie-Claude and Danielle Casanova—gallant leader of the revolutionary youth of France, and universal favorite in the working class districts of Paris.

At Romainville, Danielle Casanova became the leader of an invisible but active resistance organisation. She started a hand-written newspaper, which appeared regularly in the women's section of the camp.

The guards looked askance at Danielle in this beautiful, dark-eyed Frenchwoman they instinctively sensed the chief of the rebels. And when the women staged a splendidly organised hunger strike—that Paul Vaillant-Couturier had inspired against the camp regulations, the commandant said to Danielle:

"When they start shooting women, you'll be the first to go."

THEN came the transfer to Oswiecim—the camp of extermination. This the prisoners realised from the very first day of their confinement. How can they forget—Marie-Claude

and the others who came out here alive—how can they forget children who were cast into flames alive because the butcher short of gas? How can they forget the strains of the Marseillaise from the ghostly lorry that carried women from barrack No. 25 to house?

To the best of their ability, the sons fought this brutal, massive force of destruction. They would be protected, kept far from the sight of the German guards.

Danielle Casanova was the beacon of the women prison Oswiecim. And when Danielle Marie-Claude summoned her strength and courage to the place.

LATER, at the trial in Nuremberg, Marie-Claude was to testify month after month, and years, we had to testify that at least some of us were alive, to tell the world what the prisons are.

Today, at the sessions of the national Democratic Women's Union, Marie-Claude sits beside a brave, famous revolutionary leader, Spanish people, and Mrs. Cotton, the Federation's president. The federation brings her many prizes.

At Oswiecim she learnt, however, the strength of spirit, the capacity for struggle, the situation of the world.

"I have determined to do the women," she says, "and her future, and her revolution."

"We must fight for peace, our very last breath."

More British Soldiers Denounce Greek Atrocities

LONDON.—Twenty-one British soldiers, including five who have issued a declaration regarding the disclosure of the Greek atrocity, are named in the British Press by H. Starr.

"Some of us," says the declaration, "have ourselves witnessed similar to those described, and our testimony to the man which successive Greek governments have suppressed political liberty we in this country regard as a human right." Starr's revelation is accompanied by pictures of Greek displaying the decapitated heads of victims, aroused widespread indignation, and the withdrawal of troops from Greece.

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