

Miquel BERGA i BAGUE

CATALUNYA I LA GUERRA CIVIL
en la vida i l'obra de John LANGDON-DAVIES

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"Men fight and lose the battle,
and the thing that they fought
for comes about in spite of
their defeat, and when it comes
turns out not to be what they
meant, and other men have to
fight for what they meant under
another name"

William Morris, "A Dream of
John Ball", 1888

"And all sway forward on the dangerous flood
Of history, that never sleeps or dies,
And, held one moment, burns the hand"

W.H. Auden, "August for the people", 1935

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INTRODUCCIO

Es evident que les suposicions que generen l'interès per un tema condicionen la recerca de materials en una determinada direcció i, fins i tot, el mateix enfocament metodològic, per més que en el curs de la investigació les suposicions inicials experimentin modificacions i alteracions. En el cas de John Langdon-Davies (1897-1971) jo partia de la impressió de trobar-me davant de l'obra més completa i d'abast cronològic més dilatat que cap periodista o escriptor estranger ha dedicat a l'anàlisi i divulgació de la societat catalana durant aquest segle a partir de les pròpies vicissituds en el país. Hi ha, a més, una bona part d'aquesta obra relacionada amb la guerra civil, que calia tractar especialment, donada la gairebé singular posició d'un participant estranger, que no només coneix l'idioma, sinó que ha viscut a Catalunya unes fonamentals etapes formatives de la seva joventut durant els períodes 1921-22 i 1927-29. És a dir, l'obra d'un intel·lectual estranger que afronta els esdeveniments de 1936 amb un considerable coneixement del país i de la seva gent.

D'altra banda, i més enllà del possible interès d'aquesta obra, constatava un desconeixement quasi absolut de la personalitat i els escrits de l'autor en els cercles acadèmics, periodístics o polítics. Com és possible que l'autor de tres llibres sobre Catalunya en diverses situacions històriques (1929, 1936 i 1953), ben rebuts per la crítica i

editats a Anglaterra i als EUA, fos simplement ignorat en un país tan escassament observat des de fora?

Com s'explica la inexistència de referències al personatge o a la seva obra en el camp de la Història de Catalunya o en els dels "English Studies" que es desenvolupen a les nostres universitats? A mesura que recollia materials, la situació m'anava semblant més insòlita i sorprenent. No era, en tot cas, la conseqüència d'una obra insubstancial. L'explicació d'aquest fenomen calia cercar-la, potser, en el llarg silenci imposat per la darrera dictadura i per la desaparició de Langdon-Davies quatre anys abans de la mort del dictador. El mateix autor, d'ençà del seu últim retorn a Catalunya, havia actuat amb cautelosa discreció sobre el seu passat de militant antifeixista durant la guerra civil i s'havia afanyat a obligar Hugh Thomas a rectificar l'error de qualificar-lo com a membre del Partit Comunista a The Spanish Civil War(1961).

Aquestes constatacions inicials em van conduir a plantejar el treball en la línia de la recerca biogràfica i amb la predisposició a dedicar un lloc prominent a les relacions amb Catalunya i, especialment, al període de la guerra civil. D'entrada, l'estudi biogràfic no solament em permetia omplir un "buit" difícil de justificar des del punt de vista de la cultura catalana, sinó que m'oferia la possibilitat d'estudiar amb detall "una vida" profundament lligada als esdeveniments culturals, socials i polítics que han marcat la història de Gran Bretanya durant una bona part del segle que s'inicià, emblemàticament, amb els funerals de la reina Victòria.

Seria, és clar, absurd pretendre que una biografia servís per explicar la història social i política del segle XX, però ho seria igualment intentar presentar la vida i l'obra de l'autor sense situar-lo en el "seu temps". Lluny, doncs, d'entrar en les "domestic privacies", a vegades interessants quan s'analitza una obra de creació literària, he volgut fugir de temptacions d'omnipresència i m'he limitat a explicar la vida pública de l'autor i l'impacte de la seva obra. Donat que l'obra es caracteritza bàsicament per la immediatesa del reportatge periodístic i l'esforç divulgatiu de les especulacions intel·lectuals, polítiques o científiques més controvertides de cada moment, m'ha semblat especialment convenient mostrar, també, l'impacte que la posició personal i la formació de l'autor tenien en la configuració de les mateixes obres. He procurat, doncs, no perdre de vista aquesta preocupació per la complementarietat entre l'home i l'escriptor sense caure, espero, en les alegries del freudianisme literari.

Així doncs, he eliminat qualsevol temptació d'explicar el caràcter del personatge o la fal·làcia d'"entrar en el seu pensament". Entre la biografia novel·lada o les presentacions més pròpies de l'historiador professional, m'ha semblat que hi ha suficient espai per escriure una biografia amb el convenciment que, com ha remarcat Bernard Crick, "it involves a prolonged and strange mixture of love and critical distance, of commitment and restraint"(1). Per no traïr aquestes idees i garantir una aproximació "externa" -per bé que no freda i distant- al meu tema, he deixat, sempre que ha estat possible, que fos el mateix autor qui fes les afirmacions sobre si mateix i les observacions sobre la realitat.

1 Crick, B., George Orwell: A Life, Secker and Warburg, Londres, 1980.

Jo, si de cas, les he posades en el context d'altres apreciacions o les he contrastades amb d'altres dades. Tampoc no m'he estat de citar extensament les seves paraules quan m'ha semblat que, justament, havien sorgit de la necessitat íntima d'explicar -privadament o pública- les seves posicions personals en moments crucials de la seva vida.

Els trets més característics d'aquesta vida que m'ha interessat comentar i ponderar són, d'una banda, els comuns a una generació d'universitaris anglesos progressistes que neixen al voltant de 1900 i, d'altra banda, els més específics de Langdon-Davies i la seva relació amb Catalunya.

Es, efectivament, fàcil d'observar trets comuns entre la generació d'universitaris que entren en plena maduresa personal i creativa durant la dècada dels 30. Deixant de banda la seva primera infància que transcorre en circumstàncies prou específiques a Zululàndia (Sud-àfrica), Langdon-Davies entra en el circuit acadèmic britànic per l'obvi sistema de principi de segle, és a dir, escola preparatòria privada, public school i Oxford o Cambridge. Comparteix, doncs, un mateix sistema educatiu, vertebrat al voltant de la competició, els esports, els valors immutables de la pàtria i la religió, i l'autoconfiança de generar les elits governants de l'Imperi en el seu punt de màxima consolidació.

La Primera Guerra Mundial representa el primer sotrac generacional, la rebel·lió juvenil contra els valors associats a l'època victoriana es concreta en una reacció antibèl·lica que acaba, sovint, en actituds de militància pacifista que, en el cas de Langdon-Davies, signifiquen la presó i la pèrdua de la beca per acabar els estudis d'antropologia a

Oxford. Són els joves que, en una mena de Bloomsbury de segona generació, s'agrupen al voltant del Club 1917, que ha fundat Leonard Woolf, o que en reben, si més no, innegables influències estètiques i polítiques. Les ressonàncies del guarisme 1917 tenen relació amb un altre impacte generalitzat: el de la Revolució Russa i les consegüents transformacions socials d'un país que esdevindrà punt de referència permanent durant les dècades següents. Els anys, de fet, durant els quals molts d'aquests joves intel·lectuals seran interpel·lats per una nova capacitat d'influència de les masses treballadores, que es concretarà en la Vaga General de 1926 i que s'articularà a partir de les dures realitats que imposa la Depressió de 1929. La dècada dels 30, amb l'atur massiu, les "marxes de la fam", el creixement imparable del feixisme i la sensació d'una nova guerra general imminent, acaba d'afinar i perfilar les percepcions polítiques de tota una generació.

La guerra civil espanyola opera com a senyal i com a símbol i genera una resposta intensa i generalitzada. Com ha escrit Valentine Cunningham, "In earlier times the occasional intellectual or writer had volunteered to travel abroad and fight in someone else's domestic cause. But this war had, as it were, numerous Byrons, even if some of them did only write for the newspapers"(2). És en l'agitació d'aquesta "Spain" que té les connotacions del cèlebre poema d'Auden que cristal·litzen i han de ser examinades i contrastades la majoria d'il·lusions i conviccions polítiques dels intel·lectuals progressistes. El període 1936-1939 esdevé pivotal per a molts que passen de la màxima

2 Per adonar-se de la quantitat i diversitat dels escrits relacionats amb la guerra civil, són útils dues antologies: Skelton, *Poetry of the Thirties*, Penguin, 1964, i la més recent del mateix Cunningham, *Spanish Front: Writers on the Spanish Civil War*, OUP, 1986.

efervescència militant i ortodoxa al voltant del Front Popular, dissenyat per la Internacional Comunista, a les reflexions crítiques o les manifestacions de desil.lusió profunda. Així, el mateix Langdon-Davies, que el 1937 respon al famós qüestionari Authors Take Sides on the Spanish Civil War amb un dogmatisme característic, anunciant la gran unió dels treballadors intel.lectuals i manuals per construir la nova societat ("Two things make the future real, the artist's imagination and the worker's hope. Fascism destroys both. Therefore the artist and the worker must unite to destroy Fascism. The fascist artist is a traitor, the neutral is already dead. Art and antifascism are synonymous"), els anys 1939-1940 fa reflexions sobre la Rússia stalinista perfectament coincidents amb les argumentacions d'Orwell, Koestler, Borkenau, Silone o Malraux.

L'esclat de la Segona Guerra Mundial retorna el centre d'atenció al seu país, isolat inicialment en la lluita contra Hitler, i afegeix un epíleg suficientment nefast per a una època truculenta. Hiroshima i la guerra freda posaran el punt final a la cadena d'esdeveniments que han agitat la primera meitat de la vida de molts d'aquells joves intel.lectuals nascuts amb el segle. Entrats en l'edat madura, alguns, com ara Langdon-Davies amb el seu retorn a Catalunya el 1950, optaran per una discreta retirada de les convulsions polítiques.

Tot i això, Langdon-Davies, en els seus darrers anys, mostrarà un renovat interès en els plantejaments d'alguns socialistes britànics del XIX, com Robert Owen, i, sobretot, William Morris. Morris és, al capdavant, una possibilitat de síntesi que ha guanyat actualitat en la perspectiva dels fenòmens polítics del segle XX. Potser perquè, tal com

ha escrit l'historiador Asa Briggs(3), "His socialism rested on moral as much as on theoretical foundations. One of the reasons why his writings are relevant in the twentieth century -in some ways more relevant than they were in the late nineteenth century- is that they provide the materials for a critique of twentieth-century socialism (and communism) as much as for a critique of nineteenth-century capitalism".

En una gran diversitat de llibres, articles, reportatges periodístics, cartes o escrits inèdits apareixen reflectides les opinions i reflexions de Langdon-Davies davant pràcticament tots aquells esdeveniments històrics, els quals viu, sovint, com a testimoni d'excepció. És, en aquest sentit, indubtablement l'obra d'un "participant". És, també, i així ho he volgut remarcar al llarg del treball, una font específica i alhora un reflex de les principals preocupacions ideològiques i polítiques que marquen la història europea de la primera meitat de segle i, més concretament, l'Anglaterra d'entre-guerres.

Ara bé, els trets característics de la seva vida que m'ha semblat que calia explorar més detalladament han estat els relacionats amb les seves vinculacions amb Catalunya. He aprofitat l'ocasió de contrastar les seves vivències amb les de dos "companys" de generació i de formació, Gerald Brenan i George Orwell, relacionats d'una manera diferent amb les realitats peninsulars. Amb Brenan, per un considerable paral·lelisme biogràfic, en el qual només cal substituir Catalunya per Andalusia. Amb Orwell, perquè malgrat la seva relació molt més breu i

3 Introducció a William Morris: News from Nowhere and Selected Writings and Designs, Penguin English Library, Londres, 1984.

anecdòtica amb el país, aquesta es produeix en uns moments d'extraordinària intensitat política, i les reaccions d'un i l'altre són testimonials i complementàries.

En tot cas, Langdon-Davies, a part de les seves relacions d'amistat amb personatges com Ramon Casanova, de Ripoll o amb dos escriptors tan fonamentals en la literatura catalana d'aquest segle com Marià Manent i Josep Pla, ha escrit extensament sobre Catalunya, per a diaris i revistes anglesos o americans, sobre quasi tots els esdeveniments històrics des del cop de Primo de Rivera fins als fets de maig de 1937. Ha completat aquesta feina periodística amb la publicació de dos llibres de difícil classificació, Dancing Catalans(1929) i Gatherings from Catalonia(1953), que sintetitzen les seves vivències al país, i escrits amb la voluntat de presentar la identitat nacional i cultural catalana als lectors anglosaxons. En relació a la guerra civil, cal remarcar la publicació de Behind the Spanish Barricades(1936), un autèntic best-seller sobre els primers mesos de la guerra a Catalunya, i The Tragic Week(1937), un text inèdit en anglès, transcrit a l'Apèndix i que s'ha publicat recentment en català amb el títol de La Setmana Tràgica de 1937(1987).

Catalunya ha estat, per a Langdon-Davies, el refugi recurrent "per escapar de la civilització mecànica". Però ha estat, també, el país que li ha permès viure de prop -i sovint amb entusiasme personal- els plantejaments del catalanisme polític i la lluita per la identitat d'una cultura minoritària o presenciar, amb una barreja de fascinació i rebuig, el creixement de l'anarquisme. Ha estat també, i no cal oblidar-ho, l'espai geogràfic i humà on ha viscut els períodes de més

estabilitat familiar i sentimental.

Finalment, a més d'intentar situar l'autor en el "seu temps" i la "seva generació", o de centrar l'atenció en la seva obra "catalana", m'ha semblat que no es podia obviar en un estudi d'aquesta mena allò que ha estat precisament la seva dedicació ininterrompuda: la de l'escriptor professional. Els llibres han estat, per descomptat, la passió central d'una vida d'escriptor ininterrompuda que va des de la publicació del primer llibre als vint anys, a l'últim, dictat des d'una cadira de rodes i publicat pòstumament. És per això que m'ha semblat indispensable estructurar el treball seguint la seqüència cronològica de la publicació dels seus llibres. Al capdavall, no es pot renunciar, en la biografia d'un escriptor, al fet d'explicar la gestació i l'impacte dels seus llibres. La lectura atenta dels dietaris inèdits que s'inclouen a l'Apèndix dona la mesura del sofriment, els projectes i les mancances d'un escriptor que viu amb la pressió permanent dels llibres que "ha d'escriure" i els llibres que encara porta "a dins".

En els in comptables articles i reportatges periodístics, els centenars de conferències i en els més de quaranta llibres publicats és on, de fet, es destil·len les preocupacions d'una vida extraordinàriament intensa. La seva obra tenyida de militàncies ideològiques: el quàquer pacifista, el "company de viatge" del partit comunista, el patriota antifeixista, el liberal antistalinista o l'humanista que es retroba amb la tradició del socialisme d'arrels britàniques, juntament amb la versalitat dels seus registres: periodista, conferenciant, pedagog, activista, polemicista, divulgador del pensament científic, historiador... constitueix una crònica

d'excepció de l'època que li tocà viure.

Sobre aquesta base documental he afrontat el tema. Ho he fet, tenint present el conjunt de reflexions i d'objectius que acabo d'apuntar i que, ben segur, n'han condicionat el resultat.

Primera part: 1897-1939

DE ZULULANDIA A LA PUBLIC SCHOOL

John Eric Langdon-Davies neix el 18 de març de 1897 a Eshowe, capital de Zululàndia, a Sud-àfrica.

El seu pare, el reverend Guy Langdon-Davies mor de tuberculosi tres anys més tard. Només té 30 anys. Tot i això, aquella figura alta i severa deixa una forta impressió en l'infant, que el recordarà com "un capellà tolstoià i un admirador del Walden de Thoreau"(4). Quan John Langdon-Davies, pròxim als setanta anys, rememora el seu pare, l'imagina com un jove que mor exercint d'"angry young man". Guy abandona Londres, impulsat per la seva vocació religiosa i pedagògica, per fundar, juntament amb la seva esposa, Ethel, la primera escola pública de Zululàndia.

De fet, els Langdon-Davies estan familiaritzats amb l'aventura i els viatges. Charles Langdon-Davies, l'avi de John, visità la Xina i fundà The China Magazine(5). La seva gran passió, però, foren els invents. El més notable fou, sens dubte, el "Phonopore", un mecanisme

4 Referències semblants al seu pare apareixen sempre que J.L-D escriu autobiogràficament. Aquesta és de l'autobiografia publicada amb el pseudònim de Thomas Dent als EUA, Then a Soldier, Joh Day Co., New York, 1934. La referència a l'obra més cèlebre de Thoreau, Walden (1854), és significativa i suggereix elements d'anàlisi de l'aventura africana. L'altre llibre que John associa amb el pare és l'Origen de les espècies de Darwin. Autobiografia inèdita, APLD.

5 Charles Langdon-Davies edità una miscel·lània de textos de The China Magazine amb 24 fotografies, The China Office, Hong Kong, 1868. ET seu pare, Guy Langdon-Davies, nasqué a Hong Kong aquell mateix any.

basat en l'aplicació d'electricitat als sistemes de comunicació telegràfics, que s'assajà a Espanya en un circuit Barcelona-Saragossa-Madrid-València-Barcelona, segons ho certifica el Director General de Correos y Telégrafos a Madrid el 15 de novembre de 1899(6).

Els seus pares, acabats de casar, s'embarquen a Southampton amb destí a Eshowe, una població de la regió Natal, a Sud-àfrica. El jove matrimoni emprèn el viatge, que durarà vuit setmanes, amb l'optimisme i la confiança en les pròpies forces que denoten aquestes frases de Guy adreçades a la seva mare: "We are both very hopeful about our setting out, we are looking forward to our work together and to many happy years, and to coming home before many years are over, but this last will take some saving... You must always remember us when your hearts are strongest, and never with tears. We are both strong"(7). En realitat, les cartes de Guy a la seva mare constitueixen un interessantíssim inventari de la descoberta d'un país, on el clima, el paisatge, la vegetació i la gent presenten un contrast espectacular respecte a la vida anglesa. Són, també, una crònica de les il·lusions, el treball i les dificultats inherents a l'aventura de formar una família i guanyar-se la vida en una remota colònia de l'imperi.

Justament, la primera menció al futur John Langdon-Davies la trobem d'una manera deliciosament camuflada en una carta de Guy a la seva mare: "I must end up with a piece of prospective news which may compensate for

6 Per un informe complet del Phonopore i l'experiment a Espanya, vegeu la descripció que en fa Charles Langdon-Davies, An Explanation of the Phonopore and more Especially of the Simplex Phonopore Telegraf, Kegan Paul, Trench, Truner and Co., Londres, 1891. Edició bilingüe anglès/francès.

7 Carta de Guy a la seva mare, Illa de Wight, 17/4/1896. APLD.

this letter being short. Ethel is busy making ridiculously small garments which are not for me, not for herself, but which are to be marked with the family name"(8). És un anunci d'embaràs digne de figurar en una antologia del pudor victorià.

L'arribada de John sembla acabar de donar sentit i energies a l'aventura africana dels Langdon-Davies, però quan John només té un any, Guy comença a patir els primers símptomes de la tuberculosi que li serà fatal. El 12 de juny de 1898 naixerà un segon fill, rebut amb resignació per uns pares que viuen en una situació cada cop més complicada: "She is pleased with the little boy and so am I, but we did not want him yet, but as he has come we do not complain"(9), explica Guy a la seva mare. A la tardor de 1898, l'empitjorament de la salut de Guy obliga a la família a abandonar l'escola i a viure a l'aire lliure. Amb els dos nens, sis ases i una tartana que s'han fet construir i els serveix de casa ambulant, inicien una llarga marxa a la recerca d'un clima més idoni per a la tuberculosi en un país trasbalsat per la guerra dels bòers.

El 24 de març de 1898 mor el petit Paul, que sempre havia estat delicat. La precària salut del pare continua el seu curs irreversible i dolorós, que només aconsegueix calmar temporalment el tractament amb iodina. Des d'Anglaterra, la mare vol acabar amb l'aventura que, tan ràpidament, ha esdevingut tràgica. Els retrets de la mare, però, només aconsegueixen reafirmar Guy en la seva determinació (la clàssica síndrome del tuberculós?): "There was something in your letter which I

8 Ibid., Eshowe, 26/9/1896. APLD.

9 : Ibid., Eshowe, 20/7/1898, APLD.

do think had better be clearly explained now though I cannot see why there should be any reason to say more about it, as it was clear enough I thought when I left England. I came here in order to earn my living for one or two reasons, chiefly that I had made a rather late start in life. There was no chance of my being able to support a wife and family in England, the opportunity to do so offered itself out here, and I fully expect to do so for the future. I cannot see what satisfaction it could be to any one for me to arrive home with empty pockets, to settle down on a hundred a year in some part of England. I certainly hope to make some sort of position for myself and those belonging to me in South Africa and if I entertained the idea of shortly coming home, as though I had only come here on a visit, it would not tend to our ever feeling settled in the country we have made our home"(10).

Donades les circumstàncies, són paraules coratjoses, però també, no cal dir, patètiques. Finalment, els Langdon-Davies arriben a Estcourt (Natal), on Guy és ingressat en un vell convent catòlic que servia d'hospital psiquiàtric i que la guerra ha convertit en hospital militar. És allà on, en paraules de John, "My father, a Tolstoian pacifist, lay dying in a military hospital listening to the guns of Ladysmith"(11). Era el 9 de maig de 1900.

Ethel Brown, la mare, s'havia criat en una família típicament victoriana. L'estricta moralitat i els rigorosos costums dels Brown són un contrast permanent amb els tocs d'excentricitat i aventura que

10 : Ibid., Estcourt, 3/6/1899. APLD.

11 : John Langdon-Davies, "Two Childhoods", Harper's Monthly Magazine, Nova York, maig, 1930.

caracteritza els Langdon-Davies. Aquesta doble i directa influència en l'entorn familiar constitueix un punt de referència constant en la personalitat de John. Per temperament i vocació, John s'identifica amb els Langdon-Davies. I això, no tant per la fàcil mitificació de la figura paterna que comporta una mort prematura, com pel que significa de rebuig de l'ortodòxia victoriana característica de la família materna. John, que creix amb el segle, estarà en rebel·lia generacional contra l'ideal victorià. Quan arriba a Anglaterra "perquè l'eduquin" fa poc que els londinencs han acomiadat massivament el cadàver de la reina Victòria. A l'ambient plana una tangible sensació de "final d'època" i els Forsytes temen el "canvi". Han acabat els seixanta anys de regnat i comença un nou segle. Orfe de pare, John veurà en la seva mare el paradigma del vell ordre.

John pensa que la seva mare fou "the most dominating and dictatorial person I have ever met", tot i que afegeix "and she had to be". Hi ha, per descomptat, retret en els records de la mare, però també comprensió i consideració de les circumstàncies(12). Cal considerar la vida matrimonial de la jove Ethel Brown. Acompanya el seu marit a Zululàndia, on neix John. Ha de veure com mor el segon fill amb escassa o nul·la assistència mèdica. Amb la guerra dels bòers en marxa, ha de cuidar el seu marit d'una "galloping consumption". De l'experiència africana hereta misèria, viudedat i un fill. Per a alguns, el colonialisme comporta aquesta mena de conseqüències.

No és estrany, doncs, que John es converteixi en el centre

12 : A Then A Soldier, op. cit., John fa un retrat gairebé cruel de la seva mare. En els diversos escrits autobiogràfics inèdits, però, es constata una progressiva comprensió per la postura materna.

d'atenció i la raó de viure d'aquella dona. John patirà, no cal dir-ho, l'excés d'atenció que es tradueix en una presència aclaparadora: "From seven to seventeen I worked, usually with my mother behind me, her arms crossed over her chest, her mouth very firm, her eyes directed at the fields across the road but, I think, seeing nothing of them"(13).

La primera infància de John Langdon-Davies ve marcada, doncs, per la personalitat dels seus pares. Les fortes primeres impressions de l'enterrament del seu germà petit i la malaltia i mort del pare donen pas als primers records de la mare, la qual esdevé tutora única i representant a la terra de la voluntat del pare. Qualsevol intent de desobediència quedava anul·lat amb la frase que John més recorda de la seva mare: "It's a very good thing your father isn't here to see how you treat me".

Els anys africans li proporcionen una infantesa de ple contacte amb la natura en un entorn on conflueixen la diversitat racial, un clima quasi tropical i la presència constant de soldats involucrats en la primera de les moltes guerres de què John seria testimoni. A part, però, de les anècdotes i els records dels primers anys, els anys d'Àfrica són marcats, fonamentalment, per la idea del retorn a la metròpoli, per l'arribada del moment d'iniciar l'educació que li correspon.

La mare subsisteix un parell d'anys fent vestits i portant una botiga de joguines (un bazaar) en una població que té una cinquantena de mainada i, més tard, treballant en una granja d'estruços. Finalment, la

13 : De l'autobiografia inèdita. Ethel Brown, afectada d'artritis els darrers anys, moriria en un centre geriàtric d'Oxford.

vidua Langdon-Davies aconsegueix tenir-ho tot a punt per iniciar el destí que amb el seu difunt marit havien planejat per al seu hereu. Mare i fill s'embarquen cap a Anglaterra. John està convençut que es va a reunir amb "nois feliços que aprenen coses en una gran família". Aquesta és la seva idea de les escoles britàniques. Mestres, com si fossin germans grans, en una família feliç on conviuen els nois lluny de les seves mares. John ha fet set anys.

El setembre de 1904, John Langdon-Davies comença la seva educació acadèmica a Yardley Court, una escola preparatòria de Tonbridge (Kent). El seu progrés acadèmic és constant i és considerat, de bell antuvi, com un dels nois més prometedors de l'escola. En paraules del director, A. L. Bickmore, en el seu informe de Nadal del 1905: "He is the most promising of the younger boys in the school".

John es manté habitualment als primers llocs del seu grup i es va confirmant com un candidat ferm per a l'obtenció de beca per a una Public School. Aconseguir la beca és l'objectiu fonamental que comparteixen tres persones: per a John, és la prova de foc ineludible que determina l'èxit o el fracàs; per a la mare, és l'única recompensa satisfactòria als seus sacrificis i la seva tossuderia; per al director d'una escola preparatòria com la del senyor Bickmore, és una qüestió de prestigi sense el qual no s'aguanta el negoci del seu establiment(14).

No és sorprenent, doncs, que la beca sigui el punt de referència

14 La vida a les cèlebres "Prep Schools" ha motivat diverses memòries literàries d'escriptors anglesos. D'entre les més famoses podem recordar, Such, Such Were The Joys de G. Orwell i Enemies of Promise de C. Connolly.

de tots els informes de la direcció el darrer any de John a Yardley Court. "His prospects in the scholarship would next year seem rosy", havia afirmat el director en acabar el curs 1908-1909. Malgrat el bon rendiment de John, però, no calia fer-li massa confiança. Al final del segon trimestre de 1910, el senyor Bickmore adverteix: "I do not feel easy about his chances of success in the scholarship examination next term". La mesura justa de por al fracàs que calia conferir al jove adolescent per assegurar l'últim esforç. Al final, felicitació i el darrer consell: "I congratulate him most heartily on his brilliant success in winning so valuable a scholarship and would urge him to do all in his power to justify his election".

