VI. CULTURAL UPSURGE AND COLD WAR

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Though the emphasis varied, almost everyone I had known in the army was discontented with the old run of things. The sympathy for Russia was strong. “Britain bullshits while Russia bleeds,” was the common grumble when we were put to useless jobs. We heard of R.A.F. camps shouting, “Joe for King!” An officer in charge of a discussion had tried to bring us round to the viewpoint that in the end we’d have to fight the Soviet Union; but he kept on stammering, afraid to put his point openly, then pointed to a map of Europe and said, “What will happen when the two sides meet, as they must sooner or later?” He wanted to evoke the image of the British and American armies confronting an Asiatic horde. “We’ll shake hands!” shouted one of the soldiers, and everyone cheered. That was very much the prevailing mood; and it was such a mood, in the army and outside of it, which put the Labour Party so triumphantly in power in 1945. I spoke in uniform at a huge meeting in Marylebone on behalf of Labour; Peggy Ashcroft was one of the other speakers. On the day that the results came out, I recall a middleclass man and his wife in the tube talking in high-pitched panicky voices, “Ah, yes, there is a factory there,” they said of some seat that had fallen to Labour, as if speaking of the devil. We hoped and expected that the Labour leaders, however reluctantly, would proceed to carry out something of the programme of deepgoing change which people had voted for. I myself had high hopes. I did not believe that Atlee, Cripps and the rest wanted any real change, but I believed that the people would keep up their pressure, through the local labour parties, the trade unions, the co-ops, and so on. And I believed that the C.P. would help importantly in maintaining and directing the pressure. It was with something of a shock that we found the leadership was wedded to the project of a National Government led by Churchill, though they had to drop this idea when it clearly grew untenable. Mulk Raj Anand told me that in a talk with one of the leaders, as he was preparing to go back to India, he made a rude comment on Churchill; the other sprang to his feet and demanded that he should retract his words. “We are wedded to twenty years collaboration with the Tories in the reconstruction of Europe.” Such policies were soon disposed of by the people.

ed. Anne Cranny-Francis (2017)

I was with Mulk the morning after the first dropping of the atomic bomb in Japan. We felt strangely excited and disturbed, and wanted very much to say to one another what we felt, but could not focus our thoughts beyond the obvious point of menace. We felt that what had happened was not just the handing-over of a gigantic power of destruction to military maniacs, but that something had been split inside man himself. That, before this horror, all the worst aspects of Nazism dwindled and became archaic. I had been in London throughout the attack by flying-bombs, but though I hadn't enjoyed them, I had not felt much fear. When there was a suggestion that the office would move to Bristol I was genuinely dismayed; it would mean parting from Ann for a while, leaving her in London. But to my relief, we stayed in Eaton Square. The nearest one of the bombs came to me was when Ann and I were walking up Lower Regent Street and a bomb came down at the side of the Regent Palace Hotel; once as we were rehearsing in the YMCA, Great Russell Street, one of our troop was blown up in Tottenham Court Road. (When I was lodging in Pimlico an ordinary bomb dropped almost opposite and blew in our windows; my main grievance was that at the moment I was lighting the fire and the blast blew a mass of soot down the chimney all over me. Washing myself in the windowless house in midwinter, I got a mild pneumonia.) All such events were so trivial beside the destructions where the war was really being waged, that I hardly noticed them. But the atomic bomb as not merely a matter of increased destruction; it meant cataclysm on a quite new level. Mulk and I felt this without being able to find the words for it.

The sort of foreboding I then felt also came over me the day that the war ended. Ann and I went round that night with the wives of Randall and Stephen Swingler, whose husbands were still on active service. It was meant to be a tour of the Holborn pubs in celebration; but I grew more depressed every moment, though I did my best to hide the mood. One part of me rejoiced at the ending of the slaughter, but the other part felt that now an open enemy was going to be replaced by a hidden or lying one in a situation of far greater threat to human values, human life.

Well before the war ended and I was demobbed, I was doing party-work in the cultural field. At Emile Burns' suggestion I had gone on to the board of Fore Publications,

which had been started off by Randall shortly before the war. We produced Our Time (monthly) and Seven (four times a year if possible). The problem about Seven, which consisted of short stories with a few poems, and which had been taken over from a Cambridge venture of Philip O'Connor so as to get a paper-quota, was that it had a large circulation (about 100,000). We thus had to hoard paper and eke it out with the black-market supplies in order to make up an issue; it was better to meet the demand on one issue than split the available paper for two issues. Our Time was the more important of the two periodicals; its main function was to provide a record of what we called the Cultural Upsurge (the movement of popular culture I have mentioned) and to encourage it in various ways. As the editor at the time failed in some respects to carry out the policy we worked out on the Board, of which Geraldine Swingler (one of the pianist Pepin sisters) was a member, I rather ruthlessly had him sacked, after making sure that Edgell (run down in a Hampstead pub) would take over his job. Edgell was a highly capable editor, who understood all that was implied in reporting and stimulating the Cultural Upsurge; a term we used half in joke, but with a serious belief in the potentialities of the situation. With Edgell in charge of Our Time, I was able to give time and thought to further activities. I wanted magazines covering all the main fields of culture; and after a while we launched Theatre Today under Montagu Slater and Christopher Lee. I was hoping to draw in the Workers Musical Association (where the strong man was Alan Bush) for a similar periodical on Music, and I was negotiating with the leaders of the documentary-film industry to develop their bulletin into a magazine proper when the bottom began to fall out of the Upsurge about 1947-8. I also worked out several series of books that would clarify or aid the situation. A few appeared: Trident (poems by John Manifold, Hubert Nicholson, David Martin); Rhyme and Reason, an anthology edited by Martin; an anthology of American folksongs by A.L. Lloyd. But this was only a meagre flowering of the seeds sown. Politically, the cultural programme was linked with the theory and practice of a Popular Front; and we hoped that much would come out of the excellent schemes for Community Centres which had been born of war-experiences and which would carry on the comradeship of the war-years together (we hoped) with an expansion of the Upsurge.

Already in 1944 I issued through the firm a long pamphlet, Perspective for Poetry, which aimed at providing a basis for an effective union of poets. “All poets who have so far written, great or small, can be shown to have been propagandists for some set of values ... The poet’s freedom is his right, his need, to be true to the fullness of life, not to one side of it, but to the complete meaning and movement.” (I still hold this to be true, but at that time one couldn’t see how a mechanistic application of this principle, as often made by Soviet critics, could wreck and distort it. But then a mechanistic application can distort any principle; we must not therefore give up the quest for valid principles.) The summary made in a review in New Masses may be cited as giving a fair idea of the pamphlet’s contents.

> Differing with most leftwing critics, Lindsay pays tribute to T.S. Eliot for “expressing a recoil from a world unintelligible and abandoned to bestial ends.” He claims that in The Wasteland Eliot uttered “a largescale historical view of disintegration.” But the American-British poet could only realise one half of the creative process – “the withering and the dying.” Rebirth escaped him entirely and history “lost its powers of renewal.” Out of the postwar boom and collapse of the late Twenties and early Thirties came three young British poets, Auden, Spender and Day Lewis, who were influenced by Eliot in breaking with traditional forms, and who reached beyond his ethical programme by considering some revolution under the Marxian banner. But the “flaw of passivity which turned Eliot away just at the point when he seemed about to grapple with the fullness of life likewise attacked these three poets. Despite a growing awareness of social and political problems and the development of new technical qualities, each returned to the self instead of embracing a world society, and failed “to expand organically with the historical situation.”
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> In subsequent movements such as Grigson’s New Verse, Symons’ Twentieth Century Verse, and Left Review, further gains were made in an effort to break the now-recognised barrier of passivity, yet the political appeal “was too often dissevered from the full aesthetic issue.” And, on a large scale, the failure of the English people themselves in recognizing the meaning of the Spanish Civil War and of the people’s upsurge in the French Popular Front finally revealed that the poet in England was “striving against very difficult forces in his environment.” In prewar Britain, “the flaw of passivity was also in the British people, at the heart of the British labour movement.”

