ARCHIBALD MacLeish has said that “There is no greater persuader than art when it is permitted to touch the vital nerves.” To the people of India, who, in their years of struggle for liberty have time and again been exposed to external emotional appeals, these words now have special significance. Faced with the onslaught of the Japanese armies, the Indian people are today themselves creating new arts, arts to clarify, to convince, and to unify them in their trials. Based on ancient traditional art forms but concerning themselves with the all-important struggle now facing India, these movements, during the past year, have been mushrooming up throughout the land.

It was inevitable that any new and vital culture must spring from the worker and peasant of India, for the national dilemma has stilled many of India’s best known artistic leaders. They have been confused by the appearance of a new relentless enemy at a time when the struggle for independence has not yet been won. They have been unable to give their art direction, to make clear the importance of the anti-fascist struggle or to connect it with the man-made famine which has taken millions of lives, with the need for the release of imprisoned leaders and the formation of a truly national government. Many, instead, have given way to a feeling of helplessness, expressed by saying that to defend India is to perpetuate her slavery, while others have said that defense is possible only if the imperialists surrender power first.

The people in the path of the oncoming Japanese armies have no time or patience for such debate, however. Their task is clear, and already they are forming guerrilla bands in accordance with plans rehearsed for many months. And the songs they sing are their own, and reflect their determination to withstand the fascist invaders. It is no accident that Bengal, Andhra, and Malabar, provinces threatened by the Japanese, have been in the forefront of the new cultural upsurge. This awakening has presented the Indian writers and poets with a most direct challenge. They must face the question asked by the people and by their own inner integrity: can they keep pace with the people, and reflect the thoughts and problems of imperiled India?

The Fourth All-India Progressive Writers’ Conference, meeting in Bombay on May 22 last year, pointed this question in concrete terms. S. A. Dange, representing the Marathi language section on the Presidium of the conference, urged those hitherto unable to resolve their inner conflict to find a place in the anti-fascist struggle.

“To those souls in torment and despair, we may ask, are you with the people or against them? It is our duty to give expression,” he continued, “through art, to organize through our art, if we are with them and not against them. Bureaucracy or no bureaucracy, our people must live, and it is the task of art to inspire them to do so.”

“To the souls in torment we say—if you sit on the fence, with folded hands, if you believe that the victory of the nations led by the Soviet Union is no con-
One of the most remarkable contributions to recent Indian literature is the work of Anna Sathyé, a textile worker of Bombay, who proved himself a vital and talented artist in composing a ballad on the epic defense of Stalingrad. It is interesting to note that Sathyé is a member of the "depressed class," the Untouchables, that stratum of Indian life which for centuries has been the most socially oppressed of Hindu society.

Sathyé has long been recognized as one of the foremost artistic leaders of his people, and his awareness of world events appears in his earlier ballads as well. During the Spanish war he composed an epic ballad on the defense of Madrid.

Sathyé's singing of his "Stalingrad Defense" marked the strongest development of the Marathi ballad form known as a _Povada_, the most popular folk form in Maharashtra. It has since been published in Marathi, and preparations are being made for translation into Urdu and the other Indian languages and dialects.

As for the new anti-fascist songs, by far the best come from Bengal, the torch-bearer of the Indian renaissance. Music and drama have been the forte of the Bengalis ever since Ram Mohan Roy ushered in a new era. Rich in musical tradition, Bengal has also produced some of the world's best poetry and painting. Today, when Bengal has seen fully a tenth of its sixty millions die within twelve months from a famine created by the profiteers who control the black market, when the marauding Japanese are within striking distance of India's richest province, the youth of towns and cities are banding together with the young peasants for a last ditch fight. New ties of friendship between the urban and rural folk are being cemented in the course of the struggle. For-saking musical gymnastics, the students from the larger towns have taken to the direct folk tunes of Bengal's peasantry, tunes which pulsate with the dynamic rhythms of a strenuous life of toil.

The Bengal folk songs are simple, with superb melodies and haunting refrains. To this crude ore, Binoy Roy brought his refining touch. He combined cultured voice with forthright verse. A fine example of his craft is his "Guerrilla Song of the Bengal Peasantry," a song which has thrilled thousands of hearers, inspiring them with determined resistance to the Japanese.

Hark, hark, hark, the Japanese are coming to our village.
Come out, you young guerrillas!
Come Rahim, come Rehman, come Jogesh, come Param!
Come out, Hindus and Muslims all! Hold your weapons firm—sickle, axe, sword.
Lathi, spikes, javelins, bows and arrows.
Listen, Lisman, listen Faima, listen aunt and

In Andhra today audiences of fifteen and twenty thousand peasants sit for hours on end, listening to this powerful story. The peasant learns for the first time how the invasion peril is tied up with the national crisis, with his burden of taxation and oppression by the landlord and money-lender. While a speech of two hours would tire him, the peasant sits intently while a _katha_ of seven hours weaves reality with rhyme, wit with rhythm. He comes away from these recitations with a desire to know more of the world around him, and he is taught in a familiar form about his new duties in the present period.

Of the rich treasure of Indian folk lore, the ballad recitation is the most popular and common in every section of the country. In Maharashtra and in Andhra, in United Provinces and in Kathiawar, the peasants sit for hours listening to the ballad singer who tells of the heroes of antiquity, or of the more modern brave but kind outlaws.

The most remarkable ballad recitations at the Festivals were given by the cultural squad from Andhra. In that province, the popular form of ballad is known as the _burra-katha_, or the story with the goglet drum. The squad consisted of three people: one played the story teller, another a wag, and the third acted as commentator. The balladeer sang his story in rhyme, creating, at the same time, a distinct rhythm with castanets and thambura. The wag skepticaly interrupted the balladeer's story with _jennmis_—the notícia—and oppression by the landlord and money-lender. While a speech of two hours would tire him, the peasant sits intently while a _katha_ of seven hours weaves reality with rhyme, wit with rhythm. He comes away from these recitations with a desire to know more of the world around him, and he is taught in a familiar form about his new duties in the present period.

One of the most remarkable expressions of the new anti-fascist culture were reflected at the historic Festivals of National Culture. These Festivals were held in the Daudoddar Hall in Bombay last May, on the occasion of the First Congress of the Communist Party of India following its legalization, and again in November, during the celebration of the anniversary of the founding of the Soviet Union.

Never before in the history of India had such functions been organized, and spectators were overwhelmed by the variety of forms, the feast of colors presented, and the potency of their appeal. Over a hundred actors, singers, and dancers participated in the series of cultural offerings at the festivals. Participants came from every part of India, from virtually every class, nationality and language group. Squads traveled hundreds of miles to present their specialties; their members were drawn from the peasantry, the working class, the middle class, and even the _jesmis_—the landlords. Each visiting squad presented its offering in its own language—Telugu, Bengali, Hindi, Malayalam, Punjabi, Urdu, Marathi, Gujarati, etc.—a variety of forms peculiar to each nationality, but all with the same patriotic content.

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You, oh bride! Listen, all the women of the village.
Hush, hush, hush, be careful, walk gently
Through the bushes and jungles.
The details
Must not know we are here.
Strike with the axes, dagger and spike!
Strike with the bows and arrows, and
with jewels!
Be careful, lest one of them get away.
Inquilab Zindabad! Killed ten enemies:
Got ten rifles in our hands.

Who can resist us now?
Let a hundred Japs come now—we
would knock them down
Like jute trees. We are not afraid of
bombs and cannons.

Let any bastard come, we will slay him.
We, all the peasants together, will
achieve freedom!

All over India, not only in Bengal, hun-
dreds of such songs have this one theme
of an awakened people marching forward
to defend their motherland, to achieve
their certain liberation.
The collective folk dance has flourished
together across the countryside, giving rise,
over a period of many years, to a rich tradi-
tion. The Kuumi and Kolakkali of Malab-
ar, the Rau and Gankia of Gujarate are
typical. And on special festive occasions
there are added the religious Bhajans, and
such dances as the Holi and the Gokul
Ashtami in Maharashatra. From Malabar
and Andhra, where the peasants are best
organized, come the finest collective
dances. The Bhajan of the Andhra cul-
tural squad is worthy of mention as typical
of the new trend. Instead of the usual
prayer, a dirge for dying Hitler is pre-
pared, which opens with these lines:

O hoity-toity Hitler!
You expected to smash the workers’
and peasants’ state;
Now gather your shattered limbs as
best you can!

Beginning with slow and measured steps,
the dance works up its tempo and ends in
an exciting frenzy of movement.
The Kolakkali, or stick play dance, and
the Kuumi, or women’s dance, performed
by peasant girls and boys from Malabar,
have shown how these simple traditional
steps may be put to a new and potent use.
In Kerala, the Poorakkali is the militant
cultural dance, a lineal descendant of a war
dance of the Mairs, a warrior caste among
the Zamorins, the old rulers of Calicut.
An adaptation of ancient harvest dances,
it is essentially a peasant dance, powerful
and swift in movement, requiring a robust
constitution. The song to which the Kerala
peasant lads danced the Poorakkali had for
its theme not the gods of the past, but the
problems of the present. It dealt with the
national crisis through August 1942, and
included important historic events up to
Gandhi’s fast.

Far away from India’s bustling towns,
in her many thousands of villages,
there are a few peasant individuals with
colorful dress and speech whose antics as
soothsayers, religious mendicants and quack
doctors attract large audiences. For cen-
turies they have made a living from the
faith, innocence, and ignorance of the
superstitious element among the peasants.
Moving from village to village, aware of
events outside the peasants’ little world
which is bounded by the town limits, they
have been the bearers of tidings good and
bad, of stories strange and often terrifying.
Throughout the generations the peasants
have listened to the mendicants, gleaned
from them something of a world of which
they knew nothing.

Until recently large sections of the peas-
antry in India had never been touched by
social or political movements. They have
been awakened for the first time in the re-

tote areas of activities of the Kisan Sabha,
or Peasant Congress, which has spread
branches of its organization throughout the
land. Squads of such peasants attended the
Cultural Festivals and brought with them
their traditional forms. Nagabhushan-
am, president of the Kistna district Peas-
ant Congress, and Gopalkrishnya, a tal-
ented young peasant, were leaders in
the adaptation of these old forms. They sought
especially to utilize the mendicants and
medicine men, and even the Harijan vil-
lage crier, who in the past announced any
threat to the village, and even today makes
known the births and deaths.

The medicineman of the Andhra coun-
tryside is the lineal descendant of the early
huntsman. In other days his visits to the
jungle and his familiarity with plants and
herbs and their medicinal qualities auto-

dically constituted him the village doc-
tor. Later, with the new generations gave
up hunting, they found it profitable to re-
tain the role of medicineman, and today
they are represented by quacks who imbue
the peasants with awe and attempt to in-
spire faith in their healing powers by the
display of weird-looking claws and bones.

Certain sections of the peasantry still
cling to their age-old faith in the medicine-
man. Gopalkrishnya has therefore
brought a new type of medicineman into
existence in Andhra. He schools them at
an anti-Japanese cultural camp in one of
the provincial villages.

Today the medicineman still wears
colors on his face, feathers in his turban
and carries medicines in his haversack and
a bow and arrow on his head, but his songs
are of the people’s war. He offers pills to
exterminate the fascists, and powders to
choke the imperialists. National unity is the
medicine he gives for the successful defense
of India, and the attaining of freedom. At the Festivals the medicineman performed the traditional Harijan dance, the dance of the village crier. With tom-tom in hand he called out:

O heroes of Ind, the war of defense of the Motherland is come. Gird up your loins; the peoples of the world are on your side.

With this as their theme the new artists and writers of India are using their talents to forge a united will of the people, to inspire them with faith in themselves, and to rouse them to a passionate defense of their land which will lead to a world in which their people and culture will have freedom to develop their potentialities to the fullest.

The Problem of Germany

WHAT TO DO WITH GERMANY, by Louis Nizer, Ziff-Davis. $2.50.

WHAT SHALL WE DO WITH GERMANY, by Bernadette E. Schmitt, Public Policy Pamphlets No. 38, The University of Chicago Press. $1.50.


All these books have one idea in common: National Socialism and German imperialism must be rooted out and such measures taken as will render impossible the rebirth of a German imperialism bent on new aggressions. That is their positive element, particularly at a time when reactionaries, pro-Nazis, and "loyal" Socialists hide behind the mask of "defense of the Atlantic Charter" to advocate a compromise with German imperialism.

In the first two works, especially Mr. Nizer's, the authors propose that the following measures be taken by the United Nations against Germany after the victory over Nazism: occupation of Germany and no restoration of German sovereignty until it is absolutely certain that Germany has ceased to be a menace to other nations; punishment of the war criminals and extermination of the Nazi upper crust; military and economic disarmament; reparations in the form of money, goods, and work battalions to rebuild the devastated areas. Mr. Nizer also emphasizes the reeducation of Germany with United Nations guidance and collaboration.

The anonymous authors of The Next Germany outline a program for a German socialist revolution and analyze in detail the need for collaboration between the United Nations and the democratic forces in Germany, especially with the driving force in that movement, the German working class.

The author of The Danube Basin and the German Economic Sphere, Antonin Basch, deals with a "more limited" theme. Using a wealth of statistical data, he shows how the countries in the Danube Basin—Czechoslovakia, Austria, Hungary, Yugoslavia, Bulgaria, and Rumania—were subjected to systematic German economic penetration before the first as well as the second world war, until, under Hitler, they became colonies of aggressive German imperialism. The author correctly sees, as one of the chief problems of postwar reconstruction in Europe, the liberation of these countries from German economic domination.

The weaknesses of Mr. Nizer's and Professor Schmitt's books are most in evidence when they look for an interpretation of National Socialism in German history. Here both authors display an unscientific, unhistorical, and dilettante approach. Mr. Nizer is the worst offender. He swallowst whole the Nazi conception of history according to which all human development from the ape to Hitler has been nothing but the logical unfolding of National Socialism, disturbed and distorted at times by such "un-German" elements as the Marxists, and other foreign influences. Even if the Germans had been angels in their past history, they would have to pay heavily for what they have committed under Nazism. So in assessing this price there is no need to falsify German history. When Nizer, for example, quotes Tacitus and Caesar to confirm the innate barbarism of the German people, he is on the same level as apologists of imperialism justifying attacks on primitive peoples. When Nizer represents Hegel, the greatest encyclopedic mind of German philosophy and of bourgeois philosophy in general, as a Pan-German and forerunner of the Nazis, that is in essence the same as holding the thinkers of the French Revolution of 1789 responsible for French imperialism and the corrupt, decadent French bourgeoisie of our time. Mr. Nizer does not understand that the efforts of the Germans and their ideological leaders to forge a German national state were objectively no less progressive than the nationalist movements in other countries. The German tragedy was, of course, that they built this national state much later than the French, English, and Americans, and that it arose not out of a democratic revolution but under the leadership of the reactionary classes—under Bismarck's leadership.

If Nizer were sent to Germany to reeducate the German people, he would only do harm. For the Germans will not be reeducated until they understand their history; when they understand that the tragedy of the German nation lay in the fact that the reactionaries triumphed, and not the heroic and self-sacrificing liberation movement of the German people; and that the fight for freedom was betrayed by cowardice and compromise with the reactionaries. Since Mr. Nizer has