

CLAUDE ROY: *Not by Sputniks Alone.*

There are judges in Budapest. Why have they been so modest in allowing Tibor Dery to leave prison in nine years time at the age of 72? Why not twenty years - thirty years - never? These men who, ordinarily, are so expert at thrusting a man into a hole for thirty years or for life, were obviously wrong to worry. In reality, the furtive operation of passing Tibor Dery and his co-accused (accused of what?) from the dock to the cell has been achieved as easily as passing a letter through a letter-box.

There "were, it is true, a few bawlers - Nobel prize-winners and lesser fry - protesting a little. On the whole, however, it all passed off without too much noise, because all good men had their noses pointing to the skies. As the well-known Hungarian proverb says, "you can't chase two hares at the same time." A sputnik can be seen from anywhere - prison is more discreet and a man in a cell less visible. In all, there were many more people worried about the fate of Laika than "consciences" to sympathise over the fate of the author of *Niki, the story of a dog*. As a well-known Russian proverb says, "you can't be at the oven and the mill at the same time."

Hungary is no longer fashionable. No one can say, except in Budapest, that things are going well there, but in can be said that in Paris, it isn't going at all. The sputnik is going, however, and going splendidly. "God," said Napoleon, that man of honour, "is on the side of the biggest battalions." Paul Reynaud is on their side also, according to the international press and the embassy hand-outs, which tell us that he accepted agreeably, if not the principles of Marxism, at least the invitation to go and sample the champagne of the Soviet embassy in honour of the 40th anniversary of the October revolution. God is on the side of the biggest battalions and the best sputniks. Moscow has the realists on its side and the Americans help by adding the comedians and the laughers. A cause for rejoicing - but do not mistake the sputniks for lanterns which have, at last, lit up the future Or the bourgeoisie.

The Right is neither convinced nor converted : it is simply *amazed*. For forty years it has said, and, perhaps, believed, that the Soviet People were inefficient and evil. It now observes that they are extremely capable, and remains convinced that they are evil, but on this second point would be prepared to turn a blind eye. The bourgeoisie inclines to be less demanding about moral values, above a certain level of revenue, and less strict about virtue, above a certain stock of H-bombs. Indulgent toward its own crimes, it forgets them quickly as long as they are profitable. The dozens of thousands of massacred Madagascans do not prevent it sleeping easily, since Madagascar is relatively well-behaved now. Algeria, however, is already not such good business. Only a few 'tortured intellectuals' protested

over Madagascar (on the right as on the left, 'tortured intellectuals' is the name given to those who are disturbed by torture). There are no longer quite so few as far as Algeria is concerned. Failure raises scruples but success spells respectability.

I am not one of those who are surprised at the technical prowess of the Soviet Union. I confess to being one of those who were, on the other hand, *shocked* by the revelations of the crimes of the Stalin era. I admit that my joy at hearing the heavenly bleep would be less qualified if I had heard at the same time, for example, that Dery's trial had been as public as the sputnik's orbit, or, to take even lesser examples, that the poems of Pasternak or Martynov were openly published in the U.S.S.R.

The 'Nouvelle Critique' considers, in its latest number, that this sort of thinking reflects a warped mind - 'not seeing the wood for the trees.' I am, however, not at all short-sighted. I am quite capable of looking at, admiring and praising a beautiful forest. I must say, however, that when one of the trees supports a dangling body - and an innocent one - it rather spoils my enjoyment of the view.

But Rajk was hung and Tibor Dery wasn't. A pleasing advance. Bad form to ask for more? No. An official writer from Budapest came post-haste to Paris to write in a French Journal - "Tibor Dery will not be judged without our drawing a lesson from his trial, for the time of certain procedures will not return." I am satisfied at the denial which the sputnik has given to the bourgeois prophets of doom, but angry at that which Dery's trial gives to his 'brother-writer' (a surprising word, 'brother,' here).

It would have been a little more satisfying to be told not only how Laika behaved in its compartment but also how Dery behaved in front of his judges - to know the major charges against him, his defence, the prosecution's indictment and the defending counsel's reply.

If Dery's works are cited against him, we would like to know whether this includes having written in *Niki* that, like the dog in the story, his master suffered

from never having received any explanation about his fate or about many of the other problems which preoccupied him - if you will allow a rather pretentious phrase - for the benefit of his fellow-beings. Like a stupid dog, an inferior being, he found it impossible to accept immediate necessities because nothing had ever been done to make him understand them.

