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Quebec and the Queen

CHRISTOPHER HOLLIS writes:

Raids by schoolboys on Canadian military armouries were alarming, if absurd. Public opinion was shocked by the killings last summer and they probably damaged the Separatist cause. But nothing can be worse for the Government than that it should look ridiculous, and M. Chaput, the Separatist leader, with others, has taken advantage of its incompetence to utter ominous threats about what may happen to the Queen when she visits Quebec next week. 'Some of my people,' he has said, 'are ready to let her know, and brutally, that she is no longer welcome.'

M. Chaput is too clever to specify the threat or to identify himself with it, and in spite of the fact that charges of treason were made against him in the Canadian Parliament, it was not thought that he had committed himself sufficiently to justify a prosecution. No one imagines that M. Chaput himself would take part in any act of violence against Her Majesty or even that he thinks such an act probable. But after Dallas, who can feel quite certain what might happen? And if a Government is not competent enough to guard its rifles, can one trust it to be competent enough to guard its Queen? It was clearly M. Chaput's hope that the Government would either in fear cancel the visit to Quebec or else have to take such extensive security precautions as to destroy the whole atmosphere of welcome. Either way, the Government would look silly.

When a couple of years ago a correspondent of the French Canadian monthly, *La Liberté*, asked M. Chaput who was his favourite political character, he answered 'Jeanne d'Arc,' and when they asked him why, he said, 'Because she was not a politician.' Marcel Chaput, who was born at Hull, which is just across the river from Ottawa, in 1918, has never sat in any Parliament. He was brought up as a Frenchman in a community of mixed races. After finishing his graduate work at McGill, he was employed for nine years as an officer of scientific research in the Ottawa Research Council for Defence, until he was dismissed in 1961 on account of his Separatist activities. The comparatively moderate nationalist demands of other French Canadians had always seemed to him treason and surrender. In 1962 he left the *Rassemblement pour l'Indépendance Nationale*, of which he had up till then been President, and formed his own *Parti Républicain du Québec*.

The finances of the *Rassemblement* had always been unsatisfactory. They had issued an appeal for \$100,000 and had received only \$12,000, which it cost them \$6,000 to collect. So in order to raise money for his new party, M. Chaput hit on a novel device. He went on a hunger strike, announcing that he would confine himself to two glasses of orange juice a day until his grateful supporters presented him with \$100,000. He compared himself to Gandhi and the Irish Republican martyrs, but M. Pelletier, editor of the French Canadian *La Presse*, was so unkind as to point out that the parallel was imperfect. Gandhi had used the hunger strike to bring pressure to bear on a government which, according to his contention, was behaving unjustly. M. Chaput was using it in order to persuade his supporters into giving him some money. M. Chaput broke off in dudgeon all relations with *La Presse*. But—what

is more important—he got his \$100,000. Flushed with success, he then sent his party's secretary, M. Doucet, to the United Nations to raise more money there from foreign sources. Whether he brought anything back with him is not known.

Whatever the future holds, Quebec separatism is not at present strong enough to elect Members to Parliament. Therefore, M. Chaput is always in danger of being out-trumped by parliamentarians—whether it be M. Lesage, Quebec's Prime Minister, who may really obtain some benefits for his province, by M. Johnson (a Frenchman, in spite of his name), the leader of the Duplessis' old *Union Nationale*, or by M. Caouette of Social Credit, who could threaten to hold up the Ottawa Parliament before he allowed

French Canadian troops to be sent to serve the United Nations in Cyprus. M. Chaput can only keep pace with such rivals by keeping himself in the news with continual stunting.

No one doubts for a moment that policies of violence are utterly abhorrent to the vast majority of French Canadians, whatever their political opinions. The extremists certainly expected and hoped that their threats would cause a cancellation of the visit. The awful fear is that now that the visit is not cancelled, some wild man will think it necessary to make his protest. No one can feel quite happy until the visit is concluded. Unfortunately, for an act of violence one does not need a majority. One needs only one finger on a trigger.