I hoped that mass-pressure was now going to change the situation. In Dylan Thomas (whom I had come to know well using the war: see Meetings with Poets) I saw a counter-affirmation to the narrowness and feebleness of Auden’s position, “in which the denied body, the sensual fullness, so basic in poetry, made its private rebellion,” achieving “the dream-symbol of the

crucified (castrated) body's desire." I saw the poetry truly expressing the popular upsurge as a merging of Dylan's positions with the direct struggle to bring about the body's resurrection. (The essay was dedicated to him and Randall.) I tried once more to relate my concepts of initiation-ritual and of shamanist concentration to the situation; and raised the question of the symbolist Correspondences in connection with the poetic absorption of modern science. To quote again New Masses*:*

> He shows how many an important creator under capitalism was bound to be partly reactionary in his politics, to view socialism only in some utopian form, and to engage in anarchistic fantasies and ironies as the only means of tackling "omnipresent contradictions." He had to go outside realities for a "man-to-man relationship offsetting the distortions of capitalist fetishism which treated men as things, as part of the commodity-market with all its veils and blind forces." The one British poet who looms above all others is William Blake, "the only poet so far who has been aesthetically aware of the full implications of history in the industrial epoch."

I also tried to work out the thesis that the content of the aesthetic act "is always rent by a conflict. It is precisely this conflict of opposites within the content which creates the Form. The Form is the resolution of the inner conflict. It is the act in which the opposites achieve unity." It followed that the wider in scope, the fuller in grasp, was the content with its conflict, the richer aesthetically the Form.

As an expression of my popular-front creed I had become friendly with Orwell while he was working on Tribune; he published there everything I offered him. I continued this relationship with the periodical after Fyvel took over the literary side, and did many reviews until 1949. In these writings, as elsewhere, I tried to find an idiom harmonising with the popular-front concept and acceptable both to communist and left-labour – though Emile, who, I felt, did not like my writing for the Tribune, once rebuked me for conceding too much to Keynes.

From this time on till 1949 I was heavily involved in all sorts of organisational work, especially for Unity, the Society for Cultural Relations with Russia, P.E.N. (on the committee of which I served a term), and soon the Writers Group of the party. Most writers were still friendly towards Russia, having regained their nerve when Hitler made his attack; and our

committee on the writers' section included Spender, Lehmann, and the like. There were brains-trusts, discussions with Russian writers, film-shows, meetings of all sorts, till around 1948-9 the Cold War killed off such things and sent most intellectuals into prudent opposition to the Soviet Union. At the P.E.N. Congress in Zurich, when a vacancy in the international presidency was coming up, I discussed with Spender the possibility of my proposing him; he was still politically very friendly. Not long after he went to the U.S.A., and I had the impression that such groups as those round the Partisan Review converted him to anti-sovietism. (On his return he asked me with his nervous mildness, "Are you Stalinist?", and I replied, "I'm a communist.")

A cause which stirred me strongly at this time was that of the jailed Greek writers, especially as Britain bore so much responsibility for the betrayal in Greece. (As far back as 1943 when I often had access to the instructions sent monthly to officers, I could read there an extreme fear that the Greek resistance-movement could lead to a domination of the Left in the postwar years.) Books sent out by the League for Democracy in Greece later on included works of mine, and this led to some very moving contacts by letter with writers on Ai Stratis. I had one of my shocks when I was pressing the party centre to do something here on the lines of the Australian dockers, who had banned shipments to Greece; I was told bluntly that the party could not attempt tactics which would fail and leave it some miles ahead of its following; there was[1] only some fifty or so party-members among the tens of thousands of dockers. Through P.E.N. I was able to get protests made to the Greek embassy.

In 1945 Ted Willis, with whom I had become very friendly, suggested the formation of a group for the provision of scripts to the labour and trade-union movement. This idea was exactly in line with my whole upsurge-and-popular-front line. We formed the Script Centre, together with David Martin and Montagu Slater. I suggested Ann as secretary, and though Ted did not object I soon realised that he thoroughly disliked the appointment. From that moment on he began to drop out. Ann was a person who would never discuss personal

[1] As per typescript; should be 'were'.

grievances in any shape or form; but I had the feeling that she and Ted had disagreed on policies for Unity Theatre. At the time Ted was strongly in control of the theatre, and he was not the sort of person who tolerated oppositions. It was he who ensured that my *Robin* was staged. Usually the selection committee at unity consisted of opinionated sectarian characters who had read a book on play-engineering and thought any script incorrect. For some years I tried out ideas, drafts, even complete works on them, often producing something at their suggestion, but always had the result dissected as failing to fit in with the Laws of Drama. If I had been the only casualty in this way, the blame might be laid on my incompetence; but I saw promising writer after writer similarly laid out flat. Montagu Slater, who had had a magnificent start with Easter 1916 for Left Theatre and who could have provided the Left with a fine playwright, never got within miles of an acceptance. Sean O'Casey, with his Star Turns Red, had been reprimanded for his lack of knowledge of the textbooks, but had his play accepted on account of his name. Ted now wanted to turn the company into a professional one; I objected as the theatre was far too small to make such a venture pay, and as, in my opinion, Unity was the sole body which could give the right lead to the amateur theatre at this juncture. But Ted who was uncritically supported and nursed by the London District as the coming great proletarian writer, could do no wrong.

The poet Maurice Carpenter and myself did a few scripts for co-ops and the like, when a new possibility opened up. Ann and I were living in a house in St John's Wood almost opposite Lords; Montagu Slater was in the upper part of Baker Street; Bernard Miles a couple of minutes away from us. Monty had been commissioned to write a play for the celebrations of the centenary of the A.E.U., A Century for George; but how it was to be produced had not been settled. Here seemed a matter designed for Script Centre[2]. In my 1944 Achievement-book I had written: of:

> … the emergence of Trade Unions as sponsors of art and literature, which has already steadily begun. For in such matters were touch[3] the final test of the depth and stability of the cultural impacts which we see set going in a broad way by C.E.M.A. in its

[2] Typo in typescript: 'Centure'.
[3] As per typescript; possibly should read either 'we touch' or 'were touched'.

> hostel-concerts, in the work of the Old Vic and Sadlers Wells, in the work of symphony orchestras. One realises that the secondary stage is being reached, when the impact has gone deep enough to stir up powerful responses in the life of the people, in the organisations where the people most effectively control the conditions of their life.

Things hadn't gone so smoothly along those lines, but here seemed just the chance to make a decisive link of the T.U.s and the Upsurge. Monty had already approached Bernard, who, then as always, was ready to rise to any challenge, above all when there was a chance of anchoring the theatre in common life. Theatre 46 was formed, with Julius Gellner as producer. Bernard had a comedy about the Home Guard; I, drawn in, set to work on a three-act documentary about the Mines. The question of nationalisation was just then coming to a head. I asked Bert Coombes to collaborate, to ensure the right feeling and idiom; Margot Heinemann helped in discussions – at the time she was the party-expert on Mining. So we had a reasonably varied fare with which to launch Theatre 46. (Monty's play dealt with three generations of engineers.) Ted Willis objected, on the grounds that we were splitting resources and should have come in to help in building Unity. In view of the scant success we met, he may well have been right, though I do not see how we would have fitted our programme into such a tiny stage as Unity had. He sent round a statement complaining that I had described myself as ABCA scriptwriter as if my use of that undeniable term meant that I was claiming sole credit for plays in which so much collective effort and discussion had gone. We went on our different ways. Ann and I kept away from Unity as we did not want to suggest or form any opposition to Ted's plans. If he was right about Theatre 46, we also were right about Unity as a professional company; for soon a very large debt had been accumulated by it.