I am willing to admit that *immediate necessity* demanded the prolongation to nine years, during which a great writer must remain in prison in Budapest, on condition that everything is done to make us *understand*. But it is precisely this *clarification* which is most lacking.

One of these men who know all the answers, and who, it seems, is worth two of any other, suggested in reply to a query I made before Tibor Dery's sentence was made known, that my concern sprang from

good intent but clumsy politics. It would indeed be clumsy to show, in face of so many signs of the development of a more humane socialism in the U.S.S.R. and the peoples' democracies, an impatience, doubtless understandable, but certainly prejudicial to its own principles and hopes. A celebrated Russian proverb says, "You must not go faster than the violins." A no less celebrated Czech proverb says, "You can't catch flies with vinegar." And there is the famous Albanian dictum "Chi va piano, va sano." All of which is pretty accurately contained in the well-known French proverb, "Be realistic."

The man who knew the answers added that if we were prudent and quiet, Tibor Dery would soon be freed, getting at the most a symbolic sentence only. Today, I know the shape of this sort of symbol - the shape of 9. Nine years in jail.

I choose to jest. For anger deforms the voice and falsifies the tone. It is, perhaps *clumsy* to say aloud what millions think to themselves; that a mock-trial, like that of Tibor Dery, is a villainy which dishonours those who have perpetrated it. Yes, it is perhaps clumsy, but do not send us, from Budapest or elsewhere, the spokesmen who have stopped Dery speaking, to say that to denounce the trial is a counter-revolutionary act. So much the worse for them.

I re-read the other day the political works of Benjamin Constant in the edition just published by the *Bibliothèque de la Pleiade*. I thought of Tibor Dery and others when I found what Constant had written about one of his republican friends.

"When she saw despotism employed to further what was called liberty, she knew only too well that despotism can never give birth to liberty. It was, therefore, with a heavy heart that she watched the champions of her most cherished concepts undermining them on the pretext of making them triumph." And Benjamin Constant adds,

"Because she reasoned well, she did not conclude, like so many others, that as differing forms of tyranny had been successfully established in the name of liberty, tyranny was good and liberty evil. She did not believe that the Republic could be dishonoured merely because there were knaves or fools who called themselves republicans."

Do not replace the word *liberty* by the word *socialism* — add it.

Sound communists and calm business-men would be well prepared to join in agreement against the dreamers, the visionaries and the *preachers*, taking up the chorus that we must be *realistic*; that, after all, the Russian satellite works while the American doesn't and that you can't make sputniks without breaking a few eggs.

The industrial tycoon who only gives a brief glance at the annual accident rate in his works will not need much convincing that Stalin was an *efficient* enough industrial leader.

And he will always find a Kanapa* to yelp that "Socialism is first

* Jean Kanapa—Editor-in-chief of "Nouvelle Critique"—French C.P. intellectual monthly.

of all a given system of relations of production, not a moral demand Morality comes later as the product (moreover not immediate) of the economic structure of society." Those who claim that morality comes first are dreamers, idealist-confusionist-revisionist-liquidationists. " What are you, who like the Kantians prefer to have clean hands, and have no hands at all, going to *preach* while we tell you that the sputnik works," cry the Kanapas? " Be realistic."

Indeed, it is very likely that to dream of a world in which words will keep their meaning and where socialism will achieve its implied virtues as well as the " relations of production " which define it, is Utopian. But, as we are asked to be realistic, let us point out that the sputnik itself would never have climbed into the sky if there hadn't always been the dream, foolish enough to become an obsession, strong enough to become a reality, of overcoming the laws of gravity and the limitations of space. In his time, Cyrano de Bergerac was considered wicked by the authorities, a dreamer by the scientists and mad by all respectable people. In his *States and Empires of the Moon* he tells how these people wanted to set fire to the machine he had created to fly to the moon.

" I threw myself angrily Into my machine in order to dispel the trickery with which it was surrounded. But I arrived too late for hardly had I put two feet inside than I found myself lifted into the sky."

To be *realistic* consists not only of listing facts and the state of things, but also, when necessary, of establishing the demands of humanity. Yesterday, humanity dreamed of conquering gravity, today, it dreams of conquering stupidity, evil and injustice. Man lives not by sputniks alone, but also by justice and liberty. They mocked Cyrano who wanted to fly to the moon. They told him - "be realistic." He was.

Translated by Michael Segal from ' France-Observateur,' 12/12/57-