The World and the General

From DREW MIDDLETON

PARIS

ON the face of it, General de Gaulle's junket around South America is an ambitious enterprise in public relations. He is selling France's policy of political independence within the Atlantic community to governments who often are a mite restive under American leadership. He is offering technical aid and beating the drum for closer cultural relations. The pattern has been familiar since the then Prince of Wales was the salesman of the British Empire forty years ago. The trip will make a lot of noise. But it is unlikely to change the course of world politics.

To the small, inbred world of political Paris, however, the tour has a larger significance. The physical effect of the tour on the elderly President is expected to be the ultimate influence on the decision he must make some time this winter. This is whether or not to seek another term of office in the elections next year.

France's political stability and her rôle in world affairs are so closely linked with the General's continuation in office that this decision is about the most important one in French politics.

At the moment, he is determined to seek a further mandate next year. But how will he see his candidacy a month from now when he has returned to the Elysée Palace?

By October 16, the President will have travelled 12,500 miles by air. He will have made

twenty major speeches, the majority in Spanish or Portuguese. He will have listened to dozens of long, and often boring, speeches of welcome. He will have shaken thousands of hands. He will have clambered in and out of aircraft and cars a score of times each day. He will have endured a series of elaborate State banquets. He will have flown from sea level to mountain capitals and back again. He will have been subjected to sudden changes of climate and diet. And all the time he will have kept in close contact with the day-to-day business of the Fifth Republic by radio. Attentive as Washington is to the unity of the hemisphere, no US President has ever embarked on so long and so exhausting a tour.

Because de Gaulle regards himself as a statesman rather than as a politician, it is rather incongruous that he seems to gain more from contact with the masses than any politician I have encountered since Franklin Roosevelt.

Twice this summer, at Toulon and again at Rheims, he reached the end of a long day of public ceremonies clearly tired and worn. Then came the set speech. Before him were the French soldiers in uniform, veterans in medals, couples with children, above him the flag of France. And as he spoke, the voice grew stronger, the face more animated, the gestures more expressive. There was the priest-king renewing himself through contact with the people.

Now it may be this recognition of the strength he draws from contacts with the masses, in France or abroad, that led de Gaulle to reject first the advice and then the pleading of his doctors to reduce the length of his South American tour. Or it may be that his obstinacy on this point reflects his abiding belief that de Gaulle, like France, cannot be anything but itself. Every test must be faced, every obstacle overcome if either or both are to remain true to destiny. Finally, there is a strong streak of fatalism in the man. He may have decided that he cannot die better than when holding aloft the banner of France.

Such high-flown thoughts are not shared by the General's retainers in the Gaullist political party or the ministries. What worries them is that the President will be seventy-four in November, that he had a prostate operation in March, that he has embarked on a test of physical strength that few hale men of fifty would welcome and that, ultimately, if anything happens to him their careers are endangered.

Yet aside from the considerations of health and security, the General's willingness to embark on the South American tour is a tribute to the effectiveness of his régime. Superficially, all is

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The Way of the Chariots

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BARBARA TOY

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ALDOUS HUXLEY's last article before his death, on *Shakespeare and Religion*, is included in the current **CORNHILL MAGAZINE**. Available from all booksellers at 3s 6d net.

JOHN MURRAY

Chelsea are neither as interesting nor as immoral as they seem to think they are. They're curiously touching for being so pathetically out of date. The other thing is Mr. Raven takes transparent delight in vengeful cruelties. When a sex-starved old maid finally invites a man into her flat she is carved into pieces for her trouble. The villain of the piece, the thrusting Jude Holbrook, who is naturally not-quite-our-class, has one redeeming quality. He adores his son. So on the last page but one we are told, gratuitously, that he has died of meningitis.