The theatre in general was booming in these postwar months, and the only place we could rent was the Scala, a great graveyard of a theatre usually given over to amateur companies playing Gilbert and Sullivan. We took it and opened in wintry weather that accentuated the chilly gloom. Ann had worked tirelessly, going round to A.E.U. branches to explain the venture and the significance of A Century for George. Sometimes I went with her and also spoke on the Upsurge. Everyone always showed the utmost interest, but when it came to the point they couldn't bother to visit the Scala. I had approached Arthur Horner,

who was as sympathetic as could be, and I had several talks with him and the president of the Miner's union, in which everything short of direct financial aid was promised. If we had ever got round to playing in mining areas, I feel that Face of Coal may well have won big popular audiences. I had used all our ABCA devices, and Coombes had ensured the intimate touch.

But in the cavernous Scala we were far from any such hopes, and after a couple of weeks the failure was obvious. Face of Coal had been scheduled as the last of the three plays to be worked into repertory, and Bernard insisted on keeping the theatre going till it had the chance of a few productions. Monty and I put a couple of hundred pounds each into the theatre, which we lost; Bernard must have lost more. The only review I can find is one in Reynolds, which says, "If the standard of this one," Face of Coal, "is kept up, something new has come to stay in British theatre. Theatre 46 would become a national institution if it gave us more documentaries of this calibre." It was perhaps a pity that the work was so quickly buried, as it certainly foreshadowed a number of techniques and tendencies that did not come up again till some twenty years later. But though I gave many talks on the possibilities of documentary drama conceived as an experimental and poetic form, even producing a short documentary on documentaries, nothing further of any significance was done. The more I think about it, the more I feel that the cleavage between Ted Willis and myself at this juncture was an unfortunate one. Ann continued for some time to work in the British Drama League and elsewhere on the question of raising the standards and varying the idea of the amateur movement.

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There could not have been a different person from Elza than she was; if the term selfless did not suggest something colourless and impersonal, I should select it as the term that best described her. I do not recall one moment when she lost her balance or her temper, when she even raised her voice. She was wholly devoted to any work she took on. My concept of the Upsurge fitted perfectly in with her views. (She had joined Unity in 1937 and had as her first job a part in On Guard for Spain. She had the most marvelous verse-speaking voice I ever heard, and I was not the only one who thought so. I recall for instance Pamela Hansford

Johnson saying that she knew no voice at all comparable. There was something extraordinarily clear, deeply-felt without the least falsity of note, and powerful about it. I deeply regret, in these days of recording apparatus, that no tape was taken of it. All her fine crystalline character appeared in that voice, a warm humanity transfigured into a pellucid purity of uplifted sound.) In my lonely days of the Thirties I had tried to drive out of myself all concepts of male superiority, indeed of sexual difference at all; to see human beings only by the stark light of their humanity. "Comrade Man and Comrade Woman," cried a poem of the time, "lend me your hands while I grow human." I had tested in my thought this or that accepted female characteristic and felt it was a social and not a biological creation. In the end I could find no basic point of difference except that women bore children and that there was a specially close relation between mother and child for the first year. A close relation after that? Yes, but also one with the father. I struggled to break down in myself all the notions of sex-difference that I'd inherited in Australia, with the system of segregation allotting different roles in life to males and females. For a while I felt a revulsion against all love-poetry, for all lyrically sensuous art based in a response to woman's body. Then I decided that the mother's body for the early months (the nine in the womb and the following nine) did constitute a special source of ideas and images of union; the mother's rounded body and the food-supply did have a vital connection denied to the father, the male. The lyrical sensuous art thus had its validity as a paean to the sources of life. What then of woman's relation to art? Could she in the same way hymn her own body, since she as much as a male had the special relation to the maternal food-source? Or did that that relation short-circuit her sexual-aesthetic energies and turn them back on herself, rather than outwards into art? Such questions seemed to be wavering back to the sort of distinction I had rejected. Both sexes, I replied, have had their own narcisisms[4] or pseudo-idealisations: woman as beauty, man as strength, with various modifications. But all that would fade out with a proper growing-up. Since the bisexual elements were strong in both sexes, there was no reason why, apart from a balance resting on

[4] Lindsay consistently spells narcissism as shown above.

the actual sex of the individual, the creative responses should not be equally shared by man and woman, with multiple forms of changing expression. (I have never had any wish to suppress or penalise homosexuals; but homosexuality has always seemed to me a dull subject, representing an infantile fixation that I could not take any more seriously than kleptomania or coprophilia, bedwetting or shoe-fetishism. Matters which reflected, indeed, a cruelly repressive society, but which could only be grasped or judged in that context.) It was clear that Freud's whole concept of penis-envy was one of the many unconscious expressions of his father-complex, and needed to be paired off with womb-envy. In these terms, any artist was suffering from womb-envy, wanting to match and surpass his mother's productivity; and I painfully realised this anxiety in myself. But beyond all dominations of penis-envy or womb-envy there was the harmony I now intuited, in which the sting of such complexes was gone in the harmonious sex-union where the woman was also male without ceasing to be female, and the man was also female without ceasing to be male.

Now had come the time to test out the positions I had reached in these struggles of thought and emotion. I fear, looking back, that I cannot claim to have lived up at all fully to them – though they had all the same brought about deep changes in me. I had no objection to doing housework, though in fact most cooking and the like fell to Ann. I wanted to leave her free for the work she most enjoyed. In our first years, however, this often led to her being away, and I had need of her presence. It seems to me now that I have always needed the protection of mother-figure, as in my childhood and youth – little as I had recognised or expressed my dependence. Janet's strong and amiable character had enabled me for a while to keep a balance between dependence and freedom (in N.L.'s sense); my attempt to find the same sort of relationship with Elza had crashed and I had become emotionally dependent on her while striking out into various new dimensions. Though she had been a heavy burden throughout the Thirties, she had also been a shield, a harsh and tyrannous protection; without that shield I should have lacked the courage and tenacity to stick to my uncompromising positions. So deeply rooted is our strength in our weakness, our weakness in our strength. With Ann I wanted afresh the Janet-balance cleansed of its illusions and distortions, a free

compact in a completely shared adventure. But, looking back, I see also that I swayed Ann over to my side; she submitted to my need of her and directed her energies into fields more closely related to my ideas and projects. I regret all that insofar as it limited the range of things she may have wanted to do; but I am not sure that it did not point to a relationship within marriage that is more organic and satisfying than a union of split-up interests and activities, in which the couple merely meet as half-strangers for passing discussions and embraces. Until the factory-system the family was united in work, in farm or craft-workshop, even if the patriarchal attitudes made the father into a controlling power. Still in 18th-century London, though man and wife might be doing different jobs, we usually find them working in the same house. Because in the final stages of industrial alienation we find man and wife so much separated, whether the wife stays at home or goes out to work, we must beware of taking this as a trend that will carry on indefinitely. All forms of development in this phase of alienation must be treated with the utmost suspicion. As I write, I read in a newspaper, "Is it not likely that new forms of communication and automation will gradually make those vast office-blocks, those packed factory gates, more and more of an anachronism? We must find ways of enabling every individual to do what she or he wants to do. But let us not be too ready to assume that, from the children's point of view, let alone the employers'[5], two people cut in half by time adds up to two parents or one employee." The future I contemplate would not have any employers in it; and it would be from the aspect of the fulfillment of the married couple, not only the harmonious development of the children, that I think the united family may yet return, without the elements of male domination that have perverted it in the past.