Ara bé, deixant de banda les avaluacions del director, les bones notes i les frases convencionals d'encoratjament, convé veure de quina manera avalua els seus primers anys d'educació institucional el propi interessat. Per a John, els anys a Yardley Court constitueixen el dur aprenentatge de conviure amb uns companys que són lluny del vell ideal dels "comrades in comradeship". Les realitats de la seva primera experiència escolar són presidides per la vermellor de galtes en la majoria de les situacions, les actituds cruels dels més grans, els motius que li són atorgats injustificadament⁽¹⁵⁾, i la difícil entrada a l'adolescència, on les qüestions sexuals, de vital importància, s'aclareixen lentament amb les informacions contradictòries dels amics, les de la mare i l'anàlisi de les arrels llatines de les paraules clau

15 Al principi d'anar a l'escola, John fou batejat, de manera cruel i sense justificació, com "el pudent" per un noi més gran. Aquest motiu va tenir èxit i l'hagué de patir una llarga temporada, durant la qual se li atribuïa qualsevol mala olor que fes l'aula. A la seva autobiografia recorda reiteradament aquesta qüestió i, certament, com una experiència traumàtica.

(concupina, fornicar...) amb l'ajut de diccionaris escolars.

John no pot superar les humiliacions dels seus companys recorrent a la violència, malgrat la seva fortalesa física. La mare li havia inculcat vivament el mateix odi a la violència que professà el pare difunt. John ha de guanyar-se la confiança i el respecte del grup amb les seves virtuts d'escriptor. La seva consagració es produeix amb un redacció sobre "Beowulf", que rep l'elogi públic del director. A partir de llavors, adquireix la reputació de ser el millor "assagista" de la classe i supera la sensació de marginació que fins aleshores hagué de suportar. Això l'anima a escriure pel seu compte, i el darrer any de la seva estada a l'escola preparatòria comença a escriure poemes, que guarda secretament a casa seva. Els vidres glaçats que observa des del llit li inspiren els primers versos:

To Winter

Hail hoary monarch, in whose solemn reign
Frost with his finger paints my window pane...(16)

Així doncs, l'escriptor clandestí, amb notes brillants de Llengua i havent obtingut la beca, inicia, sota la tutela permanent de la mare la segona i decisiva etapa de la seva formació acadèmica a la "Big School", on l'adolescent ha d'esdevenir un jove universitari.

Som a l'any 1910, quan John entra a la Tonbridge School, una típica

16 De l'autobiografia inèdita. D'aquest any és el seu primer escrit publicat. Aparegué a la "Young People's Page" de la revista *The Lady*, una secció concurs per a joves de diverses edats. Amb el pseudònim, "Asteroid", John hi publicà un breu escrit, "The Hermit Crab", que sortí a l'edició del 10 de novembre de 1910.

Public School anglesa. És l'inici d'una altra llarga batalla per a la pròxima beca. Aquesta vegada la més decisiva, la d'Oxford. Però, mentrestant, cal no oblidar la responsabilitat inherent a un becari. El seu nou director, C. Lowry, ho recorda al seu primer informe: "On the whole a fair start, but he must remember that much is expected of a scholar".

Les regles del joc a Tonbridge School són les habituals d'una Public School de l'època: les mortificacions que han de patir els "novis" (els dels dos primers cursos), els petits privilegis dels "bloods" (els veterans), la importància dels esports i de les llengües clàssiques, la formació patriòtica i religiosa com a valors fonamentals que reposen en la solidesa de l'Imperi Britànic i l'Església d'Anglaterra...(17)

La sensibilitat religiosa de John evoluciona en conflicte permanent entre la memòria respectuosa del pare clergue i missioner i el rebuig de les formes externes de la religió (les farragoses oracions a l'escola, els consiliaris temptats per l'autoritarisme o l'homosexualitat).

17 Hugh Vere Hodge, professor i tutor de John a Tonbridge, fa uns interessants comentaris sobre les Public Schools en una carta (28/10/1934) que li adreça en relació a l'autobiografia que John publicà als EUA amb el pseudònim de Thomas Dent (op. cit.): "...and whereas you condemn schools, my experience has made me sometimes fancy that they are refuges from quite dreadful homes... Anyhow I am sure of one thing -for which Public Schools never receive credit in print- that many a boy is more at peace with himself there than anywhere else because is allowed to be himself -you may smile at that, but it's true-and gets clear of the tenacious parents who want to make him just like themselves". John i H.V. Hodge mantingueren una llarga correspondència, que començà després de l'escola i només s'acabà amb la mort del vell professor a principi dels anys seixanta. Vere Hodge deixà publicada una traducció crítica de les Cançons de Dant, The Odes of Dante, Oxford University Press, 1963.

Finalment, inspirat per William Blake(18), John trobarà un sentiment religiós profund i personal, allunyat de la parafernàlia de l'església, que el reconciliarà amb la memòria del pare i que, al cap d'uns anys, el portarà a entrar a la Societat dels Amics. John serà un quàquer tota la vida i n'exercirà en les ocasions més transcendents.

Les virtuts de l'educació patriòtica que rebia John havien de suportar, ben aviat, un test decisiu amb l'esclat de la Primera Guerra Mundial. La guerra constituï, sens dubte, un sotrac generacional d'efectes literaris prolongats. No només va ser l'element cohesionador d'una determinada "poesia de guerra" (Sassoon, Graves, Owen, Brooke...) sinó també un punt de referència per als que la vivien des de les Public Schools (Orwell, Anthony Powell, Evelyn Waugh...). Al cap de vint anys, Michael Roberts en feia aquesta valoració:

"1914 showed the disaster which followed when hundreds of millions of people gave the old responses to the old stimuli. Soldiers, and late civilians, saw that "Honour", "Courage", "Patriotism", as they understood them, led to cruelty, lying, and blood-lust on a scale so gigantic that the foundations of civilisation were threatened"(19).

En tot cas, els "estimuls i respostes" que provocà la Primera Guerra Mundial afectaren profundament la vida personal i la formació ideològica de John Langdon-Davies.

18 La seva tia Gertie li va regalar -a petició d'ell- l'assaig de Swinburne sobre William Blake com a record del dia de la seva confirmació. L'edició de l'obra de Swinburne era la de Chatto i Windus, Londres, 1906.

19 Michael Roberts, Critique of Poetry, Jonathan Cape, Londres, 1934, p.153.

LA PRIMERA GUERRA MUNDIAL

Com era previsible, John guanyà el premi d'assaig de l'escola que hagué de llegir a l'acte acadèmic de clausura de curs. El treball sobre utopies antigues i modernes fou reproduït parcialment al programa de l'acte celebrat a Tonbridge School, el 25 de juliol de 1914. Per a John, s'havien acabat les misèries de l'adaptació als rigors de l'escola. Ara era un dels veterans amb prou prestigi acadèmic per ser un dels candidats més fermes a la beca d'Oxford. L'estiu de 1914 és un període de plenitud, durant el qual aquell jove prometedor de disset anys comença a tenir a l'abast grans perspectives. L'autosuficiència i confiança característiques que John adquireix a la Public School li permeten citar, en el seu assaig, les visions utòpiques de William Morris amb condescendència(20) i declarar la necessitat que té el món de despertar, d'obrir pas a l'home nou que "...will regenerate the old and direct the new"(21).

Per arrodonir aquell estiu gloriós, els seus oncles el conviden a unes vacances a França. Agafarien el tren fins a Southampton i d'allí, el salt al continent. A Southampton, però, s'informa als viatgers que

20 Amb tot, juntament amb William Blake, els llibres de William Morris exerceixen una gran influència en el pensament de Langdon-Davies. La seva vídua afirma que en els seus darrers anys, John el rellegia sovint i recorda que havia vist com li queien les llàgrimes en llegir-li en veu alta fragments de l'obra de William Morris.

21 Skinners' Day, programa dels actes de 25/7/1914 a la Tonbridge School. Inclou un extracte del treball de John "Utopias: Ancient and Modern", pàgs.15-18.

França està en guerra contra Alemanya. L'expedició turística quedava frustrada i John retorna a Londres amb els oncles. Allà va viure l'emoció col·lectiva dels moments en què, com en un joc grotesc de despropòsits internacional, s'estenia la guerra a tot Europa. A les onze de la nit del 4 d'agost de 1914, el rei George V declarava la guerra a Alemanya, per tal de "garantir la neutralitat de Bèlgica". Feia deu dies que John havia llegit el seu treball premiat sobre les utopies modernes.

Per a molts joves anglesos s'iniciava el darrer acte de la representació col·lectiva de l'ideal victorià. Si ja s'havia enterrat el símbol d'una època i d'uns valors en el taüt de la reina, ara, al cap de catorze anys, s'organitzaven uns funerals col·lectius, l'epileg i la defenestració de l'ideal victorià per a la generació més jove(22).

El curs 1914-1915 serà el darrer que John passarà a Tonbridge School. La seva personalitat es va enfortint. Els seus professors li aprecien una gran capacitat: "Always exceedingly capable, and ready to take vigorous interest in all phases of life". L'estiu de 1915, el director emet una valoració dels cinc anys que John ha passat a l'escola altament satisfactòria: "He has, I am convinced, a very exceptional brain and power of gaining knowledge; also a strong character and much public spirit". Així doncs, intel·ligència, facilitat per adquirir nous coneixements, un caràcter fort i preocupacions altruistes. Tot és a punt per donar a la mare la compensació de tants anys de sacrificis: la beca per entrar a Oxford.

22 El darrer any de la guerra, Lytton Strachey publicaria Eminent Victorians. D'alguna manera, els joves universitaris van veure en els estudis biogràfics de Strachey la ratificació intel·lectual del desprestigi que havia adquirit el concepte "victorià" durant els anys de la guerra. Chatto and Windus, Londres, 1918.

A la reraguarda, però, la persistència de la guerra afecta la vida quotidiana. Al costat dels primers esnobismes intel·lectuals del tipus: "Would you care to look in, if you have nothing better to do, to read some poetry with us, if, as I daresay, you care for that kind of thing?" (23), John s'ha d'enfrontar diàriament amb la lectura de la llista dels ex-alumnes morts o desapareguts al front. Davant d'aquestes llistes, de tants ex-companys "killed in action" cal plantejar-se la possibilitat de matar. El respecte a la vida que li havia inculcat el pare ha de superar la ràbia pels amics desapareguts i l'ambient de patriotisme exaltat que es viu a les escoles.

Mentrestant, John rep la notícia esperada: li han concedit una beca per a Oxford. El curs següent començarà estudis d'història al St. John's College d'Oxford. La mare envia telegrams a la família. Es una victòria compartida. Els Brown han de saber que el fruit del seu matrimoni amb Guy està definitivament encarrilat. Llàstima que la beca arribi amb una guerra en progrés i que, al cap de poc, s'esdevingui la mort de "Sevenoaks", el protector dels seus primers anys a la Tonbridge School. Cal passar a l'acció. John decideix participar en la guerra en alguna unitat no-combatent i defensar on calgui la seva objecció de consciència a l'ús d'armes mortals. La primera anàlisi mèdica, però, deixa el procés aturat. Els metges diagnostiquen una "varicocele" (distensió de les venes als testicles). Caldrà operar i, posteriorment, decidir si perdura la "inutilitat temporal" de John.

23 Nota del 4/1/1914 adreçada a John per John Masefield de Hampstead. APLD.

Així doncs, John comença el seu primer curs a Oxford, on, malgrat les sessions d'instrucció militar obligatòria, la guerra passarà a segon terme. Els problemes immediats de John són fonamentalment tres: la gana, conseqüència de la migradesa dels seus ingressos; la poca atenció que rep del tutor, que està massa atrafegat redactant pamflets per al Departament del Ministeri de la Guerra, en els quals es demostra la constant perversitat històrica d'Alemanya; i la seva vocació poètica, que està donant els primers fruits(24).

En efecte, durant els dos anys que van de l'estiu de 1915 al de 1917, John anirà escrivint els poemes que formen la seva primera obra publicada, The Dream Splendid(25). Segons els editors, el llibre es publica "in the fourth year of the great war but the MCMXVII of our salvation". El llibre és un recull de sis sonets, sis poemes i dues proses breus, i constitueix una bona mostra de l'escassa interferència de la guerra durant els seus primers temps a Oxford.

De fet, el nou poeta és saludat per la seva capacitat de mantenir-

24 John està prou preocupat per la poesia com per escriure al príncep Kropotkin, demanant-li consells sobre la traducció poètica. Pretenia traduir, de les versions franceses, poemes de Pushkin. La resposta de Kropotkin, datada a Brighton el 25 de gener de 1917, diu entre d'altres coses: "Dear Mr. Davies: A translation from a translation is bad enough, even in prose... In poetry, a translation from a translated verses would be simply abominable. The least demand from one who undertakes to translate a poet is -apart from being oneself a poet, this is self-evident, to know the poet's language in perfection... The Russian poets who translated Goethe and Schiller, Byron and Shelley, Victor Hugo and Heine, and so on, learned first the language of their favourite poet in perfection." Kropotkin hi afegeix encara un parell d'informacions: "...There are some good French translations from Pushkin. You must easily find them in the Oxford Library", i com a post-data escriu: "with an intelligent teacher Russian is easily learned, Many Englishmen have learned it very well in one year..."

25 John Langdon-Davies, The Dream Splendid, The Pelican Press, Londres 1917.

se al marge dels conflictes del món: "The verse of Mr. Langdon-Davies owes nothing to the transient excitements of the hour"(26). En conjunt, el llibre té un marcat to de poesia juvenil "georgiana". La relació íntima que el jove poeta estableix amb la bellesa i la diversitat de la natura constitueix el tema central del recull. Tot i que The Times Literary Supplement hi veu "the outcome of a brooding imagination intensely affected by open-air influences... and expressing itself with a real sense of style"(27), S.P.B. Mais no s'està pas de recordar que "he has, of course, all the young poet's faults" i de recomanar-li l'estudi rigorós de la tècnica dels grans mestres, "Milton and Shelley to begin with"(28).

Aquestes discussions sobre l'art d'escriure versos o la preparació del següent volum poètic, Nightingale Hollow, que havia de seguir el primer es van interrompre aviat. Una comunicació oficial demanant una revisió de l'exempció mèdica que havia obtingut John introduïa un element inesperat que canviava radicalment la rutina diària i la direcció de les energies intel·lectuals de John durant el darrer any de la guerra. Quan els metges decideixen que pot incorporar-se a l'exèrcit acaba de publicar el primer llibre i té vint anys.

Les idees pacifistes de John són posades definitivament a prova. La guerra, al cap de tres anys, es veu més absurda i fútil que mai, però no anar a lluitar pel "King and Country" presenta conseqüències

26 Oxford Magazine. Crítica anònima a Publications of the week: "A new poet", setembre, 1917.

27 TLS, 11/10/1917.

28 Tonbridge Free Press, 26/10/1917.

previsibles: deixar la mare socialment avergonyida, l'acusació implícita de covardia que genera aquest tipus d'actitud, l'isolament familiar, la probable pèrdua de la beca a Oxford... Amb tot, John es declara objector de consciència i només està disposat a col·laborar en serveis humanitaris (infermer, ambulàncies...). Al·lega, d'altra banda, la necessitat d'una operació a l'aparell digestiu.

En realitat, John ha passat dos anys intentant resoldre el dilema sobre la "bondat" de la causa d'aquella guerra i, per tant, quina havia de ser la seva postura personal cas que el cridessin al front. En uns primers escrits autobiogràfics descriu els seus pensaments d'aquesta manera: "I read Tolstoi and The Sermon of the Mount on one side and came to the conclusion that no Christian could seriously believe in war... I read Kropotkin and Marx and Engels and William Penn and other authorities on social ethics. Then I turned to the war itself and read all the original documents to see if Germany really did start the war. Nearly everything I read seemed to show that the whole thing was a collective madness, and if so I ought not to join up in the fighting forces. But then on the other hand every boy I knew and loved was leaving school to enlist and by the hundred they had already got killed. Day by day we heard the rumbling barrage across the water and one knew that every day almost another school fellow was dead."(29)

29 D'esboços autobiogràfics inèdits escrits probablement entre 1925-1930. APLD.

Aquestes reflexions rebien estímuls diversos de l'"exterior". Cartes d'amics i familiars mostrant preocupació, retrets o animant-lo i, fins i tot, el bombardeig psicològic d'un seu oncle que li anava enviant retalls de premsa descrivint les atrocitats comeses pels alemanys i li preguntava si no tenia "objecció de consciència" contra aquestes coses. APLD.

John s'imagina intentant matar un jove alemany de la seva edat, un "enemic natural" en l'ortodòxia de la guerra declarada, i sap, íntimament, que no podria fer-ho. La rebel·lió contra les "raons d'estat" s'expressa amb la vehemència de les conviccions de principi. John resol els seus pensaments contradictoris i recorda la seva determinació amb aquestes paraules: "What did it matter whether Germany had invaded Belgium or not, or whose fault the war was; if a man stood in front of me as I sat on a gate by a wood, I could not kill him obviously, and all that they wanted to do was so to madden and dehumanise me that I could. Well, they were not going to get the chance"(30).

En tot cas, el veredicta no es fa esperar: objecció de consciència denegada i exempció de dos mesos per l'operació. El tribunal fa la següent consideració sobre el seu cas: "We consider that this applicant is suffering from a mental disease, which if he were older might be incurable, but as he is only twenty a few months'healthy life in the Army will probably cure him"(31).

En sortir de l'hospital, John és empresonat en uns barracons de l'exèrcit a Maidstone (Kent). Mentre duren les diligències legals del seu cas, fa vida als barracons i conviu amb els soldats. Finalment és condemnat a 120 dies de presó en total aïllament. La solitud de la cel·la es fa aviat intolerable i John cau malalt. És ingressat en un hospital militar, on rep maltractaments i és considerat com un "malalt mental en observació". Els diversos certificats mèdics del seu

30 Ibid.

31 Reproduït a l'autobiografia inèdita. APLD.

expedient, amb els problemes anteriors i el seu estat actual, li valen una reducció de la pena i pot abandonar la presó al cap d'unes tres setmanes d'haver-hi ingressat.

Li ha estat retirada una part substancial de la beca a Oxford però li queda el mínim suficient per prosseguir els estudis els dos primers trimestres de 1918. Als ulls de la seva mare, la decisió de tornar a Oxford redimeix en part la vergonya de tenir un fill "renegat" enfront de l'opinió pública. A partir d'ara, però, les preocupacions de John esdevindran cada cop menys acadèmiques. L'experiència de l'objecció de consciència i la presó han estat d'una importància decisiva en la seva formació i aviat substituirà els exercicis poètics més o menys bucòlics per un activisme social i vital que, en el camp ideològic, el portarà a la militància socialista i, en el terreny personal, al seu primer matrimoni.

Les circumstàncies de l'inici de la relació amb la seva primera esposa són prou simptomàtiques: "On my return I went to a University Socialist meeting in a fellow undergraduate's room. As I spoke I saw a very young girl sitting on the arm of a chair. I went home to bed; three hours later I woke up; I'll marry that girl, I said to myself. At the end of the week we were engaged and three months later we were married" (32).

Per a un jove que acaba d'oposar-se a participar a la guerra, l'experiment soviètic (recordem que som a l'any 1918) havia de resultar poderosament atractiu. Justament una de les conseqüències del triomf de

32 De les primeres memòries inèdites. APLD.

la revolució bolxevic fou la retirada de la URSS del conflicte bèl·lic. L'ideal socialista, en pràctica a Rússia, sembla que ha donat cos i sentit històric a l'actitud pacifista i de rebel·lia contra el vell ordre que John manté en relació amb la Primera Guerra Mundial. A.P. Taylor valora l'impacte de la revolució soviètica respecte a la causa de la guerra a Anglaterra en aquests termes: "In England opponents of the war found a new vigour and divided the House of Commons three times during the year in favour of peace by negotiation. The Independent Labour Party and the British Socialist Party, wich was avowedly Marxist, set up a United Socialist Council -first taste of the Popular Front, though by no means the last, and in june this Body summoned a convention at Leeds to inaugurate the British Revolution. Eleven hundred delegates attended, among them men usually moderate such as MacDonald and Snowden. The convention endorsed the Russian peace programme and instructed the British Government to do likewise. It also called for the setting up of workers'and soldiers'councils, or to give them their Russian name, Soviets. It was the first breath in England of the Bolshevik wind"(33).

D'aquesta primera alenada del vent soviètic a Anglaterra que descriu A.J.P. Taylor ens en queden tres vestigis en el cas particular del jove John Langdon-Davies: la resposta de l'ambaixador a Londres, Litrinoff, rebutjant una petició de Langdon-Davies perquè anés a parlar a Oxford(34); una carta del famós comunista escocès William Gallacher

33 A.J.P. Taylor, English History 1914-1945, Pelican Books, Penguin, Londres, 1970, pàg. 128. La pau negociada fou un element central en tot el procés que portà els bolxevics al poder. Les primeres cròniques de la revolució publicades en anglès ho deixaven ben clar. Vegeu, per exemple, John Reed, Ten Days that Shook the World, 1919.

34 La carta de Litrinoff és datada el 18/2/1918. L'ambaixador soviètic lamenta "being unable to adress to you and your comrades the words of encouragement for which you ask". APLD.

que havia estat empresonat feia poc per la seva participació a la vaga general de Glasgow de 1919(35); i el pòster anunciant un míting de John Langdon-Davies el 5 de juliol de 1919 al mercat de bestiar de Neath (Gal.les) organitzat per la Neath Socialist Society(36).

Es l'època en què entra a l'Independent Labour Party. Podia haver-se afiliat al jove Partit Comunista britànic però, segons que explica el mateix John, l'ILP semblava una alternativa més atractiva per a la seva personalitat: "Those of us who were more soft-minded... or who had less of an internal compulsion to be tough, belonged to the ILP", i més endavant descriu el tipus de gent que, com ell, s'allistaven a l'ILP: "Most members of the ILP, at least in London, were pacifists with a Christian and often Quaker background and most at the time had just been released from prison or were still in prison... It is curious to think how undisciplined we all were politically. We were what we were as a protest against the very idea of an orthodoxy and very few of us survived as politicians into this age of party machines"(37). Per a un pacifista, l'ILP representava l'opció més òbvia en l'esquerra britànica. Malgrat que, d'ençà de l'esclat de la Primera Guerra Mundial, el partit laborista es manifestà de manera ambigua i poc entusiasta sobre la

35 La carta de W. Gallacher no està datada, però en ella felicita John pel naixement del seu primer fill. Es, doncs, del juliol de 1919. Gallacher seria l'únic diputat comunista a la House of Commons quan va esclatar la Segona Guerra Mundial. APLD.

36 El mateix pòster anuncia dos mítings més durant el més de juliol. El d'Emrys Hughes i el de Tom Mann. Curiosament, John féu la següent anotació al pòster que es conserva a l'arxiu PLD: "This meeting was 'broken up'." APLD.

37 De l'autobiografia inèdita, APLD. Una de les memòries més interessants d'un membre destacat de l'ILP en relació a la Primera Guerra Mundial i les seves experiències de presó com a objector de consciència pot trobar-se a Fenner Brockway, Towards Tomorrow, Hart-Davies, Mac Gibbon, Londres 1977, caps. 4,5 i 6.

participació britànica a la guerra, és un fet que, com remarcava Pelling, "... only the ILP leaders were advocating a downright opposition to the war, on the lines of their campaign against the South African War"(38).

D'altra banda, John inicia una relació intensa, sobtada i romàntica amb Connie. La joventut dels dos amants deu explicar la decisió ràpida de casar-se en uns moments en què els seus plantejaments reposen en l'amor, l'aventura i la militància política més que no pas en la seguretat econòmica o una vida confortable. Així doncs, el 3 de juliol de 1918, John es casa amb Constance Rina Scott, filla del doctor D.H. Scott, membre de la Royal Society. En una petita comunitat quàquera a Witney, a la regió dels Costwolds, es realitza la senzilla cerimònia del casament segons la tradició de la Societat dels Amics. John i Connie comencen així una relació conjugal que els donarà dos fills i que es prolongarà fins a la separació. Posteriorment, el desembre de 1954, Connie se suïcidaria.

El jove matrimoni s'instal·la en un diminut apartament i els primers mesos de vida en comú John els ocupa en la redacció del seu primer assaig publicat, Militarism in Education(39). El llibre, subtítolat, "a contribution to educational reconstruction" és un estudi comparatiu dels sistemes educatius anglès, alemany i americà on, a

38 Per entendre la posició de l'Independent Labour Party durant aquest període, vegeu l'estudi general d' H. Pelling, A Short History of the Labour Party, MacMillan, 1961 (8a. edició, 1985) o els treballs més específics i detallats d'A. Marwick, "The Independent Labour Party in the Nineteen twenties", Bulletin of the Institute of Historical Research, XXXV, 1962, o el de R.E. Dowse, "The ILP and Foreign Politics, 1918-1923", International Review of Social History, VII, 1962.

39 John Langdon-Davies, Militarism in Education, Headley Brothers, Londres 1919, 154 pàgs.

partir d'una crítica del "prussianisme" en l'educació i en l'escola entesa gairebé com a preparació militar, l'autor proposa un sistema centrat en les necessitats de l'alumne i no en les de l'estat i amb l'activa participació dels pares. El tema del llibre, que no sorprèn si pensem en les experiències immediatament anteriors de Langdon Daviès, anuncia d'alguna manera les seves aportacions i preocupacions futures en el camp de l'educació(40).

El llibre trobà ampli ressò en publicacions d'ideari pacifista i revistes pedagògiques, però també en la premsa en general. La proposta de John era atractiva, valenta i oportuna en uns moments d'exaltació militarista, quan s'acabava de guanyar la Primera Guerra Mundial. Si, en darrer terme, s'havia d'acceptar la inherent absurditat del conflicte bèl·lic que acabava de sotragar Europa adduint que era "la guerra per acabar amb les guerres", John vol deixar clar que no serà pas amb soldats i amb formació militar que es guanyarà la batalla definitiva per acabar amb l'existència de les guerres. Com fa notar un dels comentaristes del llibre: "It is clear that the war to end the war must be waged by the schoolmaster rather than by the soldier"(41). Cal desmitificar el procés educatiu i deixar en mans dels mestres i els pares la responsabilitat de l'educació en funció dels interessos del nen mateix. A l'Anglaterra de postguerra els resultats del militarisme són tràgicament quantificables: 750.000 joves anglesos morts.

Per al jove matrimoni, però, el llibre comporta el substancial

40 Pensem especialment en els cèlebres "Jackdaws" en el camp de la didàctica de la història, als quals ens referirem més endavant.