Young and Sensitive, by Don Robson, is a touching story badly presented by its publishers. Mr. Robson is the winner of the 1963 Arthur Koestler Award 'to stimulate creative activity among prisoners' and the victim of condescension by Hutchinson of London. Mr. Robson, as the judges (V. S. Pritchett and Henry Green among them) say, deserves his award. He has written a work of outstanding merit. But nobody deserves the end-papers, which reproduce the author's handwriting. And please don't be put off by the title. *Young and Sensitive*, the bleak story of a boy's first flirtation, a really perceptive look at the youngster's relationship with his father, is strongly reminiscent of the best of Sherwood Anderson.

The Prime Minister's Daughter, by Maurice Edelman, is what I think they call a good read. 'Melville, the Minister of Edelman's last Parliamentary novel, is now the Prime Minister, a rank he has reached after a bitter fight. . . . Lending-library nougat.

MORDECAI RICHLER

Passage to India

An Area of Darkness. By V. S. Naipaul. (Deutsch, 25s.)

MR. NAIPAUL does not mention the most interesting thing about his first, and possibly last, visit to India. It may, indeed, easily escape attention. I refer to the fact that his last novel, *Mr. Stone and the Knights Companion*, is dated 'Srinagar, 1962.' From this one gathers that in the middle of a sojourn in the country of his remoter origins, obsessed by a desolation and despair that will not everywhere command sympathy (though my own sympathy with Mr. Naipaul is, for what it is worth, complete), the author managed to clear for himself a small area in the all-pervading mess and confusion, and to impose thereon a precarious stability in which he could work. This he obtained by shouting, threats, and a bullying insistence that promises must be fulfilled. He had chosen to stay and work in a ramshackle houseboat-hotel on the shore of a Kashmir lake. Here, in exotic surroundings, wildly insecure in every personal contact, Mr. Naipaul seems to have written his story of the over-ordered, logical life of Mr. Stone, a middle-class Englishman, whose own order and certainty are beginning to disintegrate before the onset of age. There is something almost sublime in the thought of a writer, surrounded by one form of madness, sitting down and describing another: perhaps the aim, conscious or unconscious, was to avoid yet a third, in himself.

This long middle section in Mr. Naipaul's book is beautifully done: the personnel at the hotel have much of the comic vividness and completeness of the characters in *The Mystic Masseur*. But there is no farcical exaggeration, and the passage is not detachable from the rest of the book. Almost certainly it is these pages, together with the grimly fantastic prelude at the customs house with which the book opens, that Mr. Naipaul's regular readers will find most to their

MACDONALD

New Books This
Autumn

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liking. He is a genuine comic artist: he has to have acquired a surreptitious love for his subject before he can laugh at it.

Alas, he found very little to love in India, and therefore little to be comic about; and he is, I conjecture, too honest a man and too good an artist to try to manipulate what he hated into anything more than plain statement. The power of his book as a whole lies in something that is usually absent from accounts of India: an avoidance of rhetoric. Mr. Naipaul records, candidly and ruthlessly, what he hated there, and what it made him hate in himself—his reactions of near-hysteria, disgust and panic; and above all, perhaps, his guilt at an incapacity for charity, a guilt which his recognition of a genuine Indian sweetness of disposition and behaviour could only agonisingly redouble.

How much he was prepared for such reactions it is impossible to say. In the event, he found India horrible in its present state; and he could see no apparent hope for its future. To him the whole place was desperate, flaccid, incoherent, muddled, discontinuous, and physically sickening. His pictures of India are too many and too complex for brief recapitulation; but it would be an affectation to avoid mentioning that the book reverts again and again to a fact he is bluntly explicit about: the bland Indian habit of public defecation. This simple fundamental *Scheissmotiv* is always booming up from Mr. Naipaul's orchestra. He seems to see it (and I recall similar feelings, more fastidiously expressed, in Forster's preface to Anand's *Untouchable*) as the basis of Indian life. But he is convinced that its importance and danger and

nastiness cannot be impressed on a country whose main character-trait is a capacity for manic denial.

Mr. Naipaul's conclusion (a despairing comment, not an invitation) is that 'India, it seems, will never cease to require the arbitration of a conqueror.' This remark, in itself no more than a bitter parenthesis, will doubtless give great offence. It will doubtless be construed as an approval of whatever ideas China or Russia may entertain about India's future. It is, of course, nothing of the kind: any more than it implies approval of the British Raj, whose sole residual effect, according to Mr. Naipaul, is to have posthumously created, among wealthy business-class Indians, a grotesque charade-like life where everyone plays at being super-English, the men calling each other Andy and Bunny, the women anxiously clutching their copies of the *Daily Mirror* and *Woman's Own*.

Mr. Naipaul will be attacked for the things he says. He will no doubt be trounced, vindicated, and trounced again. Perhaps he will even be proved factually wrong. That would be good, and would matter. But at least he will have contributed with passion and sincerity to an important and sometimes somnolent debate. That, too, matters. And to whom it may concern, this book also exposes that deep, reasonable, non-psychotic sadness from which comedy must find its way up and out: in this book we can glimpse a notable artist making (or having made for him) that harrowing choice between the sorry things that can just be laughed at and those that can only be wept at.

HENRY REED

The Terrible Drama

BY DAVID REES

When the news reached Athens, for a long time people would not believe it, even though they were given precise information. . . . And when they did recognise the facts, they turned against the public speakers who had been in favour of the expedition, as though they themselves had not voted for it, and also became angry with the prophets and soothsayers and all who at the time had, by various methods of divination, encouraged them to believe they could conquer Sicily. . . .

—The Peloponnesian War.

OF course, only the chief British soothsayer dare one compare Lord Avon with Alcibiades?—was topped by the failure of the Egyptian expedition of 1956, yet there remains more than a passing analogy between the catastrophe of Syracuse and Suez. The oil may still flow through the Canal, and in the Trucial States and elsewhere in the Gulf the world of Gertrude Bell and Freya Stark still exists in a recognisable form. But just as the failure of the Sicilian expedition marked the beginning of the end for Athens, the point from which the road led ever downwards, so Suez was the moment when the overwhelming majority of Britons at last realised that their country was no longer a great power. In some ways we have still not forgiven ourselves for this moment of self-revelation, and the all-pervading sense of alienation which affects our national life can reasonably, I think, be dated to 1956.

More than any other routine excursion to the brink since 1945, Suez fascinates the British. Yet in spite of all the various strands in the Suez crisis from Moscow, Paris, Cairo and Tel-Aviv, surely all are subordinate to the terrible drama of the clash between Eden and Dulles over Suez. There are several extant studies of Dulles

which discuss Suez within the general framework of his diplomacy, but Professor Finer's massive 500-page philippic* is the first to concentrate exclusively on his rôle in the Suez crisis and on his relationships with Eden. Since the State Department archives and Dulles's own papers in Princeton are closed until 1970, and since it remains highly unlikely that the whole truth about the formulation of British policy will ever be known, Professor Finer has spent much time interviewing over fifty leading participants in the great drama. In spite of its verbosity, the book makes easy reading because of the importance of the men and decisions which Finer discusses, often with a great deal of documentation which is hard to find in any other single volume on Suez. All interested in the Suez crisis should read this book, although with any open-minded person the book will inevitably produce exactly the opposite effect to that it was presumably intended to give. For basically this is a preposterous study. It is written in stark black and white, presenting Eden as the high-minded challenger of a Hitlerian threat from Cairo, and with Dulles as a scheming, pedantic, prevaricating politician who never understood the essence of the crisis and who proved himself a coward when the crunch came over the invasion of Egypt. Moreover, as if this indictment isn't enough, Finer writes throughout about Dulles in a tone of extreme personal distaste, a mixture of Richard Aldington on T. E. Lawrence and Vyshinsky harrying Bukharin in the Moscow trials.

Let's consider briefly Finer's three leading

* DULLES OVER SUEZ. By Herman Finer. (Heinemann, 63s.)

MAURICE EDELMAN

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