The failure of Theatre 46 had rather spoiled the project of Script Centre, but Ann found another way of furthering our hopes of linking working-class organisations with art-ventures. Monty had done much work in founding and helping along the People's Entertainment Society, based on the Co-ops, which had on paper an ambitious programme of fostering popular culture. Many co-op societies, through their educational committees, were

[5] Typo in typescript: employers.

doing good work, but P.E.S. could have become a national force of the utmost importance. Barnes, who dominated it, wanted to use its resources merely to buy up theatrical premises: which he did in the usual shortsighted way, getting some decrepit buildings cheap; and when Monty, with what aid we could give him, became a threatening force, he packed an annual meeting with Reynolds employees and had Monty thrown out. However, he had to do something in celebration of the Rochford pioneers, for which a pleasant and lively play had been written. Ann organised a group of actors and actresses, and took them round on a tour. Incidentally we had one political lesson as a result. There was one actor, a Scotchman, who always took a most sectarian viewpoint and brought up all sorts of minor T.U. points, insisting that he was fighting for the rights of the cast. He almost wrecked the whole thing. About a year later he was found to have been a police-spy.

I was doing odd script jobs including one for a Daily Worker rally at the Albert Hall. About three quarters way through I realised that some error had been made in the typing of the scripts (we weren't in charge of the procution[6]) and that the appeal for funds was going to be left out. I dashed down from our seats, got round the back, and was worming my way up to the pulpit where Colin Wills (a B.B.C. announcer of the time) was reciting something – he was the main figure. But before I got there the crucial moment came and the announcements moved on to the finale. Barbara Niven made a despairing appeal from the platform as the audience rose up to stream out.

Ann made an attempt to revive the mass-declamation. I wrote a poem Agony of Greece, which we also printed as a broadsheet. She trained a Unity outside-group to perform it: which they did excellently by voice and movement. It was welcomed at meetings, but quite failed to generate the magnetic impact of the prewar declamations. This failure had nothing to do with the quality of the performance, and the Agony was as good a piece of writing as On Guard for Spain. But the situation was one of deflated political responses. I also did parts of documentaries, short and full-length, for Unity at the suggestion of the Selection Committee;

[6] As per typescript: possibly a misspelling of 'production'.

but each time the idea of what was wanted grew confused, and the efforts ended in dreary argumentation. A large Unity outside-group asked for a declamation on Peace, which I did. But by the time it reached halfway in the rehearsals, a sectarian section convinced the others that they must refuse to do a work in which Isaiah was quoted. I refused to withdraw the quotation and so the project collapsed. This episode gives dome idea of what the sectarian spirit was like at this time. I was always attacked at party branch-meetings.

Then as now the problem of the relation of the C.P. and the Labour Movement was in continual agitation, finding its most difficult point in the question as to whether the C.P. should put up candidates at elections against the Labour Party. Britain has an important aspect of difference in working-class organisation from all other European countries. It has a united T.U. movement backing the Labour Party, and no system of proportional representation at elections. Hence the argument as to whether the C.P. should put up its candidates; and if so, when, where and how. As long as the popular movement generated by the war seemed at all intact inside the T.U.s and the Labour Party, I felt that the prime task was to encourage it. I overvalued it, and so tended to minimise the role of the C.P., or rather to see that role in too narrow a way. An essay I wrote in the summer of 1946 is worth citing to bring out the confusion of the period. I feel I was right in the search for finding unsectarian ways to a secure basis of union with the Labour Movement, but badly utopian in my reliance on spontaneous forces of revolt among the workers. I set out my belief that the problem was to reconstitute the Popular Front of the 1930s on the new level, with the party dropping all purely tactical notions of using or manipulating such a Front, and seeing in it the organic basis for a form of democratic British socialism could be evolved. The fascination of the pattern of 1917 still got in our way and prevented us from finding the new lines of thought and action that were needed; but the conditions prevailing in Russia at the time of the revolution bore no resemblance to those we faced in Britain. “In the situation brought about by the heavy defeat of Affiliation, how do we conceive the function of the Party in the next few years – years which are going to be of such crucial national and international importance? But we cannot answer that question about the role of our Party without asking the further question: How do

we conceive the role of the Labour Party during those years?" Then, raising the problem of building a mass C.P. in Britain, I proceeded with an analysis of the future that was quite incorrect. I rebuked sectarian attitudes to the Labour Party (which indeed were very strong at the time); and assumed that if the latter party failed to advance into socialism, it would be split, with the result of some sort of British Fascism coming to power. I insisted that with all its weaknesses and faults the Labour Party was already the mass-party of the workers, and that we had to start from this fact, whether we liked it or not. I argued that we were not seeking correctly for the basis on which we could be felt as a part of the British Labour Movement, and through which we could have the needed effect on the situation. "We must live through the situation from the level of the masses, not from the level of our sterile superiority. And to take leadership into the mass-situation means more than slogans and 'correct' phrases." I pointed to the way in which the party had powerfully given real leadership twice in the past (in the National Unemployed Movement and in the Shopstewards' Movement), but felt that we had got ourselves out of effective touch with the situation where the Labour Party had been put into power by a strong antifascist upheaval among the people. I next laid stress on the party's educational role and on the increasingly important function of the party-intellectuals. "The type of criticism from outside, exemplified by the Daily Worker, shows its impotence, its failure to grapple with the situation, because the situation is one of bursting bonds, of people concretely moving to a fuller control of their own lives and to fuller satisfactions. The key to grasping the situation at the core is to be found in the cultural approach, for there we find all the means unlocking the doors to a fuller life." I said:

> It ill becomes us to lag behind. In fact in no other way can we extend mass-contacts and become adequate to the situation. To talk of a mass-party without having made these prior adjustments in orientation and strategy is to ask for a waste of energy, with an increasing sense of frustration. If we don't expand with the real situation, we cannot even maintain ground; we can only contrast inside our own imaginary situation, where fine slogans fail to cover up the petty disintegrations into bickering and all the other signs of splinter-party sectarianism.

Finally I argued strongly for a loud self-criticism analyzing the party's attitudes and changes in 1939.

> I therefore ask for a postmortem on the Party's decisions and acts in the period 1939-41. I feel that unless that is done we can never regain the full respect of the Labour Movement. In recent statements I continually see a reference to the rightness of the Party in its antifascist fights during the 30s, its defense of Spain, its denunciation of Munich. And then the references stop. Do they go on to say: And we were right at the time of Dunkirk? They do not, and they cannot. The silence at this point is a tacit admission of error, and it immediately provokes a retort from the ordinary citizen.

I was thinking particularly of a pamphlet, The Communists were Right. Some of my points were valid, and the general approach had much to be said for it; but the presupposition that the elements which had been active in the people at the time of the 1945 elections were still intact and prepared for struggle put the whole analysis in a hopelessly wrong perspective. I feel then that Emile and the board of the Communist Review were right in refusing to print the essay; I should have been able to find some way of putting what was right in my criticisms in terms more truly related to the situation and so more useful for the party. At root I was trying to raise matters that needed to be raised, and it wasn't only my errors that made my positions disliked; but I feel the sin of intellectual pride as I read through the text of my homily some twenty-five years later.