41 B.V. Burke a "Militarism Rampant", New York Nation, 13 de març de 1920.

efecte d'un taló de 50 lliures i l'inici de tres anys de viatges i canvis de residència, que John resumeix quasi telegràficament en el paràgraf següent: "I finished my book, was given fifty pounds for it by a sympathetic pacifist and we went to Ireland to spend it on a honeymoon being nearly torpedoed on the way. Next we lived in London for six months; then we went to Oxford for a year so that my wife could read anthropology and have a baby. Then we lived for a few months in an old house in Berkshire, crammed with furniture and marble statues of the owner's forebears. Here I found half a mouse in the tea kettle and the rest of it came down the water tap next day. Here too I sprained my ankle playing a pianola, thus becoming one of the few martyrs to modern mechanical music. Then we lived at Southampton for a year and had another child. Next I bought the house in Surrey as I have fully described elsewhere and then we suddenly decamped and buried ourselves in the Pyrenees"(42). He citat aquest passatge extensament perquè entenc que és ben simptomàtic del temperament aventurer i vitalista que caracteritza molts anys de la vida de Langdon-Davies. En tot cas, veiem com en menys de tres anys el jove estudiant s'ha convertit en el pare de dos fills: Peter, nascut el 23 de juny de 1919 a Oxford, i Robin, nascut a Southampton el 9 de setembre de 1920.

Però de les anades i vingudes de la nova família abans de l'escapada als Pirineus ens interessa fixar-nos especialment en l'estada a Irlanda i els contactes que John hi estableix. En efecte, John aprofita la seva "lluna de mel" a Irlanda per fer alguns articles periodístics, especialment per al Daily Herald (Berkshire), on tenia bons amics, i així coneix el poeta W.B. Yeats, James Stephens, Maud

42 De l'autobiografia inèdita, a "An Adventure with Poverty". APLD.

Gonne, John Richard Green i una colla de figures destacades del Sinn Fein en els moments de la gran efervescència independentista previs a la proclamació de l'Estat Lliure d'Irlanda el 1922(43).

Amb alguns líders del Sinn Fein hi manté relació després de l'estada a Irlanda. Aquest és el cas de Desmond Fitzgerald, autor teatral i "Director of Propaganda" del Dáil Eireann (el Parlament Irlandès Independent)(44). Com veurem més endavant, aquestes vivències en relació a la qüestió irlandesa seran importants a l'hora de perfilar les primeres amistats polítiques i literàries de John a Catalunya.

D'altra banda, no cal passar per alt la influència que, durant aquests anys, degué exercir en ell el fet de pertànyer al "1917 Club". La importància que hi dona a les seves memòries fa pensar en una mena de militància formativament més decisiva que, per exemple, la de pertànyer al ILP. És, en tot cas, al 1917 Club on John fa una sèrie d'amistats i comparteix ideals de primera joventut que hauran d'orientar i marcar el seu futur immediat.

El 10 d'octubre de 1917, Virginia Woolf anota al seu diari: "At this moment L.(Leonard) is bringing de 17 Club into existence". El club, que tenia el local social a Gerrard Street, al Soho, neix per iniciativa

43 Cal recordar que l'any 1919, quan John i la seva dona visiten Irlanda, els diputats electes del Sinn Fein refusen l'escó a Westminster i es constitueixen en el Parlament Irlandès Autònom (el Dáil Eireann) i proclamen la República Independent d'Irlanda. Malgrat que el seu intent fracassa, això genera el procés que culminarà el 6 de desembre de 1922 amb el reconeixement formal de l'Estat Lliure d'Irlanda i la retirada de l'exèrcit britànic.

44 De D. Fitzgerald es conserva una carta datada el 6 de novembre de 1919, a Dublín, en la qual anuncia a John la seva propera visita a Londres. APLD.

de Leonard Woolf i altres intel·lectuals socialistes, com a fòrum de discussió especialment dirigit cap als més joves. El nom del club és, probablement, més una referència a la Revolució Soviètica que no pas a l'any de la seva constitució. Per entendre l'ambient que John trobà al club son especialment il·lustratiu els comentaris que en fa el biògraf de Virginia Woolf, Quentin Bell: "It very soon became a centre, not only for the politically-minded, but for a kind of second-generation Bloomsbury". Són, de fet, el paradigma del tipus de jovent que l'any següent saludarà l'aparició dels Eminent Victorians de Lytton Strachey com a manifest generacional, com ja he assenyalat anteriorment(45). Quentin Bell apunta, també, la importància d'aquest element més enllà de les controvèrsies polítiques puntuals. Referint-se als socis més joves del club escriu: "Many in fact were not seriously interested in politics, but they were all deeply and decidedly hostile to the faith and morals of those Victorians and Edwardians who, they thought, had led their generation to catastrophe"(46).

John recorda l'ambient del 1917 Club amb ironia i bon humor. Sobre la seva ubicació al Soho londinenc, per exemple, ens diu: "People used to say that this club was the only house in the street that was not a brothel", i fa una descripció divertida dels seus socis: "It was founded during the war and a very large percentage of its membership had been in prison or was expecting any day to be put into prison. There were

45 Quentin BELL, Virginia Woolf, a Biography, The Hogarth Press, Londres, 1972, Vol.II, P.48.

46 Cinquanta anys més tard, però, Langdon-Davies rememora la figura de Lytton Strachey amb un to obertament crític, i sobre l'anomenat "Grup de Bloomsbury" sentència: "A most unpleasant lot, really, the Bloomsbury set. They reached the height of intellectual snobbery. Yet they produced Keynes, E.M. Foster and some others". Vegeu apèndix 7.4, Lytton Strachey, Twelve Sketchs.

serious minded politicians and one or two really succesful writers with genuine sympathies for the underdog, whom they saw about them in the ranks of their fellow members" (47). Ja se sap, però, que a Anglaterra l'excentricitat no és pas renyida amb l'èxit social, acadèmic o polític. I d'aquest pintoresc conglomerat humà, amb el qual John compartí moltes de les seves inquietuds de la primera joventut, n'havien de sortir, per exemple, un primer ministre, C.R. Atlee (1883-1967) i un Chancelor of the Exchequer, Hugh Gaitskell (1906-63).

47 De l'autobiografia inèdita, a "An Adventure with Politics".
APLD.

CATALUNYA: DESCOBERTA I PRIMERES AMISTATS

El maig de 1920 John i la seva esposa fan una breu visita a Catalunya en un viatge a Andorra, però és justament al cap d'un any-maig de 1921- que el jove matrimoni i els seus dos infants (Peter és a punt de fer els dos anys i Robin té poc més de mig anys) decideixen instal·lar-se a Ripoll. Les raons per la que serà la primera d'una sèrie d'"escapades" a Catalunya les expressa lacònicament en un resum cronològic de la seva vida: "1921: As soon as I could, we escaped mechanical civilisation to Spain".

Es difícil precisar alguna motivació concreta que expliqui la decisió dels Langdon-Davies, però podem apuntar alguns elements que, en el cas de John, devien exercir alguna influència en aquesta determinació. Hi ha, per exemple, l'atractiu de fugir d'una societat de postguerra per algú que ha viscut traumàticament la situació de guerra al seu país; pot entendre's, potser, com una "rèplica" a l'aventura africana dels seus pares; hi ha, probablement, la intuïció del jove poeta, amb estudis d'antropologia, de trobar el paisatge físic i humà genialment contraposat a la "mechanical civilisation" que acaba d'organitzar una guerra mundial...(48)

48 En bona part, els motius per venir a Espanya que un altre company "de generació", Gerald Brenan, manifesta a South from Granada, Londres, 1957, serien perfectament aplicables al cas de Langdon-Davies. Al prefaci, Brenan, que va arribar a Andalusia el setembre de 1919, escriu: "It be naturally be asked how I came to make my home in such a

Sigui com sigui, els Langdon-Davies arriben a Ripoll i lloguen el pis de dalt de "Casa Serrallonga". Les expectatives de supervivència econòmica es limiten a les contribucions de John per a una revista americana finançada per una obscura secta religiosa i a les feines per a una agència de viatges dedicada a organitzar itineraris exòtics pels Pirineus que acaba de fundar un amic. Problemes religiosos, d'una banda, i la poca solvència de l'agència de viatges deixen ben aviat la família sense massa garanties econòmiques. D'alguna manera, però, la parella sobreviu i John es dedica a llegir poesia i llibres d'antropologia i a la contemplació dels espais naturals del Pirineu català. Allò que rellegeix amb més interès són els A Hundred and Seventy Chinese Poems en la cèlebre traducció d'Arthur Waley, "which had quite an effect upon my attitude to the local scenary"(49).

Allunyat dels conflictes socials i polítics de l'Anglaterra de post-guerra, l'autor del Dream Splendid reprèn l'escriptura d'una poesia intimista, de comunió amb la natura i deslligada de les "passions col·lectives". El resultat més palpable d'aquesta situació és Man on

remote spot. The shortest explanation would be that I was rebelling against English middle-class life. Today in our formless society this seems to me an odd thing to do, but I can assure anyone who has grown up since 1920 that he can have no idea how stifling that life was or how very few outlets there were for a youth whose horizons had been changed by reading poetry and who could no longer be satisfied with the routine professions. The England I knew was petrified by class feeling and by rigid conventions as well as, in my case, poisoned by memories of my public school, so that as soon as the war was over and I was out of uniform I set off to discover new and more breathable atmospheres..."

49 Les traduccions de Waley foren publicades el 1918. John tenia la segona edició publicada per Constable a Londres el 1920. Marià Manent recorda que fou Langdon-Davies qui, mitjançant aquestes traduccions, li despertà l'interès per la poesia xinesa, que el poeta català materialitzarà en les seves interpretacions de lírica xinesa que inicià el 1928 amb L'aire daurat.

Mountain(50), un curiós opuscle imprès a Ripoll que servirà de credencial poètica de John davant els seus amics catalans, tot i que fou la seva darrera contribució a la poesia anglesa.

En tot cas, Man on Mountain fou enviat a diversos poetes catalans (Ventura Gassol, Manent, Garcé, López Picó...) i John es troba amb alguns dels seus versos traduïts al català (51). Raons més poderoses que els valors poètics de l'obra de Langdon-Davies expliquen l'interès i l'atenció que uns quants poetes catalans demostren envers Man on Mountain. Ja he insinuat abans l'atractiu que devia exercir la figura de Langdon-Davies entre aquella colla d'intel·lectuals nacionalistes amb els ideals abraçats per les noves que es rebien del procés d'independència irlandès(52). Ve't aquí un jove poeta anglès, actualment resident a l'interior de Catalunya, que simpatitza amb la causa irlandesa i ha conegut Arthur Griffith i altres dels mítics rebels que

50 Man on Mountain, Birrell and Garnett, Ripoll 1922. L'opuscle fou imprès a la Tipografia Ripollesa de Daniel Maideu. La pacient impressió d'aquests versos provocà una anècdota curiosa. El senyor Maideu no disposava de suficients motllos "W", tan freqüents en anglès, i hagué de comprar-ne uns quants més a Barcelona. Els nous motllos, però, resultaren lleugerament més grossos que els que tenia la impremta. Així doncs, el llibret ha esdevingut una raresa de col·leccionista no sols per ser poesia anglesa impresa a Ripoll sinó també pel curiós efecte que fan les "W" del text. L'any 1957, quan Langdon-Davies residia a Sant Feliu de Guixols, envià a l'impressor Maideu una còpia dedicada de Man on Mountain. El senyor Maideu li agrai aquest detall "després de 35 anys, que no passen endebades" (carta datada el 9/10/1957).

51 Records de Marià Manent comentats a l'autor.

52 De fet, d'ençà de la revolta del Dilluns de Pasqua de 1916 fins a la Constitució del nou estat independent, Irlanda fou notícia constant a la premsa catalana. Pocs mesos abans de l'arribada de John a Ripoll es produí la mort de Terence MacSwiney, l'alcalde de Cork, després d'una vaga de fam de 75 dies en una presó anglesa. Fou un dels esdeveniments seguits amb més interès i indignació a Catalunya i a la premsa internacional. La simpatia per la lluita d'alliberament nacional dels irlandesos -que va significar el principi de la fi de l'Imperi Britànic- fou constant en els cercles intel·lectuals i nacionalistes de Catalunya.

acaben de declarar la independència de l'estat irlandès. Com recorda Langdon-Davies, anys més tard, "It was almost like Byron in Greece" (53), encara que afegeix, amb bon humor, que la versemblança de la comparació només s'aguanta si no es pretén comparar la seva poesia amb la de Lord Byron.

Les amabilitats dels poetes i amics catalans l'obligaren, en certa manera, a correspondre amb traduccions de poesia catalana a l'anglès. Així doncs, tot i les recomanacions que li adreçà el príncep Kropotkin (vegeu pàg.35, nota 24) sobre la dubtosa vàlua de les traduccions de poesia, Langdon-Davies n'intenta algunes i queda especialment satisfet de la seva versió de La vaca cega de Joan Maragall. Possiblement amb la intenció de publicar-lo en alguna revista anglesa, escriu un assaig, "Some Catalans Poems", que conté traduccions de poemes de Maragall, J. Folguera, J. Carner i M. Manent. López Picó i el mateix Manent li revisen les traduccions. Dissortadament no s'ha conservat en la seva totalitat o bé restà inacabat(54).

La qüestió irlandesa esdevé, casualment, el fil conductor d'una visió de Catalunya i la seva gent que John anirà integrant al seu

53 Fragments autobiogràfics. APLD.

54 Vegeu "Some Catalan Poems", Apèndix 7.1. En la primera carta de Marià Manent a Langdon-Davies, el poeta català, que ja li ha traduït alguns poemes, li comenta en un francès exquisit les dificultats del traductor: "J'ai donné il y a quelques jours a M. López-Picó la traduction de trois de vos poèmes. Chaque traduction (vous ne l'ignorez pas) est une tragédie où nombre de beaux êtres sont sacrifiés. Il y a toujours des images, des nuances, des délicatesses musicales qui échappent. Je dois vous confesser que dans mon modeste travail vous ne reconnaitrez pas vos poèmes. Si j'ai réussi a rendre un peu de leur esprit et de leur ton, j'en serai assez satisfait". Un bon complement als consells de Kropotkin. Carta no datada (probablement de 1922) de Marià Manent a Langdon-Davies. APLD.

interès per al país, el qual, inicialment, era sobretot antropològic i paisatgístic. Aquests decisius contactes de la primera estada al Ripollès(55) són a l'arrel de moltes de les seves actituds personals posteriors i expliquen la singularitat dels seus llibres sobre Catalunya en la mesura que és infreqüent, per no dir insòlita, l'atenció d'un estranger respecte al fet nacional català. En efecte, com veurem amb més detall posteriorment, tant Dancing Catalans (1929), Behind the Spanish Barricades (1936) o Gatherings from Catalonia (1952), malgrat la diversitat dels seus propòsits, tracten la qüestió nacional i de la llengua com a aspectes centrals en l'aproximació a l'estudi del país.

Però és l'amistat amb Ramon Casanova i Darné(56) el que esdevé el contacte més determinant i sòlid de John amb Catalunya durant aquests anys. La casualitat, doncs, propícia una intensa amistat entre els dos joves. L'hereu Casanova, fill dels industrials de La Farga de Campdevàrol i de la Hispano Suiza de Ripoll, troba en Langdon-Davies

55 Ultra la correspondència posterior i les memòries dels qui l'han sobreviscut, trobem constatació escrita d'aquests primers contactes en tres dedicatòries a llibres de Ventura Gassol que pertanyien a Langdon-Davies. La primera a La Cançó del Vell Cabrés, Altés impressor, Barcelona 1921: "Tibi, John Langdon-Davies, amice, carmen meum dico in amicitiae honorisque. Signum: Ventura Gassol (Ripoll, 1921)". Durant els primers mesos de la guerra civil es retroben a Barcelona, l'un com a corresponsal de diari, l'altre com a conseller del Govern, i Gassol afegeix a la mateixa pàgina una mena de post-dedicatòria: "Amb el record d'aquells temps inoblidables i amb l'esperança de tants de bells com ens esperen. Ventura Gassol (Barcelona, agost 1936)". La tercera l'escriu en la mateixa ocasió a la seva versió de l'obra de F. Vielé-Griffin, La cavalcada de Ieldis, Barcelona, 1932, amb clara referència a l'època de Ripoll: "A John Langdon-Davies, al poeta, a l'amic, recordant els temps heroics de la nostra primera joventut. V. Gassol (Barcelona, agost 1936)".

56 R. Casanova (Campdevàrol 1892-Barcelona 1968). Enginyer. Havia estat l'introduïdor de les tècniques d'estampació de l'acer i la fabricació d'acers inoxidables. Membre fundador d'Acció Catalana el 1922, col·laborà amb La Veu de Catalunya, La Publicitat i en la majoria de revistes culturals i polítiques del Ripollès, sovint amb el pseudònim Bern.

l'esperit selecte amb qui pot filosofar, parlar de poesia i literatura i practicar l'anglès. Ramon Casanova es converteix en el guia idoni que introdueix els Langdon-Davies en els secrets dels racons més bells dels Pirineus i els descobreix la història, la llengua i les aspiracions nacionals dels catalans. A més, Casanova és un activista amb moltes amistats en el món de les lletres i el moviment nacionalista (Manent, Garcés, López-Picó, Batista i Roca, Serra i Moret, Comorera, Ventura Gassol...). Casanova i Langdon-Davies coincideixen, doncs, en una etapa de les seves vides presidida per idealismes i entusiasmes juvenils al voltant d'activitats tan diverses com la poesia, la història, la contemplació de la natura o la política.

El mateix Casanova i les amistats que esdevindran comunes i perdurables (Marià Manent, López-Picó i Tomàs Garcés, en especial) situen plenament Langdon-Davies en un corrent de la intel·lectualitat catalana que farà precisament aquell any 1922 la seva eclosió política i que durant els mesos d'abril i maig s'articularà en la Conferència Nacional Catalana d'on sorgirà l'ideari bàsic d'Acció Catalana. Efectivament, el nou partit aglutina els intel·lectuals més joves que, provinents de la Lliga Regionalista, professen un nacionalisme més pur i radical, o si es vol, menys pragmàtic, que el de la Lliga. La simple enumeració dels qui signen el manifest de la Confederació Nacional Catalana(57) indica clarament el pes específic dels intel·lectuals en la

57 Quant als qui signen el primer manifest, hi ha, entre altres, Josep M. Pi i Sunyer, Ramon d'Abadal, Ventura Gassol, Jaume Bofill i Mates, Nicolau d'Oliver, Rovira i Virgili, Carles Soldevila, Francesc Vayreda, Manuel Raventós, Josep Pla, Alexandre Plana, Francesc Galí, Rafael Massó, Jordi Rubió i Balaguer, Miquel Ferrà, Joan Creixells, López-Picó, J.V. Foix, Francesc Trabal, Josep M. de Sagarra... Per a una llista completa, vegeu Montserrat Baras, Acció Catalana 1922-1936, Biblioteca de Cultura Catalana, Curial, Barcelona 1984, pàg. 17.

formació d'Acció Catalana.

Gradualment, doncs, la percepció de Catalunya, que per a Langdon-Davies és inicialment de fascinació pel paisatge pirinenc i de refugi idil·lic per alliberar-se d'una civilització que l'ofega es va transformant, a mesura que creixen els contactes i amistats amb aquells catalans cultes amb ideals estètics i polítics, en una fascinació i interès global per al país, la seva història i la seva gent.

No és estrany, doncs, que Langdon-Davies sigui present al primer miting d'Acció Catalana que l'entitat local "Ressorgiment" organitza a Ripoll el 3 de setembre de 1922. El principal orador és Ventura Gassol (58), que parla des dels balcons de "Ressorgiment" davant per davant de l'Ajuntament. El Catllar, setmanari nacionalista del Ripollès, es fa ressò de l'acte i menciona entre les personalitats assistents el "poeta

58 Durant les setmanes anteriors, La Publicitat de Barcelona anuncia i informa àmpliament d'aquest primer aplec/miting que serveix d'acte fundacional d'AC al Ripollès.

De fet, i segons que explica a Behind Spanish Barricades (1936), Langdon Davies ja havia assistit l'any anterior a un miting de Ventura Gassol a Ribes de Freser: "We came to Ribes. I always think of an evening in 1921 in Ribes. T. (Ramón Casanova) had brought me to hear a wild-haired poet stir up the inhabitants to a frenzy of Catalanist nationalism. I can see him now exhorting them to use their own language and not Castilian: 'Your language is your spirit, and your spirit is your race', I think he said and we all applauded. Two years later this same young man disguised as a monk escaped over the Pyrenees from Primo de Rivera; later still he had tried to lead a Catalan expedition over from Prats de Molló by the pass that Hannibal once took, but fortunately for everyone the French gendarmerie were told all about it and no one got into Spanish territory. And now Ventura Gassol, the wild poet, was Minister of Culture in the Catalan Generalitat; and Ribes was barricaded at both ends. Ribes, where Richard Ford had found the best trout fishing a hundred years ago, Ribes wick leads to Nuria in the snows." (pàgs. 114-115).

anglès John Langdon-Davies"(59). La presència d'un anglès que malgrat la seva joventut ja té status d'escriptor i periodista havia de causar una sorpresa especialment agradable entre els participants si recordem que una de les estratègies fonamentals d'Acció Catalana i una de les prioritats d'acció era la internacionalització del problema català "donant-li un sentiment de comprensió i d'aportació dins la comunitat dels pobles que obtingui la coneixença i l'estima de la nostra personalitat nacional"(60)

Langdon-Davies, però, no es limita a l'assistència a mitings i a les converses entre amics. La seva personalitat dinàmica el porta a contribuir al procés de sensibilització pel fet nacional, donant ell mateix conferències sobre el procés d'independència del poble irlandès (61). A Behind the Spanish Barricades recorda amb un punt d'ironia la que donà a Vic per a un públic majoritàriament eclesiàstic: "Fifteen

59 El Catllar, núm. 124, 9/set/1922. Aquest setmanari nacionalista s'imprimia a la Tipografia Ripollesa de Daniel Maideu (que va imprimir Man on Mountain) i es publicà de l'abril de 1920 al març de 1923. L'article, escrit molt probablement pel mateix Ramon Casanova es dol de la negativa de l'abat a deixar onejar la senyera al campanar del monestir amb motiu de l'acte, i cita entre els assistents les següents personalitats: "el senyor Massó i Llorens, que es féu cèlebre pel seu acte d'amor a la llengua nostra en aquell famós sopar del Ritz, el senyor Raimon d'Abadal, diputat provincial, en Raventós, en Carles Rahola, en Tomàs Garcés, en Pere Sacrest, d'Olot, el senyor Guarro, regidor de l'Ajuntament de Barcelona, en Duran Reynals, el poeta en Joan Draper, el poeta anglès Langdon Davies...". Amb Ventura Gassol intervingueren a l'acte Rovira i Virgili, Martí Esteve, Pelai Vidal, Lluís Massot, Bofill i Mates, Maria Passola i Ramon Casanova.

60 De la ponència d'organització i propaganda de la Conferència Nacional Catalana. Citat per Montserrat Baras, op. cit., pàg. 28.

61 Ja he esmentat en una nota anterior l'interès que despertà el procés d'independència irlandès. Durant tot l'any 1922 la premsa catalana segueix els esdeveniments a Irlanda amb notícies, comentaris i editorials. Algunes de les figures del moviment independentista són ben conegudes dels lectors, especialment, és clar, el mític batlle de Cork. A l'aplec de Ripoll, Casanova s'hi referí en el seu parlament parlant dels "veritables herois qui, com el batlle de Cork, estan generosament disposats a morir per la terra i pels ideals". La Publicitat, 5 de setembre de 1922.

years ago I was rash enough to give a lecture in Catalan, in Vic. It was on the Irish Sinn Fein movement, and it was given in an exhumed Roman Temple. The audience of three hundred was two-thirds priests. In Vic there had been priests everywhere. The great main square of Vic, the streets, the cafés, all had been thick with priests whenever I had come that way. Priests and sausages were the sole local products".

PERIODISME I POLITICA: CANDIDAT LABORISTA

La primera estada a Catalunya es veu interrompuda sobtadament per les notícies d'una malaltia greu de la seva mare. John va a Londres i durant la tardor de 1922 els Langdon-Davies s'instal·len altra volta a Anglaterra (mentre John buscava treball, Connie i els nens s'havien quedat uns mesos a Ripoll). La família no retornarà a Catalunya fins al cap de quatre anys.

Durant aquest període, Langdon-Davies treballa per a una indústria cinematogràfica, és candidat laborista al parlament, consolida la seva carrera periodística, publica el seu darrer llibre i inicia els "Lecture Tours" pels Estats Units. A més, manté els contactes personals i l'interès per Catalunya amb encàrrecs professionals com els reportatges sobre el cop de Primo de Rivera per al Daily News.

A Londres, mitjançant vells amics del Club 1917, John troba un treball inesperat que li proporciona Charles Lapworth al departament de publicitat i promoció que dirigeix per la Goldwyn Film Company. La feina consisteix en la promoció i comercialització de pel·lícules de Hollywood per al públic britànic. Els escrits autobiogràfics de Langdon-Davies sembla que suggereixen que gaudeix de l'ambient efervescent de la indústria cinematogràfica i la companyia d'un tipus de gent ben diferent de les seves amistats catalanes. Segons sembla,

l'empresa també queda satisfeta dels seus serveis. En una carta de recomanació, Charles Lapworth afirma que John Langdon-Davies "is destined to make a real mark in the moving picture industry"(62). No obstant això, el seu pas per la cinematografia només compleix la missió de demostrar-li que, si cal, és capaç de ser un "business man". La seva vocació és la d'escriptor i les seves preocupacions són socials i polítiques. El món dels negocis queda com una anècdota formativa.

Les notícies d'un cop d'estat a Espanya en són un bon exemple i propicien una nova visita de Langdon-Davies a Catalunya. El Daily News l'envia a Barcelona en qualitat d'"special correspondent" per seguir els esdeveniments. Del 14 al 20 de setembre de 1923 el diari publica les seves cròniques. Langdon-Davies aprofita l'ocasió per mostrar els seus coneixements sobre la situació política catalana. En una anàlisi de les causes del cop de Primo, "Causes of Revolt", per exemple, compara l'estratègia política de Cambó amb els plantejaments simplement autonomistes del partit del terrarinent John Redmond a Irlanda, i les més radicals d'altres líders catalanistes com Rovira i Virgili amb les tesis independentistes d'Arthur Griffith i el Sinn Fein(63). Valora especialment els efectes negatius que el cop d'estat pot tenir per a la llengua i l'autonomia política a Catalunya i assenyala com a primers símptomes inquietants les destitucions dels alcaldes catalanistes de Sabadell i Terrassa.

62 Carta timbrada de Goldwyn Limited, signada per Charles Lapworth el 6 d'abril de 1923. APLD.

63 "Causes of Revolt", Daily News and Leader, 16/9/1923, Hemeroteca de la British Library, Londres.

La relativa tranquil·litat amb què es rep el cop de Primo de Rivera disminueix l'interès periodístic i Langdon-Davies passa només una setmana a Barcelona. La visita és tan breu que ni tan sols pot veure Ramon Casanova. "We have been disappointed you being in Barcelona and no possible arrangement could be made for a meeting. No explanations wanted, of course, but how avoid being sorry?"(64), es lamenta Casanova en una carta de to pessimista i fatalista davant l'evolució de les coses al país ("Our civilisation must die before any good will have to be done"). De fet, les observacions més interessants sobre la Dictadura a Catalunya les fa Langdon-Davies, anys més tard, quan situa els antecedents de la proclamació de la República. A Revolution in the Land of Quixote(65) escriu:

"I was sent out by a London newspaper to see what was going on there. Even the Catalans remained unmoved. It seems that the large Catalan industrialists were bought out by Primo with promises of prohibitive tariffs, while the syndicalists were also bought out, so that nobody shouted 'Visca Catalunya' and Barcelona became relatively free of industrial guerrilla warfare.