We got together a loosely-organised Writers Group, with meetings held fortnightly in a large room at the Salisbury in St. Martin's Lane. We had usually fifty to sixty persons at a meeting, mostly young people, and discussed any literary or cultural issue that had come up. There was a certain division of sectarians and those seeking broader bases, but on the whole there was agreement on the ways in which we hoped that the advance to a securely based people's-culture was to come about. I, and others as well, very much overvalued at this time the extent to which the war-spirit among the people was going to prevent Atlee, Cripps, Bevin and the rest from slowing things down and reverting simply to the support of capitalism. My own notion of the necessary strategy in the cultural fields was one of combining the presentation of classics of the past with the encouragement of new activities at all levels – that is, at highest professional level down to the most extempore and ephemeral level of agitprop, festival, dance-song, squib, and masquerade. Over these years I was continually trying to find ways of putting this strategy into action, in Script Centre, Unity Theatre, declamation-groups,

Theatre 46, and any celebration of the Co-ops, T.U.s, or Labour Movement that we learned about. I did much work in documentary films, starting with Greenpark, where I worked for Ralph Keen, and writing scripts for T.U. projects, such as a film about postal workers. (The last script I did was one on Discussion Groups and Community Centres for the MOI, for which I visited mining centres, Glasgow districts, and other parts of Scotland. This film was never made. I think there was disagreement about the themes to be discussed, and the degree of outspokenness permissible among the people arguing on Housing.) An important development of the documentary method was made by Montagu Slater, who had played an early role in the films, for instance in Night Train with Auden; he now used his skills in this direction to break into a new field, writing the libretto for Peter Grimes, thus doing much to help the expansion of English opera[7].

Ann and I had taken to visiting Paris, where Nancy Cunard introduced us to Aragon and Elza, also to Tristan Tzara. A journalist friend Isak Grunberg was also very helpful. I came to know a large number of French writers of Resistance, especially the poets.[8] I have told in Meetings with Poets of my relations with Aragon, Tzara, and Eluard. Here it is enough to stress the rich stimulus I found among these writers. I translated a considerable number of their poems, but could not find a publisher in London. The first reactions of the Cold War had set in; and the firms I approached told me in lowered confidential voices that the Resistance had now been found out to have large number of brigands in its ranks and that I wasn't aware of what I was trying to glorify. I had already worked out my notions of a revolutionary people's culture based on the antifascist stirrings of the final war-years, but I discovered the same outlook in a more politically mature form in the thought of Aragon, which deeply

[7] Lindsay footnote: In evaluating the cultural gains if this period we must not forget San Demetrio and the way in which documentaries led on to the first genuine British films; but after a good start the movement strayed into triviality. Ivor Montagu about 1948-9 asked me for the suggestions for films with bases in popular life, and I roughed out a number of ideas (one on hop-pickers in Kent; one on brass-bands among the northern workers, and so on); but he was soon afterwards displaced in the film-world for his work on the peace movement.

[8] Lindsay footnote: My interest had begun during the war when I saw the underground broadsheet, Honneur des Poetes.

encouraged me. He had a far more solid basis for his hopes of a new sort of national democratic revival moving organically step by step from the Resistance-bases to a new sort of socialism; but he too undervalued the strength and resources of reaction with U.S. backing in those years. In fact the rot had already set-in in England, but I kept on hoping that with C.P. leadership or stimulus the Left forces of the Labour Movement would fight effectively back. Inside the party there was much confusion about the attitude to the Labour Party; and as usual in such a situation there was an uneasy mixture of hard sectarianism and semi-opportunist acquiescence. The arguments in the Marylebone party-group to which we belonged often distressed and disturbed me. And yet, even at the worst, I always felt the extraordinary moral force that a party- group could generate, and the energy with which organisational activities could be worked~~,~~ out, improvised, extended to meet changing circumstances. I have never known anything at all like it in any other group or association.

Inevitably some of the discords found their way into our Salisbury meetings. Thus, David Holbrook wanted to attack a book of essays published by Hubert Nicholson, which I defended. Hubert couldn't face the meeting and soon drifted out of the party. And we were trying to clarify a lot of issues in psychology and aesthetics in ways that were soon to prove too unorthodox. But during all this period not the least attempt was made by anyone at the party-centre to direct or to control our themes or methods, though what we were doing and discussing must have been wellknown. (It was also wellknown to the police-spies. A poet who had been one of our members told me later that when he was applying for a passport or something of the sort – he was Irish – he learned from his questioner that our meetings had been fully reported. I tried vainly to work out who had been the spy or spies.) The trouble began with the Zhdanov speeches in the U.S.S.R. They puzzled and upset me, marking a sharp turn from the more tolerant attitudes that had prevailed during the war. In an essay in Horizon, 1944, I had tried to reply to a Trotskyite by arguing that the Soviet Union had had many backward elements, mainly through the low level at which it had started and through the continuing threats of imperialist attack. But why start agitating against it at this point in the war, when it was at last throwing off the constructing pressures? Now it seemed that the

pressures were beginning afresh, in a worse way. I recall telling Alick West how dismayed I was. After some thirty years of socialism and the consolidating experiences of the war, was socialism still so feebly absorbed that dragooning had to go on? Alick replied, "The Zhdanov speeches are the proof of the socialist maturing, not the other way round." But I couldn't accept that.

Among my papers I find a duplicated sheet dated May 1946, as from the Marxist Writers Group, signed by Erich Fried, Peter Gunn, Fernau Hall, Peter Hewett, John Irwin, Jack Lindsay, John Longden;

> The artist who accepts Marxism has the duty to face the special problem of reintegrating his creative methods and purposes with his Marxist principles and beliefs. If he fails to archive this synthesis, or achieves it partially, his art or his Marxism must be frustrated, and possibly both.

The text complained that "there is hardly a single British Marxist preeminent in any of the arts," and laid part of the blame on the fact that the leading Marxists of the last ten or twenty years had naturally been men with a political, or political and scientific, background. "Thus some would-be Marxist critics have been able to palm off judgments made purely on economic and social grounds as genuinely Marxist analyses of art. But one cannot solve aesthetic problems by doing away with aesthetics and confusing the content of art with its context. Nor is it enough to adopt naively the maxims of a culture and a society so radically different from our own as that of the U.S.S.R." The responsibility for the situation, and for changing it, lay with Marxists interested and concerned for the arts, especially the practicing artists. So we suggested the sponsoring of a book:

> I. General essays on the relation of Anthropology and Psychology to Art. The traditional Marxist Theory of Culture and the problem of Value. II. Brief essays by Marxist artists on their own fields of work. These are planned to include all the arts from music to industrial design. All essays will be followed by replies, comments and discussion – as in Waddington's Science and Ethics.

The seven signatories had been elected as provisional editorial committee at April and May meetings. The text of the statements was by myself, but the poet Erich Fried had been active in the project. However, though the proposal led to much discussion, the book did not emerge.

With Fernau Hall, one of the committee, I was trying to found a Ballet Theatre, and wrote several dance-scripts, including one on John Barleycorn, with the use of spoken verse. The dancer Ernest Berk and his wife were interested and gave much help. I have still the cost-estimates: £190 10s for putting John Barleycorn on, and £88 as the main charge for a week's running – the three leading dancers to get £10 each a week, and eight lesser ones £6. Nesta Brooking was doing the choreography: I think very well. I tried to draw Leslie Hurry in, but soon we broke down on problems of finance. We failed to get any backing from the Arts Council. (The non-profit-making project included a permanent home, with theatre, a school of dancing, schemes of lectures, and so on.)

Zhdanov's statements strengthened dogmatists everywhere, but we had few of such in the Writers Group. However the pronouncements pushed us others to reexamine our positions and grow more persistent in opposition to any narrow political formulations. I drew up a document of some 10,000 words, Marxist Theory of Culture, which was circulated, and a meeting was called to discuss it. Re-reading it, I find it often confused and slapdash in its terminology, and too sharp in tone. Such a document needs to be as clear as possible in ideas and terms, and to keep to the key-points, so that there will be a minimum of uncertain side-issues which can be raised in ways clouding the essential aspects. My statement was very far from this ideal. Its main point however was that art in all its varieties was "no mere reflection of labour process, but a transformation of productive activity." I argued:

> It is productive activity on a new level, where it becomes a satisfaction in itself. And yet by the dialectical law the new activity, culture, is continually transformed back into economic activity. For the organisation of personal and social energy on the new level increases enormously human powers. The individual achieves enormously enhanced powers of energisation. Powers that he could never possibly have achieved if all his outlets of energy can be conceived as having remained on the economic level pure and simple.
>
> These new energies return back into everyday life, giving increased consciousness for his daily task, his economic task.
>
> He becomes a more efficient, a better organised productive agent; and from the higher level, the level of culture, spring ideas and impulses that are translated into techniques and new methods.
>
> It is clear that as soon as social energy reaches the dialectical point where it is transformed into the new quality, Culture, it has done something that cannot be undone. Something that is essential

> to all further social or personal development. Culture or the superstructure is not something just added as a kind of extra, a luxury, to the substructure, the direct productive levels. It is something on which the superstructure entirely depends, just as it depends in turn on the substructure. The two make up a dialectical unity. And man can no more get on with his productive task without an ideology, without a release and satisfaction on cultural levels, than he can develop airy structures of the mind without the sustaining productive levels.
>
> For humanity, culture is just as essential as production.
>
> Every advance in production is in a dialectical unity with an advance in culture.
>
> Any formulation then which states production as isolatedly primary is mechanist and anti-dialectical. Man advances as the whole man, or not at all. He never advances merely as economic man, which is an abstraction without any historical meaning.

John Lewis, in the counter-notes he circulated, was able to point out correctly that I was (from one angle) flogging a dead donkey. And yet in the full analysis the donkey was not at all dead – though in trying to restore an understanding of complexity to the situation, I was in fact producing my own oversimplifications. I was coming closer to the enemy when I protested against theories which reposed on a concept of spontaneity, in which "economic mechanism plus social relations is the whole dynamism of society." Thus behind Zhdanov's call for a simply partisan act of socialism lay his concept of culture during the bourgeois epoch as a hymn of praise to the bourgeoisie: a totally false concept. Stimulated by some remarks of Gorky, I was seeking to formulate the viewpoint (inherent in my outlook from the start) that culture was never the product of a ruling class, however that class might try to use culture and in so doing might modify it. If culture was a transformation of productive activity, it was essentially created by the producing classes, even if the individual artist was not aware of the relationship. In his aesthetic consciousness there must then be a dialectical conflict between an intuition of human universality (in Marx's sense) and the historical limitations of his own class-position. If the limitations triumphed, his work remained of no value, though it might have a passing success among the ruling class of his world. The true artist was the one in whom the element of human universality dominated – that element, in its conflict with the actual situation, begetting the dialectical structure of the artwork, its persisting human truth.

My failure to bring what was really at stake made my thesis easy to attack as consisting of idealist confusions and polemical statements long out of date. No effort was made to use the better aspects of my thesis in order to advance the problem under discussion. Lewis, for example, answered my statement that production and culture, being in a dialectical unity, are continually transformed into one another, with the question: "Would Jack Lindsay hold that the working class and the capitalist class are being continually transformed into the other?" That question implies that production can be equated with the workers and culture with the ruling class – the very Zhdanovist position I was chaffing against. I remarked in passing, "Only during the last fifty odd years, with Freud on the one hand and Gestalt on the other has the rudimentary basis of a general science of psychology appeared." Lewis interpreted this as meaning that "the whole of Marxist philosophy is thrown overboard in favour of Freud."

One of the irritating aspects of my essay was an effort to argue that for human beings mind and body made up an indivisible unity and could not be opposed in any mechanical way. This was inevitably taken as an idealist thesis that the mind existed as some sort of dominant abstractable entity – the very sort of thing I was protesting against. Lewis declared "Marxism regards matter as primary in the philosophical sense that it exists independently of mind, but that mind does not exist independently of matter." He did not know (nor did I) that Lenin for one had considered consciousness in some degree to be inherent in all material systems; he cited with approval a passage from Plekhanov, underlining much of it: "In regard to the question of psychical phenomena this means that <u>in an unorganised form also, matter is not devoid of the basic capacity for 'sensation,' which provides such rich 'spiritual' fruits among the higher animals</u>. But in unorganised matter this capacity exists <u>to an extremely small extent</u>." (By "unorganised" he must mean "at a very low level of organization, since the quality of "sensation" must surely be linked with the organizational aspect.) However, I was not going as far as Lenin at that time; I was merely arguing that every human phenomenon was one of mind-body. Lewis insisted, "<u>In the beginning was the deed</u>. Concrete material activity to secure the means of life is basic. Mental activity appears in association with this

when a nervous system and brain have developed. Similarly, the tool is not basic but the result of a long process of deeds." Here, while protesting that Marxists never took a mechanically materialist view, so that my arguments were uncalled-for, he went out of his way to abstract "deeds" in a mechanist way.

The meeting consisted of this kind of attack on me. The only person who spoke in my support was Edward Thompson who, with his wife, had just arrived travel-stained from Yugoslavia and rushed along without changing clothes. After the meeting Paul Eisler, an intelligent Czech, who had agreed with much of my formulations in previous talks, walked about with me. He had said nothing at the meeting. Now he tried to console me in my rather distrait state (as I searched anxiously for what was really wrong with my ideas). He went on insisting that when a radically new change occurred in spiritual orientations the revolutionary positions had to be stated again and again for many long years, in the simplest forms, so that they might enter structurally into people's consciousness; only then could a truly free discussion and advance come about. Look at the centuries during which the Christians had to repeat ABC dogmas, he said. A few weeks later a second meeting, at my request, was held; but the force had died out of the theme. Only a few persons came along; we had a friendly chat, but got nowhere.

Books had sold easily during the war, and I had (what was for me) a fair amount of money coming in. When, in the very active situation, I tried to get back to novel-writing, I found it hard to come to grips with material and theme. I wrote a work, Through the Gates, about a character, rather broken-up by his army-service, who finds it hard to get back into civilian life and grows entangled with some minor criminal rackets. The form was a Quest for the Father; and at the end he came through the moral crisis accepting a factory-job. The finding of the father worked as the recognition of himself and his conflicts. But Dakers didn't like it. (He had been managing director of Methuen; when he broke off just before the war, Colin Still told me to go with him. But Ludovici who was his necessary balance joined the R.A.F., and Dakers was left to develop his Yoga Pacifism. Which didn't matter so much during the war when everything sold, even though he often had to fall back on the racing tips

of his gardener for ready cash. Now I was finding the disadvantages of such a publisher.) So I put Through the Gates aside, and wrote a novel on a Street Victory-Party: a theme that enabled me to build up a panorama of characters, with the background-idea of the popular-front behind the Labour triumph at the polls. (I wrote some experimental novels which I did not try to publish, one much influenced by Kafka. I used in Time to Live a circular device. The character who represents the observer is trying to write a novel, using various styles; at the book's end he finds his clue and starts off a novel in which the first words are the first words of my novel in which he is appearing.) Priestley wrote to me about this novel, saying that he had now lost touch with ordinary people and didn't know what a chap said when picking up a girl; so he looked to me to carry on his work. I had become fairly friendly with him through the Writer's Section of the S.C.R., and he asked me a couple of times to give lectures on him at places where he had been asked to speak about his own writings.

Now that the worst shortages of the war were ending, publishers were no longer starved of paper. It was clear that a firm like Fore Publications without capital would be knocked out by the largescale producers of magazines unless its resources were much increased. I discussed the matter with Charles Madge, who had connections with the Pilot Press; and we arrived at a provisional agreement for the merging of the two firms, with further periodicals to be launched so that the whole field of arts and letters would be covered. In the event of conflict, the firm could break apart again. Meanwhile at Emile's suggestion the Writers Group had been reorganised. The very loose form, which had enabled the participation of anyone interested in literature, was discarded; only persons with a more definite claim to be writers were to be admitted. On Emil's proposal Ann was elected secretary. About this time a Cultural Committee with delegates from all the cultural groups was set up, with Emile in the chair; I was a member of this till it broke down in the 1956 crisis. On the whole it was an effective organ for discussion of the various problems coming up, and near the end, as I shall tell, it made important advances. These developments were natural enough, indeed necessary, but they did have the effect of killing off much of the spontaneous activities of the earlier phase. The period of spontaneity was however by its very

nature an expression of what I have called the Cultural Upsurge. As the policies of the Labour Government slowly but steadily crushed much of the bases on which the Upsurge had been bred and developed, the situation was reverting to "normal." That is, it was being taken over more and more by commercialised forms of entertainment, and the schemes for building Community Centres and Discussion Groups were halted, then broken down.

The climax of the Upsurge, which was its swansong, was the Theatre Conference, mainly organised by Monty Slater, but with Priestley and Willis giving all the help they could. Practically everyone of any note in the theatre or around it was drawn in. There was much detailed discussion, and plans of the complete reorganization of the theatrical system, with central National Theatres and with regional forms, were fully worked out; the relation of professional and amateur groups was also dealt with. When the plans were presented to the government, Cripps in effect declared his agreement and his intention to implement them. And that was the end of the whole thing. CFMA, which had become the Arts Council, had been doing its utmost, under the able lead of Mary Glasgow, to carry out the sort of policy that we in Our Time and Theatre Today were supporting, and with much reportage on events at the popular levels. But as part of the Government's resolve to break down all democratic activities that welled up from below – no doubt in the last resort because they were scared of the demands for Workers Control in Industry – Mary Glasgow's policies were defeated. She resigned, and the Arts Council gave up the job of bringing good art, music, theatre to the people, and of stimulating activities among them; instead it became the source of cash for Covent Garden and the like under the slogan of Roses but Few. Near the end I interviewed Mary Glasgow and published her remarks in Our Time, but with no effect.

I wrote another novel, The Subtle Knot, about a group of young people staging Everyman in a war-wrecked church (in fact the one in Soho where I had seen some plays); what I sought to do was to bring out a dialectic between the persons themselves and the characters they acted. The emotional background was the Upsurge and its breakdown. I also wrote a long poem on Theseus, The Dark Clue, trying to define the Hero, his inner and outer betrayal, and to link the myth-theme with the contemporary situation. And I began on a large

Life of Dickens – who at this time, it will be hard to realise, was generally despised by the critical and highbrow world. I had come to know Edith Sitwell through a review I wrote of her Shadow of Cain. The close friendship that developed I have described in Meetings with Poets. She fully shared the positions I had been trying to express and give body to, as in his own way did Dylan Thomas.

Feeling that my attempts to criticise many of the orthodox Marxist views had miscarried in the Salisbury days, I set about trying to elaborate my attitudes more thoroughly and effectively. Through Mulk Raj Anand I had come to know L.L.Whyte, in whose work I felt were many essential clues for the next stage of dialectics. We had several interesting chats at the house in St. John's Wood where Ann and I lived. Through discussions about a book on religion which Denis Saurat was trying to organise, I met H. Silver, a physicist feeling frustrated in a job at the Gas Board, who had strong ideas on the inadequacy of the Newtonian hypotheses; and later we drew in Scott-Blair of Reading University, an expert on Rheology. My lack of knowledge of the higher mathematics limited my grasp of the questions raised, but I felt that we were getting at the basis of a new set of scientific formulations or concepts, and I tried to pull together the various viewpoints, imperfectly enough but with a continual sense of hovering on the edge of fundamental discoveries. Whyte had already arrived at his key-ideas and I do not mean to infer in the least that he learned anything from these discussions except in so far as he saw us others trying to realise those ideas in our own contexts. However, the effect on me was to confirm yet more strongly my conviction of the narrowing limitations which had been built more and more into Marxism for various historical reasons, and I began on a book The Fullness of Life (published in 1950 by Dobson as Marxism and Contemporary Science).

The international perspective seemed suddenly to expand in 1948 with the project of the Peace Congress of intellectuals at Wroclaw in Poland. I knew the young couple (English) who were working in the Polish Embassy and had been partly put in charge of invitations. They were a charming pair, who, unmarried, lived together and always made communications in the plural. "We have just had influenza, but we are now getting over it quite well," they

once wrote. Always in that vein as if their fates were so entwined that what happened to one happened necessarily to the other. They agreed that the scope of the Congress should be as broad as possible, and T.S.Eliot was one of the first invited. Needless to say, he declined. Still, in the end there was a genuinely broad set of delegates. Olaf Stapledon sat next to me in the plane, and during the congress I came to know him well. I recall how some students collected us and took us along to an hotel for tea, where Haldane roared and complained in his best bear-manner, terrifying the student in charge despite my efforts to convince the lad that Haldane was really in a quite amiable mood and enjoying himself. The speeches at the sessions were all well-meaning – including that of the ardent U.S. psychoanalyst who said there was no hope for mankind unless they were all analysed. When someone interjected about the immensity of the task, he suggested the gathering of crowds in theatres for mass-therapy; thus so many tens of thousands a day could be disposed of. Mulk, who began with too much Indian discursiveness, complained that he was cut off with a sentence that made everyone consider him a Ghandian. But all that didn't matter. It was the excitement of the personal contacts outside the sessions that gave the force to the occasion. All my French Resistance-friends were there, and I met many new persons whom I was eager to know, Ernst Fischer and Georg Lukacs, as well as Leonid Leonov. So far almost the only Russian writers we had met in the postwar years in Britain were Fadayev and Simonov, both looking dour and saturnine, quite uncommunicative. Now even Fadayev smiled. Leonov talked to me about his passion for gardens, for growing things; his love of experimenting with words, which he had only partly indulged in his work. The two most gazed-at participants were Picasso and Mulk's friend, the da Silva girl from Ceylon. (Her father was also well worth a glance. Later I was walking behind him in a Warsaw Street and I saw some women, obviously gypsies, burst into a chattering rapture. I asked the Pole with me what they were saying. He told me: "Behold our king has come back to us!") The quite large English delegation was rather divided as to whether to support the Congress decisions; but it was agreed to say nothing till we had a group-meeting and discussed the matter. While we were talking, Mrs Wooster dashed in to say that she had surprised a wellknown historian (English) and a novelist (Welsh) who were

trying to ring up a newspaper in England and describe the disagreements, so as to cause a contretemps and prevent any unanimity. As she was telling us, the pair walked in, blindly unaware of the disclosure, and in reply to questions told a few mild lies. As a result there was a heavy swing to the side of the Congress, and even Kingsley Martin, who had wanted to take a fence-sitting position, voted in support, to disassociate himself from the telephoners.

Warsaw was still largely in ruins, and the plans being discussed for reconstruction seemed mere fantasy. A civil-servant (whom I had known while he was in the Polish Embassy in London, and who had been a prewar classical scholar) told me how they had first of all discussed whether to evacuate the site altogether and build a new capital, the work of clearance was so distressing. He and others in his ministry had sat doing nothing till one day a few loads of bricks were found somewhere and they had set about excitedly building a few houses. A few other memories: an evening spent with Fischer and Lukacs, the meeting with the poet Jan Tuwin in his high-up flat surrounded by dictionaries in the most outlandish dictionaries[9], "My favourite reading" – I later translated many of his fine poems; a dinner at the one intact several-storied restaurant, which had been kept by the S.S. for themselves, where I saw Jan Drda rolling on the stairs and weeping at the news of Zhdanov's death while I talked to Fadayev about an idiotic attack made by some soviet journalist on Edith's Shadow of Cain (as a defence of the atomic bomb); my one and only meeting with Picasso – while the others talked about Warsaw, I was fascinated by his eyes that seemed quite opaque in their darkness, reflecting nothing, no image, no idea, like the blank eyes of a newborn child. Ann and I roamed the countryside with Louis Golding and Monica Felton, indomitably active despite her limp. Then a lot of us went to Cracow. Here it was that Waddington told me how he had read the MS of Decay and Renewal. With a Polish Catholic writer I had a discussion on dialectics; he agreed at the end he would accept an Open Marxism, not a Closed one. Mulk and I drank mead in a beercellar, and next day he was still somnolent. We were the only two of the English delegation that agreed to visit Auschwitz; the Poles were very keen that as

[9] As per typescript, repetition of 'dictionaries'.

many of us as possible should see that site and its evidences. Mulk drowsed most of the time in the car, but was able somehow to give later a vivid account of the whole thing. (On my return to England I wrote an account of the visit in the New Statesman, stressing the helpless remark that the guide repeated, "It wasn't like this," as she despaired of conjuring up the brutalising realities of the experiences she had had there. In the different daylight they had become inexplicable and ghostly.) At Wroclaw we were caught up with by a Major from the British Embassy, who stayed at the same pension and kept on casually explaining that the shops had been filled with goods in Warsaw just to impress us, and that nothing was really like what it seemed to us. However Golding got his revenge on him by seducing his handsome young soldier-chauffeur. The Major suddenly realised what was happening when we were all in a hall where mountaineers were doing their dances for us and the electric light failed. In the glimmer of torches I saw him notice at last that Golding had carried the lad off, plus the car, back to the pension. Whinnying, the Major rushed round, trying to find another car, and was still there, sweating with dismay, when the lights went on again.

We went on by train for a few days in Prague, and then to Paris, where Mulk rejoined us. Anna Seghers was there too, distracted, with the ghosts of an heroic beauty in her face. I found Tzara who declared that he didn't like large Congresses. Back in England, we found confused argument as to how to follow on Wroclaw. There was a big meeting at St Pancras, with overflows outside at which I spoke. Louis Golding made a valiant speech about the need to stand together in the cause of Peace; then a few weeks later, finding that he was liable to be barred from the U.S.A., he resigned from the Movement. But now a yet larger Congress was looming up, called for Paris in April 1949. I find two pages left of the enthusiastic notes I made at the time.

> Three hundred Italians coming, they said. Then five hundred. Then seven, eight, nine. Then a thousand. They they gave up counting. How many we asked a small nutbrown Italian. He blushed and lowered his eyes. "Molti, molti …" A huge yellowish hall with portholes in the cavernous roof, through which lights now and then stream as if seeping from a higher world. Amid the noises I look for my friends the poets. Aragon with his boyish elasticity of tread (I remember him walking home late at night, leaning back and back as he felt more tired, walking skyward) and happier, with milder eyes.

> Tzara, threading the crowd, small and heavy-browed with his round glasses, slight and anonymous, an image of obscure and tremendous power threading the everyday confusion and drawing it together with an unseen gesture. Eluard with his trembling fingers and large calm face, asymmetrically Apollonian. Marcenac with his romantic head running away from his body. Guillevic rolling like a big pebble in a lyric sea. Pierre Seghers with tough jaw. Vercors looking older and younger. Claude Morgan, neat, with eyes of darkening warmth. The love of man is clear and clean in them; there is an earth under their feet.
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> The two most assiduous listeners on the presidium, under the bright banners and the lofty line of cut-out doves: Picasso and Fadayev. Picasso with his round baldish skull, in the back row, higher up, with his quick gentle interest in a world newborn a minute ago; and Fadeyev, sitting erect in silver strength, in the front row, judging a world that must be judged.

I should have added that Picasso's interest seemed rather that of a blind man, absorbing the world through everything but his eyes.

> Dimitrov, the Bulgarian painter, who sat behind in Polish buses after Wroclaw, with a jovial Bulgarian priest, singing folksongs for hundreds of miles. Here he is again with his long patriarchal head and bland withdrawn gaze: his body a simple one-piece support for the ancient head. Abbé Boullier embraces him and says aside, "But I thought he was a pope." They look at the doves in their hands. The Abbe with a coyly infinite tenderness, the painter with a steady scrutiny. One hand is the hand of charity open to all suffering, the other hand patiently accepts the world. In one eye, a recession of seraphic lights; in the other eye, a rhythm plumply returning in on itself. Both hands, both eyes, have faith in men and the earth.
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> Hungarian pastor, cut in old strongly-grained wood from a tall tree peasant-lean speaking to God out of a cornfield. The Czech, serene as water flowing from a wound in the side of the hill. The Italian, with catholic homeliness, peasant-solid, bristly as a thornbush, scolding God by the hearth. Metropolitan of Moscow, burly in white magnificence, blessing with authority. German Lutheran, his face ragged with blue wounds.
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> Greek writers: Melpo Axiotl with dark lost eyes and with large nose, a bitter chilly flame. Kerros, young, pressing upwards against a heavy hand. "Bring imagination to your pity …" The Vietnam girl with face that whitens in the long light, a frail flowerface unstirred by the storm that cracks the oaks. Her voice is like the word of justice. A naked sword dividing the world.

Retyping that out, I was pleased and proud to have written that about the Vietnam girl in 1948. (I translated stories by Axiotl and Kedros; some were printed in Arena.) The fragment of my notes utters the spirit I felt in the Congress: an exaltation hard to credit in the 1970s. Even the Russians were astounded at the vast procession and assembly in some sports ground; the police kept discreetly hidden in the side-streets. One high-point in the hall came when

Pablo Neruda, who, we knew, was on the run from Latin American police, suddenly appeared at the top of the dais, parting the curtains, mildly surprised at his own arrival and at once embraced by a bounding Picasso.

Walking down the street near the hall, I saw Fadayev at a café-table. He was now broadly smiling; his handsome face quite changed. “By the way,” I said, “Mulk says the Union is going to invite me to the Celebrations next year. But I’m really too busy.” He merely nodded and went on smiling. (Before I left England, I had a cable to say that the Union of Soviet Writers was holding a session to discuss my novel Men of Forty-Eight.) At a dinner given by Les Lettres Françaises I sat next to Lukacs and he asked me to lunch for the next day at the place where the Hungarians were congregated. Our talk was rather spoiled by Edith Bone, large and bouncing, who insisted on joining us and talking volubly; she was flying back to Hungary in a day or so after a long exile in England, and was full of plans. She didn’t guess that she would at once be arrested and jailed. In that was a background to the Peace Movement which I didn’t in the least guess at.

In the midst of the Congress a Chinese delegation intervened to describe, in an idiom like a classic Chinese lyric, their hurried journey across huge distances to announce the victory of their revolutionary forces.