All I could see to report was the proclamation of a directorate on all the walls and a notice to say that Primo was determined to maintain public decency and that three cabarets had been fined for permitting actresses to take off their tights between verses of a song. Nothing else; it was almost a pantaloon coup d'état. Certainly there was no picture scribbled in blood on the sidewalks, nor in glory on the skies.

64 Carta de Ramon Casanova, Ripoll, 2/11/1923.

65 Assaig inèdit. APLD. Un article llarg sobre el mateix tema, "The Country of Quixotes", aparegué a The Listener el 10/6/1931. Tots dos són a l'apèndix 3.1 i 3.2.

All Spain remained quiet; Catalunya was quieter than ever. All the speeches dried up and the leading Catalanists returned to writing poetry and essays on literary topics. Primo began repressive measures. The catalan language disappeared from the streets and the schools; nobody seemed to protest. The Barcelona Home Rule Parliament was dissolved; in every town and village the councils and mayors were dismissed and their places taken by Primo's nominees. D.'s father(66) was turned out in his village (a nominated puppet reigned in his stead). The plaque to the founder of Catalunya was taken down and stored. All the photographs of Griffith and de Valera disappeared; new clubs arose with photographs of Primo and the King. Still nobody seemed to reply; only a very few of the Catalanists remained active, but among them was the long haired young man(67) who persisted in telling his countrymen that 'la vostra llengua és la vostra raça', and very soon he had to fly over the mountains into France disguised as a priest. In Paris he joined an elderly colonel, named Macià, who had irritated all the other catalanists for years by refusing any kind of compromise and always being far more extreme than they. These two proceeded to hire a small office and founded 'Estat Català', the free Catalan state of the future..."

Més endavant menciona la fredor popular durant les visites reials i les multituds als enterraments d'Antoni Gaudí i d'Angel Guimerà com a símptomes del catalanisme latent i, comparant Primo amb Mussolini,

66 El pare de Ramon Casanova, a Ripoll.

67 Ventura Gassol

conclou que el general espanyol "was not a tyrant so much as a buffoon".

El retrobament amb les amistats dels darrers anys de la guerra li desperten la voluntat de participació en la vida pública després de l'interludi d'aïllament que ha suposat l'estada als Pirineus catalans. Langdon-Davies vol participar activament i a les eleccions generals de 1923 és nomenat candidat laborista al districte d'Epsom (Surrey).

La situació política a Anglaterra és inestable. A partir del declivi polític de Lloyd George, el primer ministre que havia guanyat la guerra, es produeixen tres eleccions generals en menys de dos anys (15/11/1922; 6/12/1923; 29/10/1924). Això propicia l'aparició en la política britànica de dues de les figures més rellevants de la dècada següent: el conservador S. Baldwin i el laborista Ramsay MacDonald. D'altra banda, s'inicia la davallada del partit liberal davant els progressos dels laboristes i de les peculiaritats del sistema electoral, que dificulten clarament la formació de parlaments que no siguin bipartidistes.

Són justament les eleccions de 1923, les de la candidatura de Langdon-Davies, les que signifiquen el punt d'inflexió de la nova situació. D'una forma inesperada, Baldwin, el substitut de Bonar Law que ha dimitit per malaltia, dissol el parlament per convocar unes eleccions que suposen, en realitat, un referèndum sobre la política proteccionista. Els liberals, defensors del mercat lliure, no podien donar suport a la majoria conservadora que havia fet del

proteccionisme el punt central del seu programa. Davant de la impossibilitat d'un govern de coalició, el rei George V ha de demanar als laboristes, la segona força política, la formació de govern. Així doncs, malgrat no ser el partit més votat, MacDonald forma el primer govern laborista. L'experiència, però, és efímera. Malgrat la prudència de MacDonald i la resignació del rei ("They -els nous ministers- have different ideas to ours as they are all socialists, but they are to be given a chance and ought to be treated fairly"(68), una campanya astuta i poc neta presentant els laboristes com a subordinats de la política soviètica limita l'experiència de govern a deu mesos. L'octubre de 1924 els conservadors de Baldwin recuperen el govern amb una àmplia majoria.

Per a Langdon-Davies, el fet de ser candidat al Parlament del que serà el primer govern laborista anglès es converteix en una tarja de presentació atractiva per als "Lecture Tours" als EUA. Aquesta serà la millor conseqüència de la seva aventura política, perquè és obvi, des del principi, que les possibilitats d'elecció d'un laborista a Epsom eren remotes per no dir inexistents.

Ell mateix descriu la situació: "The chances of a Labour Party candidate in it (Epsom) were absolutely nil; it would be what is called a 'propaganda fight' which means that your supporters are few enough to turn up in full force to your own meetings, which do so as to cheer opinions which they already hold. Thereby you are prevented doubly from doing any good, your opponents cannot find any room in

68 Del diari personal del rei. Citat per Harold Nicholson a King George the fifth: His Life and Reign, 1952, pàg. 389.

your meetings, and there are none of your supporters free to carry the gospel elsewhere in the chilly night of outside ignorance because they are all too busy keeping intellectually warm with you"(69).

Els conservadors d'Epsom pretenen utilitzar l'actitud de Langdon-Davies durant la Primera Guerra Mundial per desqualificar-lo. El fet provoca la resposta de diversos simpatitzants laboristes que ho veuen com una clara maniobra per evitar la discussió sobre la qüestió (el proteccionisme) que es debat realment en l'elecció. Així, onze ex-combatents signen un manifest demanant el vot per a Langdon-Davies i ho aprofiten per acusar el candidat conservador, Sir Rowland Blades(70), de donar suport a un govern que no atén les reclamacions dels pensionistes de guerra ni accepta dispensar del pagament d'impostos les vidues d'ex-combatents. Els qui signen, en una mena de rehabilitació pública del dret a l'objecció de consciència que Langdon-Davies exercí cinc anys enrera, demanen el vot perquè: "Having heard Mr. Langdon-Davies speak, we are convinced that he is the true supporter of the ideal to end war for which we fought or suffered, and we appeal to every lover of fair play and real sportmanship, to vote for Mr. Langdon-Davies", tot i que, en lletra més menuda, s'inclou l'afegitó, "if only as a protest against the meanness of his opponents", que denota l'escassa convicció dels mateixos laboristes en les possibilitats d'elecció del seu

69 Dels primers escrits autobiogràfics. APLD.

70 Rowland Blades, diputat conservador, fou al cap dels anys membre de la House of Lords i ostentà el càrrec honorífic de Lord Mayor of London.

candidat(71).

Les previsions s'acompleixen i el candidat conservador és reelegit. L'aventura de la política professional acaba per a Langdon-Davies amb el resultat d'aquesta elecció frustrada(72).

Mentrestant, John va definint allò que serà la seva més estable i sòlida font d'ingressos. A part del periodisme de reportatge, durant l'any 1924 exerceix regularment la crítica de llibres a diverses revistes, especialment al setmanari The New Republic i a la publicació mensual Empire Review(73). Les seves recensions són dedicades, normalment a llibres d'antropologia i de ciència i li suposen una bona pràctica per a la sèrie de llibres d'assaig i divulgació científica que s'inicia el 1925 amb The New Age of Faith i que constituirà el gruix de la seva obra publicada.

Durant aquesta època reprèn els contactes literaris al seu país.

71 Signen el manifest, adreçat als electors del districte d'Epsom, els següents ex sub-oficials: S.J. Headley, N.A. Lester, C.B. Griggs, R. Conroy, P. Butterworth, G.W. Hardiment, R.W. Hersey, Oswald Sims, J.J. Tuppy, W.R.H. Vernon i F.J. Wood. APLD.

72 Tot i això, sembla que John intentà trobar feina en l'aparell del partit després de les eleccions. Així ho suggereix la carta que li adreçà Sydney Webb el 27/2/1924, és a dir, al cap de dos mesos de les eleccions. El diputat fabià i ministre de Comerç del primer govern laborista pensa que serà difícil trobar una feina dins del partit perquè "at present, financial reasons compel reduction rather than increase of staff in any direction". APLD.

73 El títol d'alguns dels llibres recensionats per l'Empire Review durant l'any 1924 dona idea de les contribucions més habituals de Langdon-Davies: "Life in Southern Nigeria: The Magic, Beliefs and Customs of the Ibibio Tribe, by P. Amaury Talbot"; "Fossil Men: Elements of Human Paleontology, by M. Boule"; "Galapagos: World's End, by W. Beebe"; "China, by E. Hovelague"; "Battles with Giant Fish, by F.A. Mitchell Hedges"; "The Moon Element: An Introduction to the wonders of Selenium, by E.E. Fournier d'Albe"...

Manté, per exemple, el que serà una llarga relació d'amistat amb E.M. Foster. Justament durant aquest any 1924, el de la publicació de A Passage to India. Foster li demana dos favors curiosos: que li trobi una família respectable per a un jove estudiant hindú i que s'interessí per unes cartes d'Hannah More(74). L'èxit immediat als Estats Units de A Passage to India, que coincideix amb els primers "Lecture Tours" americans de Langdon-Davies, és un tema de conversa freqüent. En un breu retrat literari de Foster escrit al cap de més de quaranta anys, ho recorda així: "I first met Foster when A Passage to India was ceating a furore in America. As I had been lecturing there, he thought I might be able to explain what was utterly incomprehensible to him, why the Americans in particular liked the book. I told him of the lady in the audience at Detroit. Those were the twenties and the Americans still expected to collect our war debts from the First World War. 'After all, Finland had paid up. Could not Britain give India to the United States', she asked, 'in payement of your debts, so that we could give India back to her own people?' It was ladies such as that who had bought A Passage to India in the hope that it was a work of propaganda against the British Raj. In the end, Foster thought he had better spend some of the money collected from American royalties to go and find out for himself"(75).

74 Hannah More (1745-1833), escriptora d'èxit considerable en la seva època, fou la padrina d'una tia àvia de Foster. El novel·lista li dedicà un breu assaig el 1928, inclòs: "Abinger Harvest", Edward Arnold, Londres, 1936, pàgs. 273-280.

75 "E.M. Foster", un dels dotze retrats literaris inèdits que Langdon-Davies va escriure el 1967. Vegeu apèndix 7.4. De la mateixa època és la seva correspondència amb el poeta Walter de la Mare. APLD.

L'experiència americana de Langdon Davies havia començat amb l'arribada a Nova York la matinada del 15 d'octubre de 1924. John ha aconseguit una primera sèrie de conferències que li prepara una agència especialitzada en l'oferta de conferenciants per als diversos clubs que proliferen a les ciutats americanes dels anys 20. Tot i que és un desconegut, a l'agència estan contents: "Feakins says he has never had so good a beginning for an unknown lecturer"(76).

De fet, John comença amb un curriculum breu però prometedor per al públic americà del moment: és anglès, ha passat per Oxford, acaba de participar a les eleccions que han portat el primer govern laborista a Londres, és jove i té bona presència. De moment, els publicitaris han de limitar-se als tòpics: "A keen young Oxford man... delighted citizens with an extremely interesting picture of England's political experiences and economic problems"(77). Però Langdon-Davies sembla guanyar-se els auditoris ben aviat i els comentaris elogiosos s'apilonen: "Possessed of a most engaging personality and speaking with exceptional fluency, the speaker held his audience in wrapt attention for more than an hour during the course of his main address... The question period demonstrated the popularity of the speaker. It lasted until nearly 3 o'clock..."(78).

En aquest primer "tour", John dona una dotzena de conferències. Totes menys una, a Chicago ("Can Women Remain Feminists"), són

76 D'un diari del primer viatge i l'arribada a Nova York. Vegeu "Escrits americans", apèndix 2.1.

77 The City, 26/11/1924, vol X, nòm. 13, Cleveland. Setmanari de "The City Club of Cleveland, a social club with a civic purpose" APLD.

78 Ibid. pàg. 4.

dedicades a la nova situació política creada amb l'elecció del govern laborista a Anglaterra ("Why Trotsky Hates MacDonald", "The Impending English Elections", "The Achievement of Labour", "Some Labour Personalities").

La bona rebuda del públic americà es correspon amb la il·lusió amb què inicia la seva aventura i l'efecte de les primeres impressions de Nova York. En un diari dels dies primers dies, que sembla adreçat a Connie, que s'ha quedat amb els fills a Anglaterra, escriu: "Then the marvels began, just as the Statue of Liberty appeared... and then we came full in view of New York. It was lovelier than anything I have ever seen, the massing of the light and shade on the buildings and the skyline is like a fairy city of palaces. Each building is conceived as a whole and they form together a 'perfect' whole; and the slight mist, quite blue and unlike London fog, held everything in an even more perfect unity"(79).

Un català, Sureda(80), li fa de cicerone per Nova York i amb ell experimenta els primers "shocks" de la civilització americana, que van des de "My first experience of another N. Y. thing, a nonstop express lift, which took me to the fourteenth floor", passant per la N. Y. Library, "This is amazing. I have no idea how many floors there are", fins a l'impacte de la publicitat pels carrers: "After dinner we walked down fifth avenue and Broadway. You have no idea of advertising as it is understood here. Heat and noise are added to

79 "Escrips Americans", Apèndix 2.1.

80 "Escrips Americans", Apèndix 2.1.

light... Some of the sky signs crackle loudly with lightning"(81).

Tot plegat suggereix la imatge d'un jove de vint-i-set anys, encuriolit i fascinat per una civilització nova i diferent, a punt d'iniciar la carrera d'un escriptor d'èxit i amb els encants personals suficients per sentir-se un "bright young man" entre els circuits provincians dels clubs cívics americans. Les dificultats de la infantesa, els idealismes i l'objecció de consciència, o el refugi bucòlic del jove matrimoni als Pirineus catalans, semblen ara més lluny que mai.

De totes maneres, la primera experiència fou positiva i Langdon-Davies esdevé un "habitual" en els "Lecture Tours" americans durant més d'una dècada. A mesura que publica nous llibres s'amplia el repertori de temes per a les conferències. L'any següent, el 1925, aprofita les conferències per passar una bona temporada amb la família als Estats Units. L'edició americana de The New Age of Faith(82) obté un èxit notable i un ressò extraordinari a la premsa. Les conferències del segon "Tour" giren entorn de les polèmiques qüestions que suscita l'autor de The New Age of Faith, on desqualifica com a "pseudocientífiques" les teories sobre les races i les lleis hereditàries popularitzades per Lothrop Stoddard, A.E. Wiggam i altres.

Per a Langdon-Davies, que cita reflexions d'Unamuno contra el

81 "Escrips americans", Apèndix 2.1.

82 The New Age of Faith, The Viking Press, New York, 1925, 255 pàgs. (2a. edició, gener 1926).

dogmatisme a la introducció del llibre, als Estats Units s'està substituïnt la fe religiosa per una nova fe popularitzada per falsos profetes de pressumptes veritats científiques. Les diferències de classe que s'havien de tolerar amb resignació religiosa, ara han trobat la manera de perpetuar-se en base a les lleis de la biologia i la genètica que justifiquen la superioritat de la raça nòrdica o la impossibilitat del progrés social, condicionat per les lleis hereditàries. L'autor es proposa ridiculitzar els pseudo-científics que pretenen utilitzar la ciència en defensa d'actituds socials racistes i reaccionàries. Cal dir que John sap que s'adreça a un públic -el "melting pot" americà- especialment sensible a una qüestió que és clarament d'actualitat. A The Great Gatsby, per exemple, la novel·la que Scott Fitzgerald acaba de publicar, se'ns presenta Tom Buchanan com un admirador de les idees de Lothrop Stoddard, un dels autors populars que Langdon-Davies desqualifica al seu llibre(83).

Sigui com sigui, el llibre rep una atenció sorprenent per ser la

83 En efecte, l'atlètic Tom Buchanan que Fitzgerald presenta com un personatge insensible i ignorant a The Great Gatsby, menciona Stoddard, a qui ell anomena "Goddard", i li atribueix el títol d'una obra que no li correspon. Aquests errors són, sens dubte, recursos satírics que Fitzgerald, assumint l'actualitat del tema, utilitza per ridiculitzar el seu personatge al primer capítol:

"Civilisation's going to pieces" broke out Tom violently. I've gotten to be a terrible pessimist about things. Have you read The Rise of the Coloured Empires by this man Goddard?

"Why, no", I answered, rather surprised by his tone.

"Well it's a fine book, and everybody ought to read it. The idea is if we don't look out the white race will be utterly submerged. It's all scientific stuff; it's been proved".

"Tom's getting very profound", said Daisy, with an expression of unthoughtful sadness, "He reads deep books with long words in them. What was that word we..."

"Well, these books are all scientific!", insisted Tom, glancing at her impatiently. "This fellow has worked out the whole thing. It's up to us, who are the dominant race, to watch out or those other races will have control of things". The Great Gatsby, Scribner, N. Y., 1925, pàgs. 15-16.

primera obra d'un autor pràcticament desconegut. Més d'una seixantena de crítiques a diaris i revistes americanes provoquen una segona edició el gener de 1926. Tot i que hi ha qui retreu el fet que l'autor no sigui ell mateix un científic(84).

L'obra és especialment ben rebuda com a mostra d'allò que hauria de ser una autèntica divulgació científica. Com diu un crític, "this is a book of popular science in the best sense of the word"(85)", i el Herald Tribune afegeix, "rarely has popular science been written with such spicy impertinence, such gay insouciance, or with so much intelligence and such scrupulous regard for facts..."(86).

84 R.C. a Journal of Heredity, maig 1926, i William Goldsmith a Social Science, novembre 1925. Aquest darrer, però, es publica juntament amb la crítica de Paul A. Schilpp, totalment positiva, a la mateixa secció amb el títol "Two Views".

85 L'afirmació de John Haynes Holmes (citada per l'editor en un anunci al Retail Bookseller, desembre 1925).

86 John Bakeless, New York Herald Tribune, 15/nov/1925.

SANT FELIU

Malgrat les bones perspectives americanes, la idea de Catalunya i les amistats que hi ha fet continuen sent una mena de fil conductor de l'experiència vital de Langdon-Davies. Quan John no hi ve per fugir de la "civilització", hi ve per seguir esdeveniments històrics rellevants (fins ara ha estat el cop de Primo de Rivera; més endavant ho serà la proclamació de la República o la guerra civil). Amb els primers èxits americans i amb la professió d'escriptor encarrilada, Langdon-Davies torna a intentar d'establir una residència fixa a Catalunya.

De fet, d'ençà de la tardor de 1922, John manté una correspondència amb Ramon Casanova, la qual, a més de les qüestions d'amistat personal, serveix per canalitzar les seves relacions amb el país i els amics. Poc després d'arribar a Londres, la tardor de 1922, inicia unes col·laboracions a La Publicitat amb el títol "Lletra de Londres". Aquesta contribució, però, és efímera i només es publiquen dues cròniques, el 14 i el 25 d'octubre de 1922. Algunes comparacions entre Londres i Barcelona, l'actualitat política de la Gran Bretanya i l'inevitable seguiment de la situació a Irlanda són els temes d'aquesta breu contribució de Langdon-Davies a la premsa catalana(87).

D'altra banda, esdevé un contacte per als amics catalans que visiten Londres. López-Picó, per exemple, s'excusa de no poder realitzar

87 La Publicitat, 14/10/1922 i 25/10/1922, Barcelona, AMH.

un viatge planejat a Londres la Setmana Santa de 1923, però li adreça "Monsieur Pompeu Fabra, président de l'Institut d'Estudis Catalans", qui "me remplacera auprès de notre ami, Millàs-Raurell, et j'espère qu'ils sauront vous exprimer tous mes regrets de n'avoir pu les accompagner..."(88).

L'octubre de 1923 Casanova li escriu que, "López-Picó often speaks of you..." i li assegura que, "I will make all my political party know your articles and want to publish a good report of your book on Catalan questions"(89).

El juny de 1924, Casanova convida John a passar uns dies a Ripoll, "We and the Sayós will be delighted to have you here for a fortnight and shall help gladly you to come. Will you accept?"(90) i té ganes de parlar de la situació política i del conformisme que sembla que la gent mostra amb la dictadura, perquè a ell li sembla que "the time to act is approaching gradually". A la mateixa carta, Josep Sayós, el company de Casanova, amb qui varen establir una bona amistat durant l'estada a Ripoll, li dona les gràcies "pels vostres treballs en favor de Catalunya", i afegeix, "Ens en recordarem sempre"(91).

88 Carta de Josep Ma. López-Picó a Langdon-Davies, 27/4/1923. APLD.

89 Carta no datada, però molt probablement escrita l'octubre/novembre de 1923. El partit polític és, naturalment Acció Catalana. El llibre "on catalan questions" devia ser un projecte que havien començat i que, en tot cas, no cristal·litzà fins a la publicació de Dancing Catalans, el 1929. Casanova es refereix als articles de L-D. al Daily News sobre el cop de Primo i que ja he comentat més amunt.

90 Carta de Casanova a Langdon-Davies, Ripoll 29/6/1924. APLD.

91 Ibid.

Més endavant, en una carta de la qual Casanova no en vol resposta per escrit, perquè, "it is sure your letter will be stopped and I would be prosecuted unless you simply put questions of bare friendship", aquest el posa al corrent de la situació política que s'ha creat amb la consolidació de la dictadura i li demana que faci gestions a tots nivells per divulgar la situació a Catalunya. Casanova li envia un missatger amb un memorial dels greuges contra l'"Spanish Militarism" que per a ell és pràcticament sinònim d'Espanya ("and you are aware that Spain is mainly and may be only, militarism"). El contingut de la carta és revelador i ple de conceptes que Langdon-Davies utilitzarà quasi literalment en el seu Dancing Catalans (1929). Val la pena citar-la extensament:

"...the moral cruelty of the actual prosecution cannot be told by words. Fortunately, the effect is quite the opposite to which they expected... Socialists, financial people, anticatholics and some clergymen, among which the most intellectual, are in very closed ranks against this union of the Spanish medieval spirit, this real neoinquisition built with the bishops, king, generals and noble blooded stupids, intolerants against our aims of freedom and strong desire of dignity.

All seems prepared for (at the smallest spark) blowing into a revolution that would stain more and more our tragic Ramblas quite enough stained with the blood of catalans killed by the excitement of passion that has been used -now it is proved- as a means of division of our people by the Spanish un governments.

Despite you did not say me a word about it I know you presented yourself as a candidate to the British Parliament. That shows, and I knew that by Mr. Manent, that you are in good terms with Mr. MacDonald and the English actual situation. I never am afraid of begging things. I less like remembering good friendship of the sweet past as a means of persuasion. But now I do, John. If you have found here, among us, only an hour of hospitality remember that now we are in great pitiful condition. Read the report. All our friends are out sentenced, Massó i Llorens for a sample to eight years of penal servitude for speeches delivered months before the adventon of the military government.

Our friends are in very good terms with the people in the League of Nations at Genève. But it seems that France is against us because she is frightened of a similar movement on its catalan side, sooner or later. But be sure that that will come, but only when a freedom of Catalunya will mean for the french catalans a more prosperous and bright situation with their relatives than with their masters. And a real democratic government must be allways on the side of the will of the people. You know what for culture is done by the catalans and what it is not done by the Spaniards here. Now they oblige the pupils in the Mancomunitat and even the clergymen in the church to speak Spanish. It will not be strange a division in the Church. They claim that France is with them because they signed the Tanger Statute, but we know that a small pull from the English side will mean a salvation for us.

Please, John, do what you can. I beg you to beg for us.

You know what catalanism means and how many ideal aims are common with us. The way they send our people to Africa is a shame, the comparison between the percentage of soldiers chosen for Africa from the other provinces and from Catalunya is a cynism. We, catalans, have quite an opposite interest with the Spaniards. They want now the catalan industry to be killed for envie and for having very low prices of the goods because the French money is about a third of the Spanish one. And we have about a 40% of unemployed. But this is good for France as well. While nothing interferes betwen catalan and english people. We can even do very good, with our historical peaceful temper, for the european peace if we can afford to make ourselves free from our actual indignants rulers. I very much hope you will try to help us both in the League of Nations through Mr. MacDonald and by interesting the english mind in our distressed condition, for which purpose it will be very good to have an english paper willing to accept a periodical information from us. I thank you for all in advance in the name of my loved country..."(92).

Es evident, doncs, el paper fonamental de la correspondència amb Casanova en el coneixement real dels esdeveniments del país. Paral·lelament a "briefings" polítics tan explícits, hi ha, constantment, els missatges afectuosos dels amics catalans: "Garcés, Creixells, López-Picó, Millàs Raurell, the Sayós, and so remember you with great affection"(93). En aquesta mateixa carta, Tomàs Garcés hi

92 Carta de R.Casanova a Langdon-Davies, 10/12/1924. APLD.

93 Carta de R. Casanova a Langdon-Davies, Ripoll 29/6/1924. APLD.

afegeix una nota en el mateix sentit: "Demà anem a Núria... Ens recordarem de vós, en parlem sempre".

Una cosa i altra devien convèncer els Langon-Davies de la conveniència de retornar a Catalunya i limitar l'experiència americana a una mena de feina "de temporada" per mantenir-hi els contactes(94) i garantir l'economia familiar(95). John devia escriure a Casanova demanant-li consell sobre quin lloc de la Costa Brava seria el més idoni per instal·lar-s'hi amb la família. D'entrada, Casanova rep la notícia amb alegria perquè "Now we see you are coming still to our country and hope we shall spend happy moments together. Really the Costa Brava is wonderful". Li sembla, en fi, que estaran bé "among the civilized waves of the Mediterranean" i suggereix la zona de L'Estartit, "as one of the best spots to live in", tot i que també li recomana possibilitats més sofisticades: "And if you want good company, we have Port de la Selva where the Catalan intellectuals of to-day leaded by J. M. de Segarra spend their summer holidays"(96).

Finalment, John tria Sant Feliu de Guixols i, acabada l'estada familiar als Estats Units, els Langdon-Davies s'instal·len, la primavera de 1926, al núm 1 del passeig del Mar. Comença, així, la segona

94 Les relacions socials de John, especialment a Nova York són cada vegada més nombroses i notables. Per exemple, John D. Rockefeller Jr. acomiada els Langdon-Davies amb un sopar a la seva casa de Broadway. Carta de J.D. Rockefeller a Langdon-Davies, 6/4/1926. APLD.

95 Al seu ex-professor, Vera Hodge, li sembla molt bé que faci diners als Estats Units, "not only because money is all the good but because it is very meet and right to get all the dollars you can out of Americans. This is one of the few matters in which they serve a useful purpose". Carta de V. Hodge a Langdon-Davies, 10/1/1925. APLD.

96 Carta de R. Casanova a Langdon-Davies, 10/1/1925. APLD.

temporada llarga de Langdon-Davies a Catalunya i l'inici d'uns lligams amb Sant Feliu que perduraran fins a la seva mort.

Els Langdon-Davies s'adapten perfectament a Sant Feliu i aquí passaran uns anys especialment agradables. Quan decideixen marxar-ne, John escriu: "We have never perhaps, before or since, felt so much at one with the surrounding community as we did during those three years at Sant Feliu de Guixols"(97).

La gent del poble s'habitua ràpidament a la presència d'"aquells anglesos del passeig" i aviat John és més conegut com "aquell senyor anglès que balla sardanes" que no pas pel seu nom. Així doncs, esdevenen "perfectly familiar to nearly everybody in the town" i malgrat l'inherent grau d'excentricitat que suggereix la seva presència "the infinite politeness of the unsophisticated Catalan had quite prevented any speculations of a personal sort reaching our ears". Tot plegat queda ben apuntat en aquest retaule d'imatges de la vida quotidiana dels Langdon-Davies a Sant Feliu:

"We were leaving behind us only a few friends and hundreds of pleasant faces known by sight; people with whom we had danced the Sardana; who had listened to our large gramophone, from the road outside, on hot nights, and applauded the Fifth Symphony or Paul Robeson's negro spirituals; who had sold us things in the market and in the

97 "The Open Road", vegeu apèndix 1.3. Robin Langdon-Davies, el segon fill de John, recorda, també, els anys de Sant Feliu com els més feliços de la seva infantesa (Converses amb l'autor, estiu 1895).

shops; who, for the most part, had merely learned to greet us as we strolled up and down the Passeig by the side of the blue harbour, or sat drinking vermouth at little tables on the sidewalk"(98).

Els "few friends" que Langdon-Davies fa a Sant Feliu són, fonamentalment, Josep Pagès i Vicenç Gandol(99). El carter i el fuster de Sant Feliu esdevenen bons amics de l'escriptor, que els convida sovint a escoltar discos "americans" a casa seva. L'amistat amb aquests ganxons senzills i plens de saviesa popular és un altre factor que incideix en la seva concepció de Catalunya. De fet, és el complement mariner, mediterrani, a les seves vivències de la Catalunya interior i pirinenca, i un contrapunt a les seves relacions amb intel·lectuals nacionalistes i cultes. És aquest conjunt d'elements allò que farà que el seu primer llibre sobre Catalunya sigui, d'una banda, una singular barreja d'aspectes antropològics, sociològics, històrics, filosòfics i folkloristes, i de l'altra, una vindicació pamfletària de les virtuts de l'home mediterrani en contraposició al prototipus vulgar característic de la nova civilització americana. De moment, però, Langdon-Davies

98 Ibid.

99 Pagès fou el carter de Sant Feliu durant molts anys i era un home de conviccions republicanes. Gandol, un fuster amb esperit comercial i amb idees polítiques conservadores fou qui construí, d'acord amb l'Ensesa de Girona, les típiques casetes de banyistes de la platja de S'Agaró; amb l'entrada dels franquistes, el 1939, fou designat alcalde de Sant Feliu fins a 1947. Fundador d'una sòlida empresa funerària, recorda amb afecte i admiració la seva amistat amb un "esperit selecte" com el de Langdon-Davies. Un home que "com els grans savis, era modest", perquè, segons Gandol, "en saben prou per saber que no som res". En el que ell recorda com "la millor operació de la meua vida" va comprar el cotxe de Langdon-Davies, un Fiat 6E-2783, que John va deixar a Sant Feliu quan va marxar-ne l'estiu de 1928 i que Gandol encara conserva. Vaig poder parlar amb Vicenç Gandol l'estiu de 1985. El carter Josep Pagès morí fa anys.

continua ocupat amb els seus articles, els nous llibres i les visites als Estats Units.

Tot i que la vida política anglesa comença a quedar lluny i malgrat el seu plàcid "refugi" mediterrani, es produeix un fet que per la seva magnitud, les imprevisibles conseqüències socials i sobretot per tot allò que denuncia, sacseja profundament moltes consciències britàniques i esdevé, per als intel·lectuals més joves, una autèntica interpel·lació sobre les seves relacions amb les classes treballadores. Em refereixo, és clar, a la Vaga General de 1926.

Ja he assenyalat abans que el govern conservador elegit el novembre de 1924 havia guanyat amb una campanya poc neta. Els conservadors havien provocat la irritació dels laboristes utilitzant una suposada carta del president de la III Internacional, Zinoviev, adreçada al jove partit comunista britànic. La famosa "carta roja", l'autenticitat de la qual no s'ha demostrat mai, es convertí en una arma electoral que els conservadors feren servir per suggerir que les esquerres eren simples instruments de la política soviètica.

El comprensible ressentiment laborista trobà una sortida propícia quan els conservadors retiraren les subvencions estatals a la indústria del carbó. La reacció de la patronal fou la reducció dels sous i la prolongació de la jornada laboral. La dels laboristes i els sindicats, potser temeràriament, convocar una vaga general en solidaritat amb els miners. La convocatòria fou un èxit total i la situació de vaga general es prolongà al país del 3 al 12 de maig de 1926. Els miners resistiren encara sis mesos més, però la vaga general es desconvocà, admetent

acords més o menys extraoficials amb el govern, però sota la impressió general que ni uns ni altres no sabien què fer o com orientar aquell estat de coses inesperat, encara que clarament pre-revolucionari.

De fet, Langdon-Davies ho veu de seguida com quelcom que ultrapassa l'episodi polític o el conflicte econòmic i assegura que "the General Strike will remain in our memory... to use a dangerous phrase, as a new variety of religious experience". L'actitud de les masses pels carrers de Londres, que John compara amb les que esperaven l'anunci de la Primera Guerra Mundial el 3 d'agost de 1914, li fa pensar que "the strike has acted as a cathartic within our minds" (100).

Al cap d'uns mesos, Langdon-Davies avalua els efectes de la Vaga General i considera que tot i que és una constatació del declivi i la crisi del capitalisme britànic, ha tingut efectes positius. Per exemple, ha servit perquè "the public has set itself to learn a little about the miner's life" i ho aprofita per fer un llistat de les depriments condicions de vida dels miners. D'altra banda, la vaga ha servit perquè l'arquebisbe de Canterbury criticués obertament el govern i la patronal. Una actitud que Langdon-Davies considera "a surprise to most people who have long thought the Church moribund and blind to all social events"(101). "The moral problem behind the dispute" és, sobretot, un punt de referència inevitable per a John i molts intel·lectuals de la seva generació que, juntament amb els efectes de la Primera Guerra Mundial i la depressió econòmica de 1929, constitueixen un conjunt

100 "Crowds and Crisis", Harper's Monthly Magazine, Nova York, maig 1926, pàgs. 114-118.

101 "The Blessings of the Coal Strike", The Independent, vol.117, nòm 3968, 23/10/1926.

d'experiències comunes, d'un impacte social profund, que són a la base d'una progressiva radicalització política a mesura que avança la dècada dels trenta i que els anirà apropant a les posicions del partit comunista.

Mentrestant, Langdon-Davies continua preparant els "Lecture Tours" anuals i col.laborant en revistes de divulgació científica. Aquests treballs, bàsicament periodístics, aconsegueixen sovint, per l'atractiu del tema o la creixent popularitat de l'autor, sobretot als Estats Units, editar-se en forma de llibre. Aquest és el cas de A Short History of Women(102) i The Future of Nakedness(103), escrits a Sant Feliu el 1927 i 1928, respectivament.

Si New Age of Faith es pot llegir com un manifest contra els prejudicis racials que popularitzen els pseudocientífics, on l'autor, amb un estil popular i deliberadament polèmic, contrarresta "en el mateix terreny" la influència de diversos autors "populars", A Short History of Women s'ha d'entendre com un treball molt semblant aplicat als mites i prejudicis de la condició femenina. En aquest cas, els autors fustigats són W.L. George, Anthony Ludovici i Otto Weininger. Langdon-Davies pretén evitar de caure en el subjectivisme a l'hora de tractar el tema, encara que vol fer el llibre assequible al lector no especialitzat. L'autor aclareix d'entrada, els objectius del llibre i fa recomanacions bibliogràfiques d'estudis estrictament científics sobre

102 A Short History of Women, The Viking Press, Nova York, 1927. L'edició anglesa és de Jonathan Cape, Londres, 1928. Una versió resumida i revisada es publicà a The Thinker's Library, núm 72, Watts, Londres, 1938.

103 The Future of Nakedness, Harper and Brothers, Nova York, 1928. Edició anglesa, Noel Douglas, Londres, 1929.

cada un dels temes que es tracten. En una nota d'aclariment i justificació, que podria ser vàlida per a gairebé tota la producció de divulgació científica, diu: "The chapters in this book are essays rather than theses, and they are intended therefore rather to stimulate thought than to satisfy a quest for complete information. Everything almost in its subject matter is controversial and the authorities rarely agree with one another. The reader will therefore not expect to find more than a point of view and will need to go to other writers for confirmation or disagreement on many matters. The author would have preferred to spend ten years upon a longer History in many volumes, but as that does not seem possible a shorter work may have at least a temporary value"(104).

Així doncs, tot i que l'autor es cura en salut, les critiques són les previsible. Acusacions d'imprecisió científica i de detall i elogis per la força de l'estil i el domini de l'escriptura polèmica en el camp de la ciència popular. Com a resum d'aquestes opinions, citaré les conclusions de dos informes editorials encarregats per la Viking Press. Tots dos fan l'habitual llistat d'imprecisions o afirmacions insuficientment provades, però mentre el primer (anònim) considera que "The whole approach is altogether too journalistic for so serious and important a subject" i conclou: "My final impression is that while the author's excellent style will unquestionably carry him through, the book will for a variety of reasons not appeal to the average American reader and certainly not to anyone who has any true acquaintance with the facts", el segon, signat per Ruth F. Benedict del Departament d'Antropologia de la Columbia University i de l'American Folk-lore Society, afirma que "The book is far and away the sanest and least naive

104 A Short History of Women, pàg. 7.

account we have of the historical background of the female sex, and it is a book which I am sure would be appreciated especially by anthropologists"(105).

A Short History of Women s'estructura en tres parts diferenciades: una mena de capítol introductori sobre "The biological background to women's history"; cinc capítols "històrics" que tracten les concepcions sobre la dona des de les societats primitives fins a l'època victoriana; i la tercera part, la més periodística, un epíleg sobre el futur a partir de les observacions que Langdon-Davies fa sobre la nova dona americana i la situació de la dona a la nova societat soviètica, que li sembla que són indicatives d'un procés irreversible que afectarà totes les societats industrials.

The Future of Nakedness és un llibre provocador i divertit on, com diu el crític del New York Times, "with a good deal of sound truth and a good deal of extravagance, Mr. Langdon-Davies presents the case for nudity"(106). A partir de la llegenda de Lady Godiva i dels anuncis a l'església de Sant Feliu amb les recomanacions del bisbat de Girona sobre les vestimentes adequades per entrar a l'església, Langdon-Davies fa una defensa del nudisme que es mou entre la crítica a les hipocresies socials i religioses, el puritanisme profund del quàquer que és ell mateix, els somnis utòpics i, sobretot, l'humor. De fet, la crítica americana rep el llibre amb una seriositat que l'autor no pretenia. Al meu entendre, aquest llibre és l'exemple més extrem d'una prosa viva i periodística que ens apropa molt a l'estil del conferenciant provocatiu,

105 APLD.

106 "Why Clothes?", New York Times, 18/11/1928.

brillant i divertit que es guanya la vida amb els "Lecture Tours" americans.

La crítica a l'edició anglesa del llibre capta més clarament la intencionalitat humorística de l'autor (sembla improbable, en tot cas, que els qui han de suportar les inclemències climàtiques britàniques puguin prendre's seriosament algú que predica l'existència d'una societat nudista), tot i que alguns crítics, com els del Sunday Worker(107) i el Birmingham Post(108) hi veuen una crítica seriosa contra l'imperialisme britànic o l'església. The Observer, però, contribueix decididament a la lectura humorística del llibre amb una crítica a l'edició anglesa, que es publica el febrer de 1929: "But was the coldest month since 1895 the right one for issuing this sharp shiversome call to Godivisms?"(109).

L'estiu de 1928, els Langdon-Davies inicien un viatge, amb cotxe i tenda de campanya, pel nord d'Espanya. El seu propòsit és escriure un "journal of contacts with Spanish peasant life and problems". Havent decidit que els fills comencin el curs escolar a Anglaterra, el viatge constitueix una mena de comiat del país. Aquest diari no s'arriba a publicar, però n'han quedat unes notes prou significatives que, en la perspectiva dels seixanta anys que han passat, tenen un interès notable per a l'historiador que vulgui disposar d'un munt d'observacions sobre les condicions de vida als petits pobles del nord rural de la península.

107 "Nakedness and the Negro", Sunday Worker, 14/4/1929.

108 Birmingham Post, 16/4/1929.

109 The Observer, 24/2/1929.

Langdon-Davies recull anotacions sobre les dietes dels pagesos, els preus, l'estat de les carreteres, l'activitat econòmica, el paisatge, els tipus humans... Aquestes informacions estan agrupades en dos reculls: "Journal of a Spanish Journey, July-August 1928" i "The Open Road"(110). El primer comença amb una introducció ("A Hermitage with a View"), on recomana que, "The studious traveller who would know northern Spain more deeply than the ordinary holiday maker would do well to take the train from the frontier at Port-Bou to Gerona, Europe's most neglected beautiful city, and thence on foot or by car ascend to this hermitage of "The Angels", and look down upon the villages and townships of the plain spread at his feet". Des del mirador d'Els Angels, prop de Girona, fa una descripció del paisatge en relació als diversos esdeveniments històrics que han anat deixant la seva marca i han configurat el país actual. La vista d'Els Angels és "a fascinating history book", perquè, "indeed we are not merely enjoying a very fine view, we are watching a microcosmography, an epitome of European history..." La introducció va seguida del Dietari pròpiament dit, que recull anotacions precises de 40 dies. La primera entrada és del 10 de juliol de 1928 (el dia que surten de Sant Feliu) i la darrera, quaranta dies més tard, des de la Vall de Covadonga. Aquí, el dietari s'interromp. L'itinerari els porta per Catalunya, Aragó, Navarra, La Rioja, Castella, Galícia, una petita incursió a Portugal, Astúries, Cantàbria i el País Basc. Cal remarcar que alguna vegada trobem dues entrades del mateix dia, la segona amb observacions escrites directament per Connie sobre aspectes "logistics" del viatge (pneumàtics rebentats, menjars en ruta...).

110 Vegeu Apèndix 1.2 i 1.3.

"The Open Road", el segon recull de la mateixa experiència, és molt més breu i es limita a les comarques gironines, però amb anotacions més elaborades. Aquí trobem confirmació de l'estat d'ànim optimista dels Langdon-Davies durant la segona estada llarga a Catalunya: "Light-hearted but, thank heaven, not afoot nor for that matter with a donkey, we took to the open road; healthy, free, the world before us, the long brown path before us leading wherever we choose!"(111). Aquí el viatge és volgudament iniciàtic. No hi ha l'utilitarisme dels "Tours" americans. Aquí hi ha les ressonàncies de l'amor per l'aventura, l'idealisme, l'esperit lliure que John deu als pocs anys de contacte amb el seu pare per terres africanes.

Els objectius del viatge són formulats més clarament i Langdon-Davies se sent hereu d'una sèrie de pioners britànics en la descoberta de la península: "We left Sant Feliu de Guixols on a roving commission to study agriculture, rural life, population problems and general economic conditions in Northern Spain, Catalunya, Aragon, Navarre, Old Castile, Leon, Galicia; and back through Asturias and the Basque Provinces to Irun and England. Before us over parts at least of our journey had gone the Wife of Bath on her pilgrimage to Santiago de Compostela, George Borrow selling protestant bibles, Sir John More retreating, Mr. Street studying gothic architecture, and of course everywhere that Prince of travellers in Spain, Richard Ford"(112).

Aquest recull és, clarament, la versió "per publicar" elaborada a partir de les notes del "Journal of a Spanish journey". Dissortadament,

111 "The Open Road", cap. 1, Apèndix 1.3.

112 Ibid.

queda incomplet i, com deia abans, queda reduït a la ruta Sant Feliu-Girona-Banyoles-Besaldó-Olot, amb dissertacions especials sobre el Santuari dels Angels i la catedral de Girona.

El viatge culmina, doncs, la segona esta llarga de Langdon-Davies a Catalunya. La conveniència d'"educar els fills" els fa retornar a Anglaterra. Curiosament, doncs, els seus fills han de seguir el mateix procés "to be educated" que John explica en els seus escrits autobiogràfics quan abandonà Sud-àfrica amb la seva mare.

Aquest segon contacte llarg amb Catalunya, però, cristal·litza amb la publicació del primer llibre important de Langdon-Davies sobre temes catalans: Dancing Catalans (1929). Procuraré ara, comentar-lo detalladament.

DANCING CATALANS

Tot i que conté un curiós apèndix sobre la tècnica de comptar i repartir sardanes, Dancing Catalans és ben lluny de ser un simple estudi de dances folklòriques. El llibre confirma el lligam vital de Langdon-Davies amb Catalunya i recull el conjunt de vivències de l'època de Ripoll, les amistats i els anys d'estada al passeig de Sant Feliu. La sardana és l'eix vertebrador, el símbol sobre el qual l'autor basteix un assaig amb objectius diversos. L'autor no escriu com un especialista en danses tradicionals sinó com l'observador que assumeix la frase de Morera, "La sardana és Catalunya", i per tant, per entendre-la, cal tenir present que, al capdavant, "the Sardana is more than a dance, as we have already seen, it is Catalunya, an oppressed nationality"(113).

Així doncs, un dels objectius centrals del llibre és el de divulgar la situació singular del fet nacional català. Això li sembla que és indispensable per situar l'altre gran objectiu de l'assaig: un estudi antropològic sobre la mentalitat els costums, les condicions de vida dels catalans. Ho fa, a més, adreçant-se al lector anglès i americà, el qual no té, en principi, un coneixement clar dels problemes nacionals a

113 Dancing Catalans, Jonathan Cape, Londres, 1929 i Harper and Brothers, Nova York, 1929, pàg. 136.

l'estat espanyol(114) i, per això, quan parla de nacionalisme ja aclareix d'entrada que "The only sane political creed in our town, or rather the only creed held by intelligent and pleasant people, is the creed of Nationalism; every Catalan who thinks politically is a separatist in some form or other, and politics for him is merely a discussion of various means of ridding himself of the feudal incubus of Madrid"(115). La divulgació del nacionalisme català i l'estudi de les formes de vida d'aquesta col·lectivitat són la base per a la tercera preocupació de l'assaig, que és la reflexió crítica sobre diverses dicotomies: civilització nòrdico-americana vs. civilització greco-mediterrània, industrialització vs. societat rural, estandardització de la nova societat consumista americana vs. varietat i saviesa de les velles cultures europees... Catalunya es presenta com un model d'equilibri entre paisatges, activitat econòmica, sentiment comunitari i resistència als nous valors del capitalisme americà; un model amb el qual l'autor se sent personalment identificat. Langdon-Davies creu, però, que el model no resistirà el procés d'americanització que ja pateix Europa i en remarca signes prou simptomàtics. Amb tot, ell encara identifica Catalunya amb el refugi ideal on pot escapar de la "civilització" de les guerres mundials i on pot reposar dels "Lecture Tours" americans, del cosmopolitisme i de les sofisticacions socials, i viure en un grup humà que ell percep que és més pròxim que cap altre als ideals utòpics del seu admirat William Morris.

Veiem, ara, com tracta cadascun dels temes principals que

114 Ens en dona una bona mostra un dels crítics americans del llibre quan situa Catalunya en les "caloroses terres del Sud d'Espanya".

115 Op. cit., pàg 133.

configuren Dancing Catalans.

Els cinc primers capítols descriuen el país i la seva gent. "Mountains and the Sea" és una mena d'introducció a l'espai geogràfic escrita en una prosa gairebé poètica, on el Mediterrani i els Pirineus són presentats en contrast amb la percepció nòrdica del mar i la muntanya. Veiem una petita mostra de l'estil:

"In an English storm, the waves come galloping up like a host of riders; they have the spur of the inexorable tides urging them on; we see them come into sight far out on the horizon, and follow them approaching at breakneck speed to their final catastrophe; nothing stops them as they move and move, always forward, never up and down as here. Here they may be white horses still, but white horses tied up by the head, foaming at the bit, their motion frustrated by a tideless sea"(116).

El segon capítol és dedicat a la sardana com a dansa. L'autor afirma que la sardana es "a communal ceremony, a social ritual" i fa una sèrie de reflexions i especulacions característiques del to que té l'assaig: "Why, we wonder, is dancing in this Mediterranean town an expression of herd instinct, a group interest, while in the cold north where the sun burns low in the sky, and the fire of life, they say, burns low in the body, it is a sex instinct: that is, a piece of individualism?"(117).

116 Op. cit., pàg. 18.

117 Op. cit., pàg. 34.

El capítol conté, també, una introducció històrica de la dansa amb referències a Pep Ventura, Enric Morera, Antoni Turón i Miquel Pardas, així com als dos viatgers anglesos del segle XIX que mencionen la sardana: Richard Ford i Erskine Murray.

"Penelope", el tercer capítol, és un assaig sobre la dona catalana i, per extensió, sobre la dona mediterrània. Les joves són les "Helenes" que, en casar-se, esdevenen "Penelopes" ràpidament envellides, dedicades a la llar i amb més vocació de mares que no d'esposes. A Langdon-Davies, aquest estat de coses li sembla l'explicació de la força de la família a Catalunya, perquè "where mothers are more important than wives, the family will conserve its primitive strength"(118). Amb tot, les coses li semblen a punt de canviar i les pautes de conducta de la dona no resistiran les transformacions imminents i és, per tant, "almost impossible to believe that the present generations of Helens will really turn into just such a group of Penelopes as their mothers".

El problema, no cal dir-ho, és la influència americana i, encara que de moment, "the Sardana reigns supreme, and Helen walks to and from the factory in her rope-soled shoes without heels, and with no pseudo-Parisian imitation of a hat on her beautiful hair", aquesta naturalitat de les joves catalanes està amenaçada perquè, "meanwhile the movies have come and jazz has come. The curious things folk do in Hollywood are watched and commented on; the cafés employ atrocious orchestras to

118 Ibid., pàg. 71. Aquesta és una de les tesis del llarg article que Langdon-Davies publicà el novembre de 1929 al Harper's Monthly Magazine, titulat "The Spanish Woman". És un article típic de "social reformer", amb moltes dades i observacions recollides al viatge pel nord d'Espanya, Apèndix 1.2.

murder syncopation. All this must have its effect some day"(119).

En el següent capítol, "Chastity and vulgarity", l'ambient que envolta la sardana, l'element comunal a l'aire lliure, l'exquisida castedat de la dansa malgrat el contacte de les mans ("When Helen presses the hand of the hand of the man next her in the Sardana, it does mean what you or I would have thought, but simply that the next steps must be three to the right or left instead of two"), li permeten una idealització de la cultura catalana que té com a punt de referència la Grècia clàssica: "All this only serves to illustrate the extraordinary difference between Catalans and the people of Southern Spain: to listen to a 'cante flamenco', to watch a 'taranta' or a 'fandango', is to be compelled to think of love or death, or both mixed into one grim passion. One is tempted to believe that this comes from Africa while the Catalan culture comes from Greece, but it is to the Greece of Homer and Nausicaa with which they had no contact, rather than to the later Greece and Rome, whose colonies certainly did influence them, that the customs and temperament seem similar"(120).

De totes maneres, Langdon-Davies dedica una bona part del capítol a alertar el lector sobre la facilitat de l'observador estranger per idealitzar situacions d'aquest tipus. Considera que un element important per explicar possibles distorsions és el poc domini de l'idioma. Precisament utilitza fragments de cartes de R. Casanova per il·lustrar de quina manera el poc domini d'una llengua estrangera, en provocar

119 Ibid., pàgs. 76-77.

120 Ibid., pàg 91.

errors en les convencions gramaticals, dona com a resultat "out of his partial ignorance things new and old, and alike beautiful and arresting"(121). Les cites de les cartes exemplifiquen, en efecte, una determinada sensibilitat. És, certament, la de Ramón Casanova, però no sembla que tingui sentit fer-la extrapolable a la "dels catalans". Allò que Langdon-Davies vol suggerir és que la visió de l'"estranger" és idealitzada en la mesura que els instruments que té per jutjar la realitat impliquen l'aprenentatge d'una nova percepció, amb mecanismes rudimentaris però alhora sense patir les restriccions dels tòpics expressius habituals dels parlants nadius.

En tot cas, els dos capítols següents entren de ple en observacions sobre ideologia i organització social. La sardana servirà, ara, per plantejar qüestions d'organització econòmica ("The Peasant Transformed") i la qüestió nacional ("Nationalism"). Segons Langdon-Davies, la progressiva industrialització de Catalunya acabarà introduint tots els mals que ell considera inherents a les societats industrials. Per explicar el procés utilitza l'exemple d'un suposat "Pere" que ha anat convertint el seu petit negoci local de suro a Sant Feliu en una indústria d'exportació. El procés ha suposat canvis profunds en la vida de Pere: des de la manera de vestir a l'arquitectura de la seva nova casa i, per extensió, en la vida de tota la comunitat. La creixent industrialització crea barreres socials que acabaran trencant l'esperit comunal que simbolitza la sardana. De moment, però, la sardana no és pas un vestigi folklòric ruralitzant sinó, com l'autor vol deixar clar d'entrada, "the Sardana exists to-day in the smallest village, but also

121 Ibid., pàgs. 93-96. Els fragments són de cartes de R. Casanova datades 6/11/1922 i 2/11/1923. APLD.

amid the tram-lines of Barcelona" (122), i resisteix les transformacions econòmiques. Això s'explica, segons l'autor, per dues raons: "First of all, because it is older and more fundamental than all the changes; a habit, which enthralled men and girls before Homer became blind, is not likely to be easily destroyed; and, second, because its value as a symbol cannot be overlooked by the Catalan nationalists; so long as Catalunya can claim to be an oppressed nation, so long will nationalism and enthusiasm for traditional customs be powerful. The Sardana, indeed is a sublimation of the desire for separatism which even Primo de Rivera cannot suppress"(123). La qüestió nacional és, justament, l'objecte d'anàlisi al següent capítol del llibre.

"You are at your best, in my opinion, when... with all your love of internationalism you describe comprehendingly the oppression of Catalunya", li escriu un lector comentant Dancing Catalans(124). Certament, Langdon-Davies deixa clara l'opinió negativa que li mereixen els nacionalismes. L'experiència històrica de l'objector de consciència de la Primera Guerra Mundial situa els nacionalismes en la perspectiva de l'imperialisme i les guerres. Malgrat això, justifica i procura fer entendre les aspiracions nacionals de Catalunya, especialment davant l'actitud de la dictadura de Primo de Rivera. El símbol físic d'aquesta opressió és present en les manifestacions més innocents. Per exemple, amb la inevitable presència de la Guardia Civil als aplecs: "... we see there, standing rifle in hand, stiff and hot, poor devils, in their uniform, their faces utterly unlike those of the Catalan peasants

122 Ibid. pàg. 103.

123 Ibid., pàg. 126.

124 Carta d' Hugo Vera Hodge, 19/7/1929. APLD.

around, Castilian members of the Guardia Civil. Utterly inactive, utterly listless, hardly aware of anything going on around them, and quite unaware, it seems, that it is a happy scene, they strive to efface themselves as much as possible. Their presence is a double tragedy, to themselves, since they are outsiders wearing an unpopular uniform; to the others, since, however kindly and courteous and harmless they may be as men, they are the symbol of a penetrating, invisible, unreasonable power, lying in wait incessantly to curb and interfere with the daily life of the Catalan"(125).

Els problemes de fons, però, que planteja el fet català en relació a la seva articulació amb la resta de l'estat són resumits per Langdon-Davies en un paràgraf significatiu:

"Politically speaking, a Castilian has all the virtues, vices, and graces of feudalism, while the Catalan aspires to the enlightenment, the failings, the energy, and perhaps the ugliness of a modern democracy. The Castilian, except for the intellectual few, detests education and fears it, often enough logically from his own point of view; the Catalan is almost Victorian in his enthusiasm for education: he would like to have a sound, decent system of universal suffrage, and then he would like to say: 'we must educate our masters'; at least that is the attitude of the ordinary Catalan bourgeois of the towns, who has found himself in the last decade assailed by all the problems of nascent industrialism, and sees the disadvantage of the feudal way of dealing with these problems.

125 Op. cit., pàgs. 138-139.

The Castilian military governors, looking down on the Barcelona streets and factories, see the workers coming out on strike, rooting up the pavements for barricades, burning churches, murdering and pillaging; his feudal code leads him to answer with machine-guns, to drive the living away from the dead, and force them back to partial slavery in insanitary, uninspected factories. The Catalan employer, enlightened and disillusioned with such methods, sighs for a lawful, organised trades unionism like the British, and hence he sighs for education. And so we see that in ten years, from 1914 till 1923, during which the Catalan provinces had their own home-rule parliament in Barcelona, a great system of modern higher education began to grow up: technical schools, arts and crafts institutes, industrial universities, psychological laboratories, as well as various institutes of culture, art and literature. In 1923 came the coup d'état and the establishment of an unconstitutional dictatorship; with a naïve ruthlessness the home-rule government was annulled, and after it fell all its work... It is hard... to deny a validity to the claims of those who tell us that their oppressed Catalan nationality must rid itself of the incubus of the Middle Ages. We cannot altogether help sympathising in the desire of Barcelona to step, albeit a little noisily, out of the fourteenth century"(126).

Aquestes diferències fonamentals en la manera de pensar, juntament amb la repressió contra l'ús de la llengua, la presència militar, el

126 Ibid., pàgs. 142-145.

reclutament per a la guerra del Marroc i altres greuges, justifiquen, segons Langdon-Davies, el moviment nacionalista, interclassista i generalitzat que es detecta en la vida de la comunitat. No obstant això, l'autor creu que resoldre la qüestió nacional comportaria problemes greus inherents a la mateixa essència dels nacionalismes. D'altra banda, hi ha la vocació imperialista latent en les ideologies nacionalistes, de la qual no s'escapa el cas català. L'autor cita fragments de La nacionalitat catalana de Prat de la Riba(127), és a dir, anteriors a la guerra mundial, per il·lustrar les barbaritats que poden dir-se en nom de l'ideal nacional. Són les tesis que presenten l'imperialisme com "the triumphant stage of nationalism", una croada per civilitzar els bàrbars i, per tant, davant la bondat de l'objectiu final fan, sense embuts, una apologia de la guerra com a instrument de civilització. En paraules de Prat de la Riba, que cita la Prússia de Bismark com l'ideal a imitar, i que Langdon-Davies tradueix: "Patriotism and expansion have to accept the assistance of war in international relations today... Poor humanity if it had to submit to the evangel of peace of the Tolstoys! Preparation for war is the most solid guarantee of peace. War, which submits barbarous people to civilisation, is a work of peace and civilisation. A nation which does not know how to defend its rights with arms, cannot sustain or exercise in the world any progressive mission..."(128). No sorprendrà que Langdon-Davies, després de l'experiència de la guerra,

127 Els fragments corresponen al cap. IX, "L'imperialisme", pàgs. 127 i següents. Langdon-Davies devia ignorar l'existència de la 1a. edició de La nacionalitat catalana (1906), perquè situa els escrits al 1910, és a dir, la data de la reedició "per subscripció popular en homenatge a son il·lustre autor" que va publicar "La Catalunya", Barcelona, 1910.

128 Op. cit., pàg.149.

qualifiqui aquestes argumentacions com a "sheer idiocy"(129).

L'altre inconvenient que l'autor preveu davant d'un hipotètic triomf del nacionalisme està relacionat amb els diferents objectius del nacionalisme conservador, de base rural, i el nacionalisme liberal i urbà que pretén convertir Catalunya en una moderna societat industrial. Si això s'acaba imposant, per més que es resolgui una situació injusta, Catalunya s'afegirà a les nacions que pateixen les conseqüències funestes que, segons Langdon-Davies, ha comportat la industrialització a les societats modernes. Catalunya esdevindrà una democràcia industrial en la qual "the town would swallow up all the arts and graces of the countryside and sweep them steadily and inevitably over the Niagara of cosmopolitanism". Una Catalunya lliure no escaparia a la degradació de les noves societats industrials i la pèrdua d'identitat pròpia que Langdon-Davies procura descriure, en contrast amb la Catalunya actual, en els dos últims capítols del llibre. L'autor conclou: "Within fifty years of a free Catalunya, the Sardana would be as extinct as the morris dance in England. For we have come to a stage in human history, when only oppressed nationalities can retain their personalities, the others are doomed to lose everything peculiar to them in the great avalanche of economic world civilisation"(130).

En els dos darrers assaigs del llibre ("Cosmopolis" i "Myth and

129 El catalanisme polític ha tendit a silenciar aquest tipus d'opinions o bé matisar-ne el sentit. Vegeu, per exemple, J. M. Ainaud, "La nacionalitat catalana: l'obra", conferència amb motiu del 75è aniversari de la publicació de l'obra de Prat de la Riba. La conferència és transcrita en el Butlletí d'Omnium Cultural, n.ºm. 40-41, 1982.

130 Ibid., pàg. 155.

Happiness") l'autor insisteix en els perills de l'americanització que pateix Europa fins al punt que "how to escape ruthless and complete Americanisation is becoming a vital problem for every intelligent European". El nou cosmopolitisme, que segons Langdon-Davies es fonamenta en el "materialisme" i el "comercialisme" i té el seu centre de distribució en el Middle West americà, crea la impressió d'un progrés que és fals i que confon la societat de consum amb la felicitat. Aquest procés que acabarà afectant la comunitat catalana posa en perill, d'una manera subtil però efectiva, molts dels hàbits i tradicions que sustenten el sentiment nacional.

Contra aquest món que sembla que guanya terreny inexorablement, Langdon-Davies hi contraposa l'energia, la sana innocència, l'espontaneïtat i el sentit comunal dels habitants del seu poble a la costa catalana. Aquesta idealització de la vida a Sant Feliu li serveix, de fet, per criticar el cinisme, la sofisticació buida i l'autosuficiència que han generat l'"English Intellectualism" i l'"American Materialism". El darrer assaig del llibre critica aquests nous mals socials que han deixat la societat anglosaxona orfe de mites i desil.lusionada ("instead of glorious hopes we see them as sordid half realities") en comparació amb la vitalitat d'aquests "dancing catalans" que viuen en una nació oprimida. En una premonició dels "ismes" que presidiran el debat ideològic de la dècada que és a punt de començar, Langdon-Davies acaba el capítol amb referències al "mite del feixisme" i al "mite del comunisme" com a possibles respostes a l'estat de coses del moment. Ell, però, sembla decidit a no participar i a continuar gaudint del seu refugi mediterrani davant del port "full of evening lights and the buzz of sardine boats putting out to sea", un escenari ideal i

deliberadament idealitzat per acabar les seves reflexions sobre Catalunya: "Round the corner comes the warning noise of the flaviol; the Sardana is about to begin; it is time to stop writing and to go and dance"(131).

131 Ibid., pàg. 210.

LA CRITICA I DANCING CATALANS

El fet que Dancing Catalans sigui un dels pocs llibres per no dir l'únic(132) que, des de la vivència directa, presenta als lectors de parla anglesa la qüestió catalana com un tema d'actualitat justifica un repàs minuciós de la rebuda que la crítica anglesa i americana li dispensà. Comentaré, també, els escassos però significatius comentaris que hi dedica la premsa irlandesa i catalana.

Langdon-Davies és un autor més conegut als Estats Units que no pas a Anglaterra. Potser per això alguns crítics anglesos aprofiten l'ocasió per donar alguna pista sobre la personalitat i la trajectòria de l'autor. Així, per exemple, The Spectator comença presentant-lo d'aquesta manera: "Mr. J. Langdon-Davies belongs to the generation whose enthusiasms and illusions were shattered by the war. Every inch an intellectual -in the dubious sense in which the term is used in England- he went to live for several years among the simple, happy, unsophisticated folk who still to-day number three-quarters of the population of Catalonia. This pseudo-vegetable existence in a small town was interrumped, it appears, by breathless trips to the United States to

132 Un altre anglès que va escriure amb interès i coneixement de causa sobre Catalunya fou l'hispanista Edgar Allison Peers. Aquest, però, publicà estudis acadèmics de literatura (esp. Ramon Llull) i quan parla de l'actualitat a Catalonia Infelix (1937) no era a Barcelona i el llibre és, sobretot, una síntesi d'història de Catalunya amb un apèndix sobre el curs de la guerra civil.

lecture throughout the length and breadth of women's clubs. Such is the unusual background against which must be placed -and judged-this unusual and stimulating little volume..."(133). La revista de Cambridge, Granta, diu que "The author of A Short History of Women and The Future of Nakedness is sociologically-minded, a reformer". A J.B. Priestley no li sembla que la sociologia sigui una cosa gaire seriosa i, a la seva secció de crítica de l'Evening News, diu amb evident ironia, i com un dels defectes de l'autor, que "I imagine that he has at one time read too many sociological works" i el descriu com un "travel philosopher".

Molts veuen en Langdon-Davies el moralista que ornamenta el seu discurs amb descripcions poètiques, La Saturday Review arriba a descriure el llibre com a "rather good and provocative Sermon with the Sardana, or Catalan national dance, for text..." En general, els crítics valoren més la vena poètica de la prosa de l'autor quan descriu el país que no pas quan "sermoneja" i fa comparacions sociològiques. El New Statesman, per exemple, afirma que "he is distinctly better when he leaves these always useless comparisons between one civilisation and another and keeps to the dance, its technique, its poetic emulation of the Mediterranean waves, its mountain setting, the lives and customs of its dancers".

El que ningú discuteix és el seu coneixement real del país. S.B. Trend, a The Observer, celebra que "when we consider the "stuff" that is written about Spain by people who ought to know better" Langdon-Davies sigui "one of the few who have lived there long enough, and speak the

133 Quan diu "folk who still number three-quarters of the population of Catalonia", el crític sembla que es refereix a una tribu en vies d'extinció.

language well enough -even Catalan!- to know what they are talking about". D'una manera semblant, The Times Literary Supplement remarca que "Mr. Langdon-Davies shows that he knows the Catalan people more thoroughly than most foreigners writing about Spain" i encara afegeix que "his modesty in referring to the difficult Catalan language is almost a proof that he knows it extremely well".

Algunes crítiques recullen especialment la qüestió nacional i les peculiaritats catalanes en relació a la resta d'Espanya. Saturday Review fa notar que Catalunya, "looking to the north for its political direction -and this, ideologically opposed to the disguised theocracy of Castile- its strength and fibre are, paradoxically, that admirable regional spirit which pervades all the Spanish provinces, but Castile least of all". The Spectator introdueix la qüestió dels estats supranacionals i les preocupacions de la Lliga de Nacions en aquest sentit. El crític, tot i acceptar l'opressió nacional de Catalunya, sembla sobretot preocupat per justificar parcialment la personalitat de Primo de Rivera i el seu rol històric en relació a Catalunya quan diu: "But he (Langdon-Davies) does not seem to have realized that the feudally-minded Castilian -or 'vulgar' Dictator, who forbids the use of the Catalan language and tries, in vain, to suppress Catalan culture- is only one of the long line of misguided individuals who ever since the French revolution have ignored, in deference to that intellectual absurdity, the nation-state, the essential distinction between nationality and citizenship, between personality and political obligation". Les seves simpaties pel dictador són evidents en l'últim paràgraf de la crítica: "...Moreover, one of the chief virtues of General Primo de Rivera is that while sternly discouraging Catalan political nationalism -and in the process no doubt injuring the genuine

article- this bluff, practical soldier for the first time in Spanish history is seeking by his administrative and economic reforms to build a new Spain on the only solid foundations of regional differences and local patriotism".

D'altres, però, es mostren menys comprensius amb l'actuació de l'estat respecte a Catalunya, i com ho fa el Morning Post, aprofiten per denunciar l'estat de coses actual: "There is no love lost between the Catalan and his Castilian masters. They have forbidden his language to be taught, and the peasant is dragooned by Castilian police whose speech he can hardly understand". En tot cas, com recorda el crític del Yorkshire Post, la publicació de Dancing Catalans és una bona ocasió "to realise that Andalusia is not the whole of Spain, and that the North and North-East have a charm and character of their own".

Als Estats Units, la crítica es concentra fonamentalment en el que algun considera "an unnecessary attack on American civilisation" (Boston Transcript) i a remarcar el fet diferencial català en el context de l'estat espanyol. No cal dir que tot allò que Langdon-Davies relaciona amb el concepte "americanització" és rebut amb poc entusiasme pels crítics americans que, tot sovint i malgrat el to generalment elogiós que mereix el treball, rebaten les opinions de l'autor. El mateix Boston Transcript considera que "He attacks American customs and institutions, commercialism and industrialism, with a fierceness entirely out of place". Harry Mitchell al Brooklyn Eagle insisteix en el mateix argument i arriba a afirmar que "he strikes each blow with malicious force and tears into American civilization with sadistic enthusiasm". William Soskin, al New York Evening Post, sembla que no accepta el fet que algú

pugui tenir una impressió tan negativa d'Amèrica i deu pensar que només pot ser deguda al desconeixement quan escriu: "lead him into this hated America and his sympathetic instincts will find a new message in the new fox-trot, in the emancipation of the machine, in the larger industrialism, in the countless manifestations of a destiny for American civilization not altogether hopeless".

La qüestió nacional desperta interès en la crítica americana tot i que, alguna vegada, la distància provoca algun error d'apreciació. És el cas de Landon Robinson, al New York Evening Sun, quan diu que els catalans són "the equivalent of the Basque people of northern Spain and southern France and, stretching the comparison possibly, a continental parallel to our American Indians". The New York Times admet que "Catalonia is a portion of the European Continent which appears infrequently in newspapers or travel books" i que, gràcies al llibre de Langdon-Davies, es tenen notícies "of the hope of some of its political leaders to obtain complete independence from Spain". Comentaris semblants li dedica Herschel Brickell al New York Herald Tribune, que titula la crítica: "Spain that is not Spain", i creu que el llibre "needs to be recommended especially by prospective visitors to the present International Exposition in Barcelona". L'American Mercury creu que els esforços de Primo de Rivera per eliminar el catalanisme polític no tindran èxit, perquè els catalans "still think of Spain as a foreign country and they still speak their ancient language". E. M. Kelly detecta en aquesta actitud similituds amb la qüestió irlandesa: "Whatever may have been the primitive origin of this ancient people, there is something extremely celtic and reminiscent of Ireland in Catalonia's attitude toward the oppressing Castile".

Precisament, l'única apreciació crítica irlandesa que he pogut trobar confirma aquesta impressió i va més enllà del que l'Irish Statesman anomena "The political resistance to the centralising pressure of Madrid". El crític irlandès creu que Langdon-Davies escriu com un observador massa "distant" i no s'adona, per exemple, que la manera de ser de la dona catalana és comuna en els països catòlics com Irlanda, independentment del clima, la llengua o el paisatge. El crític troba inquietants les reflexions de Langdon-Davies en el sentit d'associar la pervivència de les tradicions i la manera de viure dels catalans justament a la seva condició de nacionalitat oprimida. Però, veient el procés irlandès, set anys després de la independència, pensa que Langdon-Davies podria tenir raó al capdavant, i acaba lamentant-se dels efectes de l'americanització sobre la vida a la nova Irlanda lliure, que confirmarien les tesis de Dancing Catalans: "In this new Free State of ours, as one sees the great electric-light standards of Siemens-Shuckert stalking across the land; as one looks at a resurrected O'Connell Street architecturally indistinguishable from almost any street in almost any English provincial town, with its shops full of English newspapers and goods, its cinemas given over to American films, one wonders a little sadly -tariffs and language movement notwithstanding- how much that has hitherto been distinctively Irish will be left to this country fifty years hence?"

A Catalunya, la publicació del llibre només rep l'atenció del diari catòlic El matí, on Cristina Casanova hi publica una ressenya. La filla de Ramon Casanova diu que "John Langdon-Davies no és ja un foraster. Tothom sap que ha traduït a l'anglès Maragall i Folguera, i dels nostres

temes ha donat conferències als Estats Units. L'amic personal de G.K. Chesterton i l'ex-candidat laborista són altres tants títols que l'apropen a la nostra familiaritat". Després d'aquesta presentació, C. Casanova fa un resum dels continguts del llibre i el qualifica d'"obra densa" que ha d'interessar "els nostres literats i els nostres lectors no solament per la seva importància científica sinó encara pel valor documental de la nostra història interna". En l'aspecte negatiu, retreu "alguna que altra inexactitud en les dades, així com la manca d'un bon índex al final"(134).

J.B. Alemany, professor del Carnegie Institute of Technology de Pittsburg, als Estats Units, intentà publicar-ne una ressenya en una de les cròniques que durant els anys trenta publicava a La veu de Catalunya. Per alguna raó això no fou possible, tot i que Alemany va escriure a Langdon-Davies per demanar-li detalls, ja que, segons deia, estava preparant "an article about your Dancing Catalans for La veu de Catalaunya de Barcelona. L'única apreciació crítica que conté la carta és el següent paràgraf: "As a Catalan I am exceedingly grateful to you for having written the book, so truthful, so unusually honest. I disagree with you on some interpretations of visible facts, on points on which few people agree, anyway"(135).

De fet, el comentari escrit més decididament entusiasta d'un català va haver d'esperar vint anys. Comentant un llibre d'Henry Pepratx-Saisset sobre la sardana, editat a Perpinyà, Josep Pla escriu al

134 El matí, divendres, 6/9/1929.

135 Carta de J.B. Alemany, datada a Pittsburg i adreçada a New York, 10/4/1930. APLD.

Destino, el 23 de juliol de 1949: "En un determinado lugar de su libro, el señor Pepratx se pregunta: Existe un buen libro sobre la sardana? Yo le responderé que el mejor ensayo teórico -casi diría filosófico- sobre la sardana, ensayo que va seguido de una parte práctica, está constituido por el libro de Mr. John Langdon-Davies, titulado Dancing Catalans (Jonathan Cape, ed. Londres, 1a edición:1929). No hay en nuestra lengua -si se exceptúa la poesía de Maragall- nada comparable a este ensayo..."(136).

136 Josep Pla, "El fenómeno sardanístico actual", Destino, no.624, Barcelona, 23/7/1949.

1930 - 1935

Els articles i reportatges periodístics que són sovint el complement econòmic i temàtic dels "Lecture Tours" i la publicació de llibres demostren la diversitat de registres de l'autor i la seva intuïció periodística per aconseguir esdevenir un cronista "del seu temps". Això ho fa, i ho farà seguint els esdeveniments històrics "in situ" o bé ocupant-se, abans que ningú, de qüestions d'actualitat. Un bon exemple d'aquesta darrera faceta és la secció fixa de crítica discogràfica que publica durant dos anys a The Spectator.

Inicialment la secció s'anomena "The Gramophone", i més tard, "Gramophone Notes". Les millores tècniques que a partir de 1925 s'introdueixen en els aparells de reproducció convencen The Spectator i Langdon-Davies que cal tractar d'una manera seriosa la creixent producció discogràfica. A la primera col.laboració anuncia clarament les seves intencions: "...I propose in these columns to treat the gramophone as a vehicle of culture and to review its products as new books, plays, and concert performers are reviewed"(137). En realitat, l'estat incipient de la indústria discogràfica fa que la secció, a part de la crítica musical, aplegui consells sobre l'elecció d'un bon gramòfon, informi de les novetats del mercat o suggereixi als lectors la millor manera d'aconseguir una determinada gravació.

137 "The Gramophone", The Spectator, 31/8/1929, pàg.272.

A part, però, d'aquestes activitats, diem-ne "paral·leles", 1930 és l'any de la publicació del que hauria de ser el seu assaig de divulgació científica més substancial i el més traduït a d'altres llengües. Em refereixo a l'obra en què John ha treballat d'ençà de la publicació de Dancing Catalans. El novembre de 1929, a la casa que han llogat a Darlington, Devon, l'acaba i la titula Man and his Universe (138). El llibre és, certament, de concepció ambiciosa i significa la consagració de l'estil propi que Langdon-Davies havia començat a treballar a New Age of Faith. Més que una història de la ciència, Man and his Universe pretén fer una història "of the human imagination as science has affected it and allowed it to grow", segons que diu ell mateix a la introducció. És a dir, el tema de l'assaig és la transformació que, al llarg del temps, ha sofert la concepció de l'home respecte a l'univers que l'envolta i respecte al seu propi destí. Per desenvolupar el tema, l'autor presenta una sèrie de talls històrics -des de l'home primitiu al de la "Nova Renaixença" científica del segle XX- que representen els diversos estadis del pensament humà en relació als coneixements científics de cadascun d'aquests moments històrics.

Aquest treball confirma les possibilitats de John Langdon-Davies i, als trenta-tres anys, aconsegueix "status" d'autor seriós i ensems potencialment comercial. Així ho creuen, almenys, els seus editors, que donen un tractament realment especial a aquesta obra.

A part d'incloure-hi catorze esplèndides il·lustracions, la primera

138 Langdon-Davies, J., Man and his Universe, Harper and Brothers, Nova York, 1930.

edició de Harper ja incorpora a les tapes comentaris elogiosos d'H.G. Wells, Sir Arthur Thompson, Julian Huxley i Sir Arthur Keith. L'apreciació de Huxley, per exemple, la gestiona directament Janet Hamilton, una de les directores de l'editorial, qui, quan li ho comunica a Langdon-Davies, assegura que: "We all have the highest hopes for the book, and I am planning the advertising campaign with great care"(139). El comentari complet de Julian Huxley diu el següent:

"Mr. Langdon-Davies says many wise things, and says them in an illuminating and often brilliant way; still more important, he relates all he has to say to a consistent point of view which is all the more modern for being rooted in history. He will not expect his readers to agree with all his statements; but he will have a right to be disappointed if his book is not widely read, for it is one of the most stimulating presentations which has appeared in recent years of the growth of man's ideas about his world and himself" (140).

Ja sigui gràcies a aquests comentaris inicials, o bé per la cura dels editors en la campanya publicitària, la qüestió és que Man and his Universe rep pràcticament totes les atencions crítiques possibles que un llibre d'aquestes característiques podia rebre a Gran Bretanya i als Estats Units. Les apreciacions d'uns i altres repeteixen, ara amb més

139 Carta de Harper and Brothers a Langdon-Davies, 17/9/1930.
APLD.

140 En una nota privada a l'editor, però, comenta alguns defectes tècnics del llibre en relació sobretot a la biologia moderna i lamenta que no citi els darrers descobriments de Pavlov. Tot i això, manifesta interès per conèixer l'autor i ho considera crítiques menors que no desvirtuen l'interès del llibre. Ibid.

quantitat, les reaccions que havia provocat New Age of Faith. És a dir, retrets de detall o poca profunditat en el tractament dels fenòmens científics, però elogis abundants sobre l'estil, la capacitat de presentar un tema polèmicament i, sobretot, l'habilitat de discutir seriosament sobre temes científics amb un llenguatge a l'abast del no-especialista.

D'altra banda, durant els anys següents a l'edició en anglès, se'n publiquen traduccions a l'holandès, el suec i el danès(141), i el 1937 se'n publica una versió revisada a la col·lecció "The Thinker's Library". Fins i tot hi ha una traducció a l'indonesi que restà inèdita (142).

L'èxit de Man and his Universe anima Langdon-Davies a escriure'n ràpidament una mena de segona part, que es publica primer a Anglaterra amb el títol, Science and Common Sense(143) l'octubre de 1931 i, al cap de tres mesos, als Estats Units amb el títol de Man Comes of Age(144). L'estil, basat en el que un crític considera "the happy gift of being able to present abstruse ideas in plain terms"(145) segueix les pautes de New Age of Faith i Man and his Universe, tot i que, ara, hi ha una

141 Les traduccions, per ordre de publicació, són De groei Van Ons Wereldbeeld, 'S-Gravenhage, Leopold's U.M., La Haya, 1932; Människan och Universum, Tidens Förlag, Stockholm, 1933 i Mennesket og Universet, Gyldendalske Boghandel, Copenhagen, 1934.

142 En una curiosa carta datada a Tegal el 10 d'octubre de 1952, un tal S. Mundingsari demana permís a Langdon-Davies per la publicació de la seva traducció "lliure" de Man and his Universe, que el traductor titula Antara Dunia dan Tuhan (Entre Déu i el món). APLD.

143 Hamish Hamilton, Londres, oct. 1931.

144 Harper and Brothers, Nova York, 1932.

145 "Man's Two Worlds", Christchurch Time, N.Z., 21/11/1931.

reflexió més personal en la mesura que Science and Common Sense no planteja polèmiques concretes ni anàlisis històriques, sinó que l'autor es proposa escriure "what all this panorama of past and present science really means to the daily life and philosophy of myself -a man with average expectation of life, average education and average experience" (146).

Langdon-Davies argumenta que moltes convencions de la conducta humana i els codis morals es fonamenten en una sèrie de fets "naturals" que un suposat sentit comú popular dona per bons malgrat que els descobriments científics els desmenteixin. L'autor creu que l'home del segle XX ha d'establir tota una altra escala de valors que tingui més en compte les veritats científiques que no pas moltes de les creences populars, que ell anomena "the world of make-believe". Aquesta reflexió ha de suposar una nova "way of life" que impliqui la revisió del sentit que es dona al matrimoni, al sexe, la religió, la justícia o la felicitat i, sobretot, a l'acceptació de l'absurditat del dogmatisme i els valors absoluts.

Tot i que el llibre està planejat com una seqüela de Man and His Universe i està escrit amb la urgència d'un nou encàrrec degut a l'èxit precedent, l'obra de Langdon-Davies troba les crítiques entusiastes dels llibres anteriors. Per exemple, referint-se als seus darrers llibres, un crític diu: "As a guide to the basis of civilized living and thinking there are not two better books in any language than these by John

146 Del prefaci de les dues edicions.

Langdon-Davies"(147), i The New York Times Book Review el considera "thoughtful, lucid and suggestive"(148). Les critiques negatives, però, també s'aguditzen. Algunes de les critiques més escèptiques són, com era de preveure, de publicacions cristianes, però algunes, com la de Benjamin Ginzburg a New York Nation són definitivament adverses i l'autor és acusat d'una excessiva frivolitat a l'hora de tractar temes científics. El crític cataloga el llibre com un "lecture-platform book" i, no pas sense malícia, afirma que: "It has all the charm and appeal- and all the vices- of the popular lecturer dispensing culture before women's clubs and Chautauqua circuits"(149).

Dès de la perspectiva i els valors tradicionals i l'ortodòxia cristiana, la crítica més detallada és la de Ronald Knox, que dedica un capítol, "The Hegira from Stagira", del seu llibre, Broadcast Minds (150) a comentar Science and Common Sense. El llibre és, en realitat, un conjunt de crítiques als darrers treballs publicats pels qui ell anomena "omniscientists" i "modern priests of science", als quals acusa de parlar amb fanatisme i de ser alguns dels causants del declivi del sentiment religiós, per la seva pretensió de crear una nova cultura "to replace the christian culture". Juntament amb Langdon-Davies, el grup d'"omniscientists" que mereixen les crítiques de l'autor està format per H.G. Wells (Outline of History i What are to do with our Lives), Julian

147 "John Langdon-Davies writes about a world growing up", Baltimore Post, 6/2/1932.

148 "Science as the Basis for a Modern Morality", The New York Times Book Review, 14/2/1932.

149 B. Ginzburg, "In the name of Science", New York Nation, 9/3/1932.

150 Ronald Knox, Broadcast Minds, Sheed and Ward, Londres, 1932, 280 pàgs.

Huxley (Religion without Revelation i What Dare I Think?), Bertrand Russell (The Conquest of Happiness i Scientific Outlook), Mencken (Treatise on the Gods) i Gerald Heard (Emergence of Man). Tampoc hi manquen, no cal dir-ho, referències sarcàstiques a les obres d'Einstein i Freud.

Malgrat tot, la popularitat de Langdon-Davies és un fet i durant aquest període les seves col.laboracions a revistes americanes, com el Harper's Magazine o The Forum esdevenen pràcticament regulars. D'altra banda, la seva reputació com a conferenciant és al punt més alt i troba públics adeptes, tant a les universitats com entre els clubs i associacions més populars. D'ençà d'aquell primer "Lecture Tour", on l'única oferta atractiva eren les notícies fresques sobre el primer govern laborista britànic, s'ha produït una notable diversificació dels seus temes. L'any 1933, per exemple, els agents de Langdon-Davies ofereixen un llistat de 10 "Lecture Topics" que poden agrupar-se en tres blocs: a/ Temes d'educació ("An Outside View of American Education", "Some Dilemmas of a Progressive Parent", "Education for the New Leisure"); b/ Qüestions espanyoles ("Spain, England, America; Contrasts in the Art of Living", "The Spanish Revolution and After"); c/ Divulgació científica i temes d'actualitat ("Escapes from the Machine Age", "The Next Ten Years of Civilization", "A Five Year Plan against Communism", "The Universe, the Atom and Ourselves", "Has Mankind Come of Age?"). Aquest conjunt de conferències dona una idea prou clara de quins han estat els interessos bàsics de Langdon-Davies fins ara i del camp de treball que cobreixen els seus llibres i articles.

Mentrestant, però, a Espanya es produeix un esdeveniment que no

podia deixar indiferent Langdon-Davies. En efecte, la proclamació de la República és el fet que motiva la redacció de dos articles llargs sobre la nova situació i una visita breu a Catalunya l'agost del mateix any. El primer article, "The Country of Quixotes"⁽¹⁵¹⁾ apareix el juny de 1931 a la secció "The World and Ourselves" del setmanari The Listener. Les característiques de la secció obliguen l'autor a presentar el país en general i a situar els esdeveniments que són notícia en la seva perspectiva històrica sense entrar a analitzar la nova situació. Tot i això, Langdon-Davies no s'està pas d'afirmar que la proclamació de la República està suposant una "Well-nigh, bloodless and good-tempered revolution wich seems to be as complete in its results as it was unconventional in its methods". Alguns d'aquests resultats i l'originalitat dels mètodes, els sintetitza en poques ratlles: "Catalonia, Spain's Ireland, gained without a blow the freedom which centuries violent rebellion had failed to recapture; a feudal aristocracy found itself forced to migrate across the Pyrenees. All this as a result of municipal elections for town councils in a country where armed police stood at every corner, and law and order seemed as secure as stern force can ever make them... Naturally we all want to know more about a country where such miracles can happen".

Tampoc no desaprofita l'ocasió per desmitificar els mites decimonònics que tenen d'Espanya els anglosaxons, i recomana que s'oblidi "the commonest picture of Spain to be found among foreigners who have never been there. Spain is "not" the Spain of Bizet's opera "Carmen", toreadores, serenaders climbing up balconies, ladies with

¹⁵¹ "The Country of Quixotes", The Listener, 10/6/1931. Vegeu Apèndix 3.1.

flowers in their hair and daggers in their garters, oranges, gipsies". Segons ell, l'"ànima espanyola" no és tan sentimental ni d'opereta i té, en canvi, més de tràgica -en el sentit grec de la paraula- i de fatalista. Langdon-Davies creu que la vida quotidiana dels espanyols, acostumats a estar mal governats els darrers 300 anys, canviarà ben poca cosa, malgrat els canvis espectaculars que sembla que comportarà la nova república. L'endarreriment d'Espanya és crònic i les diferències amb la resta d'Europa són degudes, fonamentalment, a què el geni i les virtuts dels espanyols s'han desenvolupat en una estructura econòmica ben diferent. Aquestes diferències òbvies, que sovint provoquen l'admiració, la perplexitat o les crítiques poc reflexives de l'observador estranger són degudes, diu Langdon-Davies, al fet que "The most noticeable difference between Spain and England is that Spain escaped the Industrial Revolution".

Tesis semblants són les del segon escrit, un assaig inèdit, que titula "Revolution in the Land of Quixote"(152) i on estan molt més centrats els antecedents en la proclamació de la República a Catalunya i en les seves pròpies vivències al país en els darrers deu anys. Aquí, Langdon-Davies, que escriu després de la visita del mes d'agost, repassa els moments clau en l'evolució política catalana, tot i que, de moment, no veu en la proclamació de la República gaire cosa més que un nou "pronunciamento" en la llarga seqüència de canvis de govern de poca durada que han caracteritzat la vida política espanyola.

En el repàs de les seves vivències recorda l'interès dels nacionalistes catalans pels esdeveniments a Irlanda quan va ser a

152 Assaig inèdit. Vegeu Apèndix 3.2.

Catalunya els anys 1921-1922 i els punts de vista dels burgesos patriotes davant la possibilitat de reformes socials. Repassa, també, l'impacte del cop d'estat de Primo de Rivera quan "All the speeches dried up and the leading Catalanists returned to writing poetry and essays on literary topics", la fundació d'Estat Català, la progressiva impopularitat del rei, les excentricitats de Primo, la resistència latent del catalanisme, que es manifestava en els enterraments multitudinaris de Gaudí i Angel Guimerà, la popularitat de figures oposades a la Dictadura a la resta d'Espanya, com Unamuno, Blasco Ibáñez, l'aviador Ramón Franco, el Dr. Marañón...

Més endavant, a partir de l'operació fallida de Prats de Molló el 1926, comenta la figura de Francesc Macià. Langdon-Davies creu que el coronel "is perhaps the most picturesque public man in Europe today, and he could have no counterpart elsewhere" i fa una interessant definició política del nou president de la Generalitat quan afirma: "Macià has absolutely none of the qualities of a statesman except faith".

En els darrers capítols relata les impressions de la seva darrera visita l'agost del mateix any 1931 i els canvis que ha pogut constatar a Ripoll, Sant Feliu de Guíxols i Barcelona. A part de remarcar l'eufòria col·lectiva a favor de l'aprovació de l'Estatut, i malgrat canvis immediats en molts aspectes, com la substitució de la bandera monàrquica als estancs, la liberalització dels espectacles de cabaret, o l'aparició de funerals civils i un cert fervor anti-religiós, Langdon-Davies afirma que "The general feeling one gets from revisiting the youngest revolutionary state is of stability." Ratifica, doncs, la tesi exposada a l'altre article i es mostra escèptic davant la possibilitat que la

situació política aconseguí canviar la vida quotidiana, la visió del món o el tarannà que l'autor associa amb la gent que ha conegut a Catalunya els darrers deu anys.

Malgrat aquesta visita a Catalunya i la poca freqüència amb què anava a Anglaterra, la vida de John Langdon-Davies apunta, professionalment i emocionalment, a establir-se als Estats Units. L'assentament de la seva activitat a Amèrica coincideix amb un progressiu distanciament de Connie. La seva dona es veu afectada, d'altra banda, per trastorns físics i psíquics que acaben d'empitjorar la situació. El 1932 es formalitza el divorci. Els dos fills, Peter i Robin, resten a Anglaterra amb la mare. Un any més tard, el 21 d'agost de 1933, contrau matrimoni a Redding (Connecticut) amb l'actriu i ballarina Betty Barr. John té 36 anys i la seva segona esposa, 30.

Sigui per la nova situació familiar, per la fràgil situació econòmica que ha generat la depressió als EUA, o per la natural versatilitat dels talents de Langdon-Davies, la qüestió és que troba temps entre els "Lecture Tours" i el periodisme per iniciar i desenvolupar la seva latent vocació pedagògica amb el que serà el primer treball adreçat directament al públic escolar. En efecte, aquest mateix any 1933 publica Inside the Atom(153), un llibre en el qual, segons la Scientific Book Club Review, l'autor aconseguí "The almost impossible task of explaining the fundamental laws of physics and chemistry in language the youth of fourteen and fifteen can understand"(154). Podriem

153 Inside the Atom, Harper and Brothers, Nova York, 1933, 184 pàgs. Hi ha traducció castellana: El átomo por dentro, HASA, Buenos Aires, 1944, 204 pàgs. Routledge publica l'edició anglesa l'any 1934.

154 Scientific Book Club Review, nov. 1933.

dir, doncs, que els seus treballs de reflexió i divulgació del fet científic són portats a les últimes conseqüències amb aquesta mena d'original "llibre de text" que rep elogis entusiastes de la crítica anglesa i americana més seriosa(155). El llibre, dedicat als seus fills Peter i Robin, està il·lustrat per la seva nova esposa. Aquest tipus de treball continuarà amb la publicació de Radio: The Story of the Capture and Use of Radio Waves(156) i, anys més tard, amb contribucions importants en l'ensenyament de la història i l'educació sexual, com veurem més endavant.

L'impacte profund que suposa en la personalitat i l'organització professional i familiar de Langdon-Davies la vida als EUA dona com a resultat el clàssic exercici literari davant els canvis vitals radicals: la publicació d'una autobiografia. Aquest serà el segon intent, i l'únic publicat, d'organitzar literàriament les seves memòries. L'anterior, inèdit i citat als capítols anteriors, fou escrit a la primera joventut. Aquesta segon incursió en el gènere es produeix quan l'autor està als seus "mid-thirties" i encara en farà una altra, els darrers anys de la seva vida, que resta incompleta i inèdita.

La idea d'escriure una autobiografia i publicar-la amb un pseudònim sorgeix a principi de 1933(157) i Langdon-Davies n'envia un primer manuscrit al seu amic S.K. Ratcliffe el mes de novembre. Harper's, els

155 Per exemple, el Manchester Evening News, de 2/11/ 1934, la New York Times Book Review, de 14/1/1934 o el New Statesman, de 8/12/1934.

156 Radio: The Story of the Capture and Use of Radio Waves, Dodd, Mead and Co., New York, 1935, 278 pàgs. L'edició anglesa de Routledge es publicà amb el títol How the Wireless Came.

157 Carta a Vera Hodge, 21/2/1933. APLD.

editors dels seus darrers llibres, declinen la possibilitat de publicar-lo, però els directors de John Day estan entusiasmats amb el manuscrit i li asseguren que "At whatever emotional cost, you did succeed in rising to a great height of climax in the last chapters" i descriuen el llibre com "a magnificent piece of work and one that you and we will be very proud of"(158). Coincideixen, però, amb les impressions negatives dels primers capítols que ja li havia manifestat S.K. Ratcliffe: "Our only fear is that the early chapters move too slowly. Here we believe you should do some cutting. However we think you can do this best in galley proof and are therefore rushing the book into type as it stands."(159)

Com sigui que el llibre està estructurat en quatre parts que recullen cada una set anys de la vida de "Thomas Dent", el pseudònim de l'autor(160), Langdon-Davies suggereix títols com "The Four Toms", però els editors volen quelcom més explícit i n'hi proposen cinc per ordre de preferència: "Come of Age, Growth: the story of a young life", "Boy into Man", "The Web of Youth" i "Conquest of Youth". Finalment, John opta per un de nou: Then a Soldier, una cita de Shakespeare a As you Like it, poc efectiva de cara al públic, però que sembla que reforça la teoria dels períodes de creixement i que remet a la part més significativa del llibre, que és la que rememora les seves experiències com a objector de consciència(161).

158 Cartes de Richard Walsh, president de "The John Day Company", 20/7/1934. APLD.

159 Ibid.

160 En principi, el pseudònim escollit era "John Freed", ibid.

161 Els períodes de creixement són de set anys. Probablement, Langdon Davies pensava en la idea dels jesuïtes sobre la importància decisiva dels primers set anys de vida en la formació de la personalitat i, també, com explica ell mateix, en una vaga teoria científica segons

El llibre, escrit en tercera persona, descriu la infància a Sud-àfrica, l'adolescència a les escoles angleses, l'impacte de la guerra en el jove universitari i acaba amb la cerimònia del casament amb Connie. Els editors presenten l'autor com un "well known British author" que publica amb pseudònim per la franquesa amb què ha escrit la seva autobiografia. Malgrat aquestes possibles connotacions d'obra "escandalosa", el llibre no obté l'èxit esperat i la crítica rep aquest "experiment autobiogràfic" amb diversitat d'opinions. Molts crítics hi veuen, sobretot, un altre document de denúncia de la guerra en la línia de les obres de Robert Graves o Siegfried Sassoon, i a l'autor com un exponent de la "Lost Generation", un concepte que ha arrelat suficientment als EUA perquè The New York Times tituli la crítica del llibre "The Autobiography of a Lost Generation Briton"(162).

Durant la tardor de 1934, coincidint amb la publicació de Then a Soldier, Langdon-Davies està pensant seriosament a retornar a Anglaterra amb la seva dona i donar per acabada la seva residència fixa als EUA.

la qual cada set anys es renoven la totalitat de les cèl.lules del cos. La cita de Shakespeare és del cèlebre parlament de Jacques a l'escena VII del segon acte d'As you Like it:

All the world's a stage,
 And all the men and women merely players;
 They have their exits and their entrances;
 And one man in his time plays many parts,
 His acts being sev'es ages. At first the infant
 Mewling and puking in the nurse's arms;
 Then the whining school-boy, with his satchel
 And shining morning face, creeping like snail
 Unwillingly to school. And then the lover,
 Sighing like furnace, with a woefull ballad
 Made to his mistress'eyebrow. Then a soldier,
 Full of strange oaths, and bearded like the pard,

162 The New York Times, 25/11/1934.

S.K. Ratcliffe, a qui demana consell sobre aquesta decisió, no es mostra gaire sorprès. "I have wondered often", li escriu, "how long your stay in God's country could last". Quant a les possibilitats econòmiques, creu que Langdon-Davies hauria de mantenir els mesos d'hivern els "Lecture Tours" americans, que li garanteixen almenys 300 lliures "especially as you could go back to the exposition of English affairs; and could renew and expand your knowledge of Spain". En la mateixa carta, es mostra escèptic sobre les possibilitats de Betty en el món de la dansa i el teatre ("About Betty's chances here I naturally can't say a thing. My feeling is that the field must be terribly full") i suggereix que per mantenir-se durant els primers mesos, "A journey to Spain would be the thing, perhaps. You could get some newspaper correspondance, and could rush out a book on the country in its present chaos"(163).

La idea d'escriure reportatges sobre Espanya, ara que té notícies dels recents esdeveniments a Catalunya amb la situació creada pels "fets d'octubre" de 1934, li sembla prou atractiva. Justament Ramon Casanova havia rebut una còpia de Then a Soldier "shortly after the tragic night of October the 6th" i li escriu el mes de desembre per agrair el llibre, que fou rebut com un "blessing", perquè "the spiritual weather was very cloudy among us". Obviament, Langdon-Davies ha consultat Casanova sobre la possibilitat d'escriure sobre la nova situació perquè, tot i que sense massa entusiasme, aquest li comenta: "Do you think worthwhile to write a serial of articles in the origins and development of the last Catalan movement? Will they pay something for the trouble? I know a lot

of things."(164)

En tot cas, els plans dels Langdon-Davies aniran agafant cos i el mes de març de 1935 s'embarquen cap a Anglaterra. Després de la introspecció sobre el seu propi passat que ha suposat Then a Soldier, Langdon-Davies comença a preparar un assaig sobre el futur, A Short History of the Future(165). Mentrestant, la premonitòria frase de S.K. Ratcliffe escrita el novembre de 1934 ("You could get some newspaper correspondence, and could rush out a book on the country -Spain- in its present chaos") haurà d'esperar ben poc per convertir-se en un encàrrec formal. Un encàrrec que serà latent durant el 1935 i que esdevindrà literal i urgent l'any 1936.

L'experiència americana té conseqüències importants en la vida de Langdon-Davies i esdevé un punt de referència sobre el qual bascularà la seva percepció dels anys anteriors i posteriors. Quinze anys després del retorn a Anglaterra, el 1950, i en una de la seves múltiples reflexions autobiogràfiques, escriu sobre l'abans i el després dels anys americans amb una perspectiva reveladora dels valors intel·lectuals i morals de la seva generació. En aquest exercici de definició de l'intel·lectual davant del seu temps, hi ha la lluita per l'assentament d'una personalitat en relació als canvis socials i polítics, és a dir, per trobar una forma de coherència entre la vida privada i la pública, la reflexió intel·lectual i l'acció política. Val la pena citar extensament aquestes reflexions extretes d'un dietari per entendre el tipus de

164 Carta de Ramon Casanova, 29/12/1934. APLD.

165 A Short History of the Future, Routledge and Sons, Londres, 1936, 272 pàgs. L'edició americana és de Dodd, Mead and Company, Nova York, 1936.

personalitat que ben aviat tornaria a involucrar-se directament amb els esdeveniments socials, polítics i bèl·lics que marquen la Catalunya de 1936:

"... From 1930 to 1934 I was living in America in conditions which made a complete break between what my life had been in England and what it was to be on my return.

Until I left England I had been, or at least felt myself to be, one of the rising adult generation. My friends, for the most part, and I, had a great faith in humanity, and particularly in working-class humanity; we had read William Morris as undergraduates, and we had thought about Robert Owen. Although we had read Marx and protected ourselves against our own sentimentality by affirming our belief in scientific socialism, our ideas were British in origin and our desire to have things changed was rooted -though we said little about it- in human love.

Our intellectual landscapes had been coloured by Shaw, Wells and the Webbs, so that although there might be little logic in them and much confusion, there was also a gusto, and enjoyment, and a desire to be happy ourselves, and to see the world happy and at peace. Of course, there was an admiration and a protective spirit -strange these words sound in 1950- towards Russia. They were largely caused by our having constructed a new Russia in our minds where our aspirations were on their way to a triumph. Meanwhile the battle which really interested most of us was waged elsewhere than in the field of economics. Bertrand Russell and Freud in their

several ways had opened the locked doors in the house of sex where there are many mansions often with underground cellars. In our and the century's twenties we had heard with enthusiasm that we must give up possessiveness and concentrate on creativeness, though creativeness with some of us never amounted to much more than the right to possess our friends'wives (...). But in the late twenties and the early thirties all this was changing. The change was gradual no doubt but the effect of my four years break of continuity had the effect of concealing this gradualness from me.

I returned to England to find a new generation pushing its way to the centre of the stage whereon youth is wont to act out its tragicomedy. I was soon to find that a hungry generation was indeed treading mine down.

These young people, who had never heard of Robert Owen and never read William Morris -or the authorised version of the Bible, or Shakespeare or anything else except perhaps Anton Duhring and a number of works by John Strachey and Palm Dutt -seemed to me at first glance rather unattractive, taking a delight in bitterness and not wanting anyone, even themselves, to enjoy anything at all. (...) Above all, our dreams were certainly concerned with universal happiness and the simpler pleasures for all, and not with power, power bulldozing human nature into conformity (...)

It sounds naive of me, no doubt, but it was with astonishment and quite a high degree of irritation that I now found myself described by these only slightly younger people as a social fascist and an escapist.

Moreover I was disturbed to find that the symptoms of being a social fascist and an escapist turned up in the most unexpected places. In our day -for it soon became clear to old fogies like myself in their middle thirties that our day was over -in our day we naturally assumed that anyone who disagreed with us was the victim of a bad education which had left him unable to think and political argument kept pretty narrowly to economic themes. Now all that was changed. Not a good word was to be said not merely of the opponent's intellect but of his morals, his honesty, his common decency.

And consider the symptoms of escapism which you might show. If you enjoyed a play by J.B. Priestley, you were an escapist; if you put on a dinner jacket except to wing money out of the rich for the cause, you were an escapist; if you regarded religion as anything but the opium of the people -and this even if you did not profess a creed, but mildly urged that as a sociological and psychological phenomenon there was more to religion than that -you were an escapist. You soon became an escapist if you were interested, perhaps without being a Freudian, in Freud. (...)

Well, as I say, it came as a serious blow to me on returning to England, expecting to take up my life in its main public aspects as if four withered years did not lie between the two parts into which it had fallen, to find that I was labelled an escapist. That I was in good company did not help. I think I must have been abnormally earnest as well as stupid to react as I did; for I took the criticism very seriously to heart and spent much time in considering whether the things I

liked best and admired best in life were justifiable, or escapist. As I think back I wish that I had had the intelligence then to accept the challenge and to declare then as I most certainly do now, that no man who is not an escapist has any claims to sanity, that escapism indeed is that quality in living things which makes flowers and insects beautiful, instead of being merely efficient as breeding machines, that makes some men write poetry and less gifted men, that is less efficient escapists, make something more out their brief lives than a struggle for animal necessities. But it took three wars to reach even such elementary wisdom as this"(166).

166 Fragments de "Journal of Scape", Premiã, abril de 1950. Vegeu Apêndix 6.

1935 - 1936

La inquietant situació que es viu a Europa durant els anys trenta, amb l'agreujament de la crisi econòmica general, la gradual agressivitat expansionista dels feixismes, la consolidació del règim soviètic a Rússia i els rumors d'una inevitable confrontació bèl·lica internacional, crea una demanda natural i un interès renovat pel futur com a tema d'anàlisi i debat. No sorprèn, doncs, que l'escriptor professional que és Langdon-Davies prepari, a partir del seu retorn a Anglaterra, un llibre que respon a les expectatives del públic lector del moment.

La literatura sobre el futur té una tradició consolidada i ha tractat el tema des d'una gran diversitat d'enfocaments. Simptomàticament, quan New Statesman s'ocupa del nou llibre de Langdon-Davies, titula la recensió, "Again the Future"(167). Des de les visions dels socialistes utòpics als profetes més negres passant pels exercicis satírics, el futur ha rebut moltes atencions literàries. Ara Langdon-Davies vol aprofitar el seu "background" de divulgador científic per escriure una A Short History of the Future(168) en forma d'una col·lecció de profecies basades en l'aplicació de les lleis de l'evolució biològica a la història dels pobles. Langdon-Davies, segons

167 "Again the Future", New Statesman, 26/12/1936

168 Op. cit.

diu la introducció, intenta tractar la qüestió "without personal prejudice and to describe a future which perhaps I should prefer to see". No obstant això, C.E.M. Joad considera que "intending to write a history of the future, Mr. Langdon-Davies has insisted upon putting in whatever happens to interest him in the present"(169). Aquesta aparent contradicció és, però, allò que sustenta el possible interès actual de l'assaig. No és tant l'encert de les profecies que aventura Langdon-Davies allò que ens interessa sinó justament els temes que tracta i que, ara, veiem com un document de les preocupacions de l'època.

En efecte, tal i com diu un crític de l'obra, "visions of the future are apt to reflect the seer's outlook on the present"(170). I el present, com els capítols del llibre, és ple de discussions sobre la inevitabilitat d'una pròxima guerra, la crisi anunciada del sistema capitalista, la fragilitat dels règims democràtics, l'evolució i expansió de les ideologies que donen respostes absolutes a les incerteses del present, com el feixisme i el comunisme... No és, doncs, el "joc de profecies" allò que importa sinó la plasmació de les preocupacions de l'època. A. Calder-Marshall apunta en la mateixa direcció quan sintetitza la importància del llibre amb aquestes paraules: "The importance of A Short History of the Future... is not its truth, but its sense of direction, its possibility, its preparation for social modes which at the moment are strange and abhorrent to many of us. It is disquieting. It is meant to be. But it induces no more alarm

169 "Again the Future", Cyril Joad, periodista de la BBC durant molts anys, fou un bon amic de Langdon-Davies. El 1922 el visità a Ripoll i amb L'Hispano Suiza de Ramón Casanova recorregueren Catalunya plegats. Joad acabà una mica "tip" dels discursos nacionalistes de Casanova. Vegeu "Cyril Joad" a "Twelve Sketches", Apèndix 7.4.

170 Illustrated London News, 16/1/1937.

about the future than anyone with the least sense of responsibility is justified in having"(171).

Les prediccions a més llarg termini provoquen en algunes crítiques les comparacions amb la novel·la de futur més notable de la dècada, Brave New World que Aldous Huxley havia publicat el 1932(172). D'altres hi veuen, sobretot, una apologia del comunisme, com el Times Literary Supplement, que subtitula la seva crítica, "A Communist Vision"(173) o, no cal dir-ho, el Daily Worker, que veu el llibre com una descripció del "kind of communist state that will emerge after the Age of Stupidity has been liquidated"(174).

La qüestió de la "pròxima guerra" a Europa, que Langdon-Davies considera probable pel 1940, i, en tot cas, inevitable més aviat o més tard, situa A Short History of the Future en el corrent de les freqüents contribucions literàries que, durant aquests anys, creen una consciència generacional sobre el que s'ha anomenat el mite de "la pròxima guerra"(175). Curiosament, quan el llibre surt a la venda, els crítics remarquen el fet que l'autor és precisament ben conegut per la seva intervenció en una guerra real: "Mr. Langdon-Davies is probably

171 Time and Tide, 21/10/1936.

172 Per exemple, R.L. Duffus, "What Coming Years May Hold", New York Times Book Review, 13/12/1936.

173 "A 'History' of the Future: A Communist Vision", Times Literary Supplement, desembre de 1936.

174 Trevor Clewitt, Daily Worker, 16/2/1936.

175 Vegeu, per exemple, el capítol "Literatura vs política: Els mites d'una generació literària", M. Berga, Entre la ploma i el fusell, Curial, 1981 o molt millor, l'estudi detallat de S. Hynes, The Auden Generation, The Bodley Head, Londres, 1976.

known to many readers from his dispatches on Spain to the News Chronicle or his eloquent speeches in aid of the Spanish Medical Unit"(176). De fet, el mateix autor escriu la introducció a Barcelona durant les primeres setmanes d'una guerra civil que ell i molts compatriotes seus perceben com "la pròxima guerra". El fet que la guerra estigui localitzada a Espanya no amaga pas les connotacions d'un conflicte ideològic amb implicacions internacionals. Langdon-Davies n'està convençut i aprofita la introducció per denunciar-ho i extreure'n conseqüències en relació a la política del govern britànic:

"I am writing this introduction in Barcelona: a city struggling to establish a new order and ruthlessly liquidating the old... Often during these last days when Italian aeroplanes, given to the blood-brothers of Fascism in Spain, have been landing Moors to destroy the Spanish people in the name of patriotism. I have wondered if my second prophecy would prove false. Have I not given capitalism too long a time before it must fall a victim to its own suicidal mania? Will not every nation in the world be drawn into the battle that is raging in this amazing country? The Fascist International knows that this is not internal quarrel of generals and anarchists. In there an anti-Fascist International conscious of its danger, or will Spain be allowed to join the rest, so that the Mediterranean becomes a Fascist lake; so that France may follow the same path tomorrow; so that the British lion may be left alone in surprised, injured dignity in a world that swears its roar is only a bray after all?

On July 19, 1936, Spain offered Europe one more chance of saving itself. On that day ill-armed people rose and defeated a long-planned military Fascist uprising. By tearing up the paving-stones of their streets and holding on against even modern weapons of war, they played their part that freedom should not perish utterly from the face of the earth. Just as the Spanish people struck the first blow that was to destroy Napoleon when the Mamelouks of the dictator cut them down in the streets of Madrid on May 2, 1808, so they have struck the first blow against an even worse dictatorship to-day. In those days British people were the most eager to come to their assistance; to-day they hang back. Why this is so can be seen in the body of this book. Caught between two fires, British conservatism can do nothing but crouch nearer to the hole in the ground which is to be its grave. It is left to others to lead the world forward. Russia, Spain and England in their various ways destroyed Napoleon: Russia and Spain stand once more between us and the worse dictators of our day -but where is England? England seems to have deserted. How this can come about, and what will come of it, is the story that I have tried to tell. I may have given capitalism more rope than it needs to hang itself; we may all be at war before these words are published. It will not invalidate the rest..."(177).

En tot cas, ja fos impulsat pels suggeriments que li havia fet

177 De la introducció a A Short History of the Future, op. cit. pàgs. 19-20.

S.K. Ratcliffe quan planejava el retorn dels EUA, fos per l'interès obvi de cara a la situació espanyola després de la victòria del Front Popular a les eleccions de febrer de 1936, la qüestió és que Langdon-Davies ja havia tingut l'oportunitat de viatjar per Espanya durant els mesos de maig i juny de 1936 per encàrrec del News Chronicle.

El mes d'abril, visita Sir Gerald Barry, llavors director del News Chronicle(178) i li explica que els seus amics espanyols l'han avisat que està a punt de passar alguna cosa grossa a Espanya. Barry sembla que té informacions semblants i l'encàrrec es materialitza. Langdon-Davies visita Espanya immediatament i escriu una sèrie de cinc articles llargs sobre la situació, i el diari els publica setmanalment. En realitat, la suposada informació de Langdon-Davies és una simple estratagema per aconseguir la feina, segons ell mateix explica més tard: "De fet, a mi ningú no m'havia avisat de res, però no era gens descabellat pensar que en qualsevol moment podia passar alguna cosa a Espanya"(179).

Langdon-Davies arriba a temps de presenciar la manifestació del Primer de Maig de 1936 a Madrid, viatja per Extremadura i retorna a Barcelona el mateix dia de l'assassinat dels germans Badia. Els reportatges(180) que Langdon-Davies publica del 13 de maig al 15 de juny, un mes abans de l'esclat de la guerra civil, constitueixen un

178 El mateix diari, llavors dirigit per Redwood i Ebbutt, l'havia enviat a sondejar la situació després del cop de Primo de Rivera, el 1923. Vegeu capítols anteriors.

179 Vegeu "The Spanish Civil War: Reporting", Apèndix 4.4.

180 "Azaña: Rebel President", 13/5/36; "Spain Unites Against Fascism" 28/5/36; "Life Today in Spain", 5/6/36; "Revolt of the Peasants in Spain", 9/6/36; "Syndicalism", 15/6/36. Vegeu transcripció dels articles a l'Apèndix 3.3.

testimoniatge singular del clima social i polític que es viu a Espanya i a Catalunya les setmanes anteriors a la revolta militar. Algunes de les afirmacions que fa el periodista en el darrer article, "Syndicalism", ens situen perfectament en la perspectiva dels fets que s'esdevindrien ben aviat i són indicatius de la situació de radicalisme latent que viu el país. Parlant, per exemple, de les possibilitats d'una revolució sindicalista diu: "...It is more likely that the opposition will be exasperated into a Fascist coup", i més avall comenta: "But if political evolution follows its normal course... If this happens we may see the Syndicalists, Left Socialists and Communists melting into truly revolutionary movement".

Ja en el primer article, "Azaña: Rebel President", Langdon-Davies sembla que anuncia les dificultats de la República espanyola, malgrat la importància que suposa l'èxit de l'experiència democràtica a la península de cara a l'estabilitat internacional. El periodista sembla que es proposa una campanya perquè es compregui el difícil paper de la República i trobi el suport necessari de les democràcies europees. Una campanya que els esdeveniments tenyiran de patetisme i desesperació, i un suport que en els moments més dramàtics es limitarà a la cinica formulació del Pacte de No-Intervenció. "Azaña's Spain", escriu Langdon-Davies, "takes its place among the democracies, none too many today, determined to stem the rising tide of dictatorial nationalism", i afegeix: "Spain today has perhaps the most constitutional and least corrupt Government of the continent of Europe. All good Europeans will wish Azaña well".

Però, malgrat la impecable aparença democràtica d'Azaña i el seu

govern, no escapa a l'observador estranger el fet que "no country outside Russia is so plastered with revolutionary manifestoes as Spain". Un furor revolucionari que es manifesta tant a les grans ciutats com als pobles que visita el maig de 1936, on observa que "Hovels in the lonely despoblados of Castile and Estremadura have scrawled on their whitewashed walls: 'Viva Rusia' and 'Muera Mussolini'"(181).

Just abans de l'esclat de la guerra, Langdon-Davies publica una entrevista amb Largo Caballero(182), que complementa la sèrie d'articles sobre la situació a Espanya que el News Chronicle ha ofert als seus lectors. Els titulars descriuen el líder socialista que visita Londres aquells dies com a "one of the most important men in Spain today, the man who may become as famous as Lenin", un eufemisme per insinuar la probabilitat d'una revolució social a Espanya. Langdon-Davies sintetitza la situació que s'ha creat amb el coneixement de causa que li confereix el seu recent viatge: "Spain... is in the strange predicament of having a democratic middle-class Government, menaced by revolution from the Right, and relying for its very life upon support from a Left, which does not really believe in its ability to solve social and economic problems".

Es un punt de vista que queda clarament ratificat en les respostes de Largo Caballero, que resumeixen la seva posició davant el govern republicà i amb unes afirmacions que devien deixar els analistes polítics considerablement perplexos. Diu Largo Caballero: "We are willing to help them (el govern) work out their programme; we put them

181 "Spain Unites Against Fascism", News Chronicle, 28/5/36

182 "Caballero is Here", News Chronicle 9/7/36.

where they are with the sacrifices of our blood and freedom; we do not believe that they will succeed; when they fail, we will take over, and then it will be our programme and not theirs that we will carry out; but so long as they have yet to fail, we are loyal to the United Front and even the middle-class Republicans".

La radicalització política i la percepció de valors "absoluts" en les relacions internacionals han madurat suficientment perquè es produeixi aquest intercanvi entre entrevistador i entrevistat:

"L-D: Will Spain remain one of the 'neutral states' in the coming struggles?

L. Caballero: There are no neutral states any longer. It is the United Front of the democracies and Russia on one side, against the dictatorships of the Right."

Certament per als lectors de Langdon-Davies i del News Chronicle no havien de resultar sorprenents els fets que es desencadenen a partir del 18 de juliol. Els reportatges del periodista són prou eloqüents per poder entreveure les dificultats i les implicacions que graviten sobre la vida social i política de l'Espanya republicana durant el període que va de febrer a juliol de 1936.

A partir d'ara, les valoracions periodístiques donaran pas als despatxos urgents del "corresponsal de guerra", qui seguirà pas a pas tot el procés de la guerra a Catalunya i mantindrà una activitat febril, protagonitzant les iniciatives més diverses a favor de la causa política republicana i ajudant materialment les víctimes de la nova situació.

LANGDON-DAVIES I LA GUERRA CIVIL

- 1936 -

Amb una motocicleta de segona mà, que li havia proporcionat el News Chronicle, el seu fill Robin al darrere i una carta de recomanació del Cònsol General d'Espanya a Londres, Vicente A. Buylla, Langdon-Davies arriba a Puigcerdà el 6 d'agost de 1936. L'endemà és a Ripoll, on deixa el fill de quinze anys sota la tutela d'amics i del "Comité Antifascista Revolucionario de Ripoll". Obté la corresponent autorització d'aquest comitè, segellada per sis organitzacions polítiques, per tal que "el supditto ingles Juan Landòn" (sic) pugui circular amb motocicleta fins a Barcelona.

Un altre comitè, el de Granollers, li dona allotjament per una nit, abans d'arribar a Barcelona, i Langdon-Davies els entrega, com a donatiu "per a les milícies antifeixistes d'Espanya", la quantitat de deu pessetes, que li havien donat els directors del News Chronicle.

A Barcelona, contacta amb Ventura Gassol, qui li ofereix la possibilitat d'enviar les primeres cròniques mitjançant el telèfon del despatx del conseller de Cultura. Així, l'onze d'agost, el News Chronicle comença a publicar una sèrie de col.laboracions, gairebé diàries que es perllonguen fins al 7 de setembre amb la notícia de la caiguda d'Irun en mans dels rebels. La crònica de l'eufòria

revolucionària que viu Catalunya durant aquestes setmanes i que el periodista enceta amb "Barcelona is a proud city today", va evolucionant cap a una denúncia insistent de l'actitud del govern conservador britànic, que s'inhibeix a l'hora d'ajudar el govern legal de la República. La darrera crònica acaba, justament, amb aquesta frase: "Today, by refusing arms to a legitimate democratic Spanish Government, we are making it more likely that the last bombs will be dropped through London mists"(183). Aquesta idea, que és una de les fonamentals per explicar-nos el fenomen de solidaritat internacional i la formació de les Brigades Internacionals, i que Langdon-Davies percep de bon començament(184), persisteix i agafa cos a mesura que passa el temps(185).

Les cròniques de Barcelona inclouen una entrevista al president Companys(186), la reconversió que ha fet el Sindicat d'Hosteleria dels

183 "What the Fall of Irun Means to Spain and Us", News Chronicle, 7/9/36.

184 Vegeu també el pròleg de A Short History of the Future, citat anteriorment.

185 És la mateixa idea que utilitzarà George Orwell en el memorable paràgraf que clou el seu llibre quan, gairebé un any més tard, retorna a Anglaterra després de les experiències que ha viscut a Catalunya i al Front d'Aragó: "Down here it was still the England I had known in my childhood: the railway cuttings smothered in wild flowers, the deep meadows where the great shining horses browse and meditate, the slow moving streams bordered by willows, the green bosoms of the elms, the larkspurs in the cottage gardens; and then the huge peaceful wilderness of outer London, the barges on the miry river, the familiar streets, the posters telling of cricket matches and Royal weddings, the men in bowler hats, the pigeons in Trafalgar Square, the red buses, the blue policemen -all sleeping the deep, deep sleep of England, from which I sometimes fear that we shall never wake till we are jerked out of it by the roar bombs." Homage to Catalonia, Secker and Warburg, Londres, 1938.

186 "Catalonia's Struggle", News Chronicle, 14/8/36.

serveis de l'Hotel Ritz(187) i diversos intents de situar històricamentel fenomen d'incendiar esglésies. Després de Barcelona, Langdon-Davies visita València i Madrid, des d'on envia més cròniques, i Toledo, on aconsegueix fotografies d'un bombardeig sobre l'Alcázar(188). Quan torna a Londres, aquest conjunt d'experiències i les viscudes els mesos de maig i juny anteriors són la base amb què, des d'Anglaterra, es posa a escriure ràpidament Behind Spanish Barricades. La redacció del llibre li ocupa els mesos de setembre i octubre. Simultàniament, inicia una intensa activitat de suport a la causa republicana. Només d'arribar, el 20 de setembre, fa una conferència a Leeds per recollir diners per a l'"Spanish Medical Aid"(189).

Es precisament aquest mes de setembre quan es produeix un incident que afecta la gran amistat que l'unia a Ramón Casanova i que val la pena de ressenyar. L'enginyer català acompanya un assessor del Comitè Central dels Ferrocarrils del Nord d'Espanya en "viatge d'estudis per compte de la Generalitat i, si de cas es presenta, per comprar maquinària molt important per fabricar material que els manca per fer rutilar els trens"(190). Langdon-Davies desconeix, però, el contingut de la carta i, per tant, de moment, no sap quina és la missió de Casanova. Quan aquest li envia un telegrama anunciant la seva arribada a l'aeroport de Croydon, el periodista -que està ficat de ple en la redacció de Behind the Spanish Barricades i en una fase d'elevat misticisme revolucionari després del que ha vist a Catalunya durant el segon mes de la guerra-

187 "Workers are dining at the Ritz in Barcelona", *ibid.*, 24/8/36.

188 "Toledo: Pictures Taken under Fire", *ibid.*, 9/9/36.

189 Vegeu News Chronicle, 21/9/36.

190 Carta de R. Casanova, Paris, setembre 1936. APLD.

assumeix, erròniament, que Casanova vol instal·lar-se a Anglaterra, abandonant la seva empresa i la nova situació revolucionària. Langdon-Davies intueix la confirmació d'allò que vol veure en Casanova (i que utilitza al seu llibre): el paradigma d'un tipus de nacionalista català, catòlic i progressista que, això sí, quan veu que la nova situació pot perjudicar els seus interessos, opta per abandonar el país o passar-se a l'altre bàndol.

Aquest malentès fa que no acudeixi a rebre el seu amic i els dos catalans a Croydon; en la narració dels fets que en fa Casanova, diu que són "send back on 'no-ingerence'... We have been obliged to spend the night in some sort of prison with no supper like naughty children of the old times"(191). La impossibilitat d'entrar a Anglaterra fa que decideixin complir la seva missió comercial, comprant els materials necessaris a França. De fet, Casanova acaba quedant-se amb la família a França i no torna a Catalunya fins el 1943.

Quan Casanova rep, a París, les explicacions que li tramet Langdon-Davies, la base de la confusió queda ben palesa, i el català se'n sent profundament dolgut. La seva resposta és immediata i, per primera vegada, li escriu en la llengua que li permet alliberar més espontàniament els sentiments d'irritació: "Estimat John: La vostra lletra nerviosa, vindicativa, grollerament paternalista, si bé no m'ha sorprès, m'ha fet pena. Aquest és l'acolliment que m'havieu reservat a Anglaterra? Amb aqueixa confiança -o amb aquest pànic- m'haurieu

191 Carta de Casanova a Langdon-Davies, Croydon, setembre, 1936. Casanova pretenia aprofitar el viatge per veure a Anglaterra l'advocat Josep Llimona i Joan Gili, que hi residien feia dos anys. L'adreça de Gili li havia donada Batista i Roca des de Ginebra. APLD.

presentat vós els vostres amics? Però, de què us parlo a vós ara? Té raó que no sou un vulgar sentimental!... Per altra banda, jo no vull afegir llenya al foc que en vós està cremant les romanalles d'una amistat altre temps plena d'ufana. Vull creure que travesseu un període opac de la vostra vida i que un altre dia podrem discutir amb el to serè i objectiu d'abans"(192).

Aquest és el moment més tens de la relació entre els dos amics i que provoca un refredament de l'amistat que ha de durar anys i no s'ha de renovar "amb el to serè d'abans" fins al 1947, quan Langdon-Davies comença a fer plans per tornar-se a instal·lar a Catalunya.

Això no obstant, les seves activitats a favor de la causa republicana continuen. Si hem de buscar un acte concret que exemplifiqui fins a quin punt la situació d'Espanya catalitza les més diverses energies polítiques de la societat anglesa de 1936, potser el més clar és el miting multitudinari que organitza el comitè de l'"Spanish Medical Aid" a l'Albert Hall de Londres. Jim Fyrth comença el seu estudi detallat sobre el moviment amb una referència a aquest acte: "On a wet Sunday evening, the last day of November 1936, long queues of people stood in the rain outside the Albert Hall in London. They were waiting not to hear a famous musician but to support the group of British

192 Carta de R. Casanova a Langdon-Davies, París, setembre 1936. De tota manera, Casanova s'acomiada amb la fórmula "el vostre amic". Segons que em manifestà Damià Casanova, fill de R. Casanova, la seva impressió és que al seu pare l'irrità "l'entusiasme de l'estranger, que va amb una moto i la Unió Jack al davant, emocionat per allò que el meu pare vivia com una tragèdia", així com el tractament de determinades qüestions a Behind the Spanish Barricades.

nurses, doctors and drivers working hard behind the Muesca front in Spain"(193).

Langdon-Davies és un dels oradors, juntament amb Viscount Churchill, cosí de Winston Churchill, que venia de l'hospital de Graimèn, el director del zoo de Londres, Sir Peter Chalmers-Mitchell, el líder de l'esquerra laborista Stafford Cripps, el líder comunista Harry Pollitt i la pintora i activista Isabel Brown, que aconsegueix reunir més de 200 lliures en una recaptada "en calent". En la seva intervenció, Langdon-Davies explica que a un capellà de Madrid, el pare Leocadio Lobo, que volia ser present al míting per agrair les donacions, li havia estat refusat el permís d'entrada a Anglaterra, perquè les autoritats britàniques no volien permetre que s'utilitzés ningú per fer "propaganda política". Una actitud que l'orador considera contradictòria en un govern que havia autoritzat la impressió del cèlebre pamflet "Red Atrocities", que feia circular el govern de Burgos.

D'altra banda, Langdon-Davies comença a promoure i/o veure's involucrat en diverses iniciatives dels sectors intel·lectuals. El 22 de novembre, per exemple, rep una curiosa proposta de Gerald Brenan perquè un grup d'escriptors britànics pressionin el president Roosevelt en relació a la situació d'Espanya. Brenan formula el seu suggeriment en aquests termes: "...The Spanish situation has reached a very critical moment. If Eden acknowledges a state of war as existing in Spain, as I

193 J. Fyrth, The Signal was Spain: The Aid Spain Movement in Britain 1936-39, Lawrence and Wishart, Londres 1986, pág.19. La premsa del 30/11/36 es fa ressò del míting, sobretot el Daily Worker, Manchester Guardian i Daily Telegraph. Cal fixar-se que Fyrth comet un petit error quan escriu "the last day of november", on, en tot cas, hauria de dir "the last Sunday of November", per tal com el dia 30 era dilluns.

fear he is likely to do, I do not see how the Government will be able to get their arms. I wonder if an appeal to Roosevelt is not possible. Supposing a number of British writers appealed to him not to let down democracy in Spain by acknowledging the existence of a state of war between the lawful elected Spanish Government and the rebels, but to come out into the open with some pronouncement on the subject. He would be flattered by this appeal and might come out with something: anyhow it would be good propaganda. Perhaps my suggestion is quite impractical, but if you think well of it couldn't we start collecting names?"(194). La carta de Brenan acaba amb un "Salud, compañero" ben somptomàtic de l'efervescència amb què segueixen els esdeveniments d'Espanya(195).

Mentrestant, i després d'una considerable campanya de promoció anunciant el llibre, es publica Behind the Spanish Barricades(196). Els editors, Secker and Warburg, els mateixos que publicarien l'Homage to Catalonia d'Orwell, havien distribuït un fulletó per fer encàrrecs del llibre amb una nota de l'autor que indica prou clarament la sintonia de Langdon-Davies amb els qui veuen, immediatament, la dimensió internacional de la guerra civil i reclamen un posicionament clar del govern britànic al costat del govern legal de la República: "At one barricade after another ill-armed men who had left their fields and

194 Carta de Gerald Brenan a Langdon-Davies, 22/11/1936. APLD.

195 Es interessant fer notar, en aquest context, el muntatge d'un espectacle de mim i dansa que Langdon-Davies i la seva dona, Betty Barr, presenten a Londres. L'escriptor fa el paper d'un camperol català revolucionari, amb faixa negra, barretina i una falç a la mà. La dansa representa la lluita del camperol contra les personificacions del militarisme, el capitalisme i la superstició. Fotos de la representació a APLD.

196 John Langdon-Davies, Behind the Spanish Barricades, Secker and Warburg, London, november 1936.

workshops to die so that decency shall not perish in another part of Europe welcomed me 'because I was English'. 'Ah', they said, 'Salud! You are English and the English believe in democracy. They are with us, are they not?' And then I came back. In the Paris train I heard the old familiar voices -Moscow gold, raped nuns, filthy Reds... Stands England where she did?"(197). El llibre de Langdon-Davies, tal com suggereix aquesta nota, és una de les primeres i més vigoroses contribucions literàries per tal de crear opinió en la campanya infructuosa per fer canviar la postura de suposada neutralitat que manté el govern de Sa Majestat.

Quan l'autor anuncia al prefaci de Behind the Spanish Barricades que "This book does not lay claim to permanence or to be considered as a work of art", i s'afanya a dir que "it has been write in five weeks in the intervals of addressing meetings from one end of England to the other to collect funds for Spanish Medical Aid" està justificant les limitacions de la seva obra amb el convenciment moral de respondre al reclam d'un vers de l'època que demana "To make action urgent and its nature clear"(198), un imperatiu moral que en el clima polític del moment passa, sovint, per damunt de qualsevol consideració artística. És per això que l'autor tampoc no vol deixar dubtes respecte a la seva posició. D'entrada ell pren partit, un altre imperatiu moral/intel.lectual de l'època(199), tot i que la seva llarga relació

197 APLD.

198 Poema nòm. 30 de Look Stranger! de W.H. Auden, Faber and Faber, London, 1936, pàgs. 65-66. El poema era dedicat a Christopher Isherwood el dia del seu aniversari.

199 Recordeu les edicions de pamflets del tipus "Authors Take Sides on the Spanish Civil War".

amb el país el porta a preocupacions que van més enllà dels conflictes polítics que s'han plantejat: "I think one side right and the other criminally wrong, but beyond that I am obsessed with the disintegration of human nature that comes with the greatest atrocity of all, Civil War."(200)

El llibre recull les experiències que Langdon-Davies visqué fent la seva sèrie d'entrevistes per al News Chronicle a partir del primer de maig de 1936 i les de corresponsal a Barcelona l'agost i el setembre. És a dir, és un testimoniatge del clima social i polític immediatament anterior a l'esclat de la guerra i dels canvis que la nova situació produeix a Catalunya durant les primeres setmanes de l'enfrontament. Hi ha, d'altra banda, un capítol dedicat al fenomen dels incendis d'esglésies i una mena d'epíleg sobre les implicacions que suposa la postura del govern britànic davant la situació.

Behind the Spanish Barricades, però, és sobretot el llibre anglès que tracta més extensament i des de l'experiència personal la situació política i els primers efectes de la guerra a Catalunya(201). Malgrat el seu mateix títol i la competència amb d'altres més enganyosos, com Homage to Catalonia, Behind the Spanish Barricades dedica dos capítols complets a la situació catalana -"The Army in Overalls" i "Rambles and

200 Prefaci a la 1a. edició de Behind Spanish Barricades, op. cit.

201 Cal recordar aquí el magnífic treball de l'austríac Franz Borkenau, The Spanish Cockpit, Faber and Faber, Londres, 1937, una anàlisi política més consistent i menys anecdòtica de les primeres setmanes de la guerra. Vegeu especialment el cap., "A Diary in Revolution".

Paral·lelo"(202)- i conté múltiples referències a la qüestió nacional a la resta de capítols.

Es un llibre-reportatge format per un conjunt d'anècdotes, entrevistes i comentaris que l'autor recull dels diversos amics que tractà durant les setmanes que seguiren el 19 de juliol. Obviament descriu l'eufòria i entusiasme generalitzats d'aquells primers mesos amb la voluntat de projectar-los als simpatitzants de la causa antifeixista al món anglosaxó. Amb tot, Langdon-Davies comença a anotar les profundes contradiccions i la multiplicitat d'interessos que la situació revolucionària està fent aflorar entre els seus amics i coneguts catalans en relació a la classe social a què pertanyen. Així els qui l'autor anomena "Q.", "T.", "Cristina", "Borrull" o "Kim" són personificacions, no pas necessàriament exactes, que exemplifiquen els conflictes de classe i les situacions personals que s'estan produint a Catalunya(203).

Els crítics anglesos no són pas immunes a la predisposició de "prendre partit" que caracteritza el moment. I menys respecte a la guerra civil, el conflicte que epitomitza els debats ideològics de tota

202 Hi ha traducció catalana d'aquests dos capítols a J. Langdon-Davies, La Setmana Tràgica de 1937, Llibres a l'abast, núm. 227, Edicions 62, Barcelona, 1987. Són també prou interessants com a testimoniatge de l'ambient a Barcelona el 1936 ("La ciutat més estranya del món") i com una aportació a la mitificació del Districte Vè. com a "viver de revolucionaris". El tema ha estat tractat per Ucelay Da Cal a L'Avenç, núm 76, pàgs. 28 i sgs., sense, però, citar el llibre de Langdon-Davies.

203 És evident que Langdon-Davies està més preocupat a il·lustrar amb anècdotes un determinat tipus de conflicte personal que no pas a ser biogràficament precís i/o acurat en l'anècdota. Tot i això, és clar que "T." i "Cristina", per exemple, responen inicialment al matrimoni Casanova de Ripoll. En canvi, "Kim" sembla ser una fusió de l'advocat Joaquim Llimona, nebot de l'escultor, i del periodista Josep Pla.

una dècada. Així doncs, no ha de sorprendre que diversos crítics trobin en el mateix llibre raons per fer apologia del govern de Burgos, del govern de València o de la revolució anarco-sindicalista. La premsa que dóna suport al general Franco carrega contra la declarada parcialitat de l'autor, que només ha visitat la zona republicana, posa l'èmfasi en els aspectes religiosos a partir de les justificacions que Langdon-Davies fa per explicar el fenomen dels incendis d'esglésies i li retreu les nombroses faltes d'ortografia en les cites en castellà(204). Es produeix, fins i tot, alguna crítica negativa al llibre només d'aparèixer l'anunci de la seva publicació (Saturday Review), o la censura prèvia, com en el cas de The Observer, que dirigeix J.L. Gravin, un declarat partidari del govern de Burgos, que no permet la inserció d'un anunci publicitari de Behind the Spanish Barricades quan era a punt de sortir a la venda. Quan Langdon-Davies rememora, els anys seixanta, les seves vivències de l'època a "La Guerra Civil Espanyola: Crònica"(205) recorda aquest fet amb aquestes paraules: "The Observer es negaria a inserir l'anunci del meu llibre, cosa, és clar, prou legítima des del seu punt de vista. Avui dia, quan llegeixo els anuncis contra la guerra del Vietnam, tot sovint em ve a la memòria aquella negativa".

D'altra banda, però, la parcialitat declarada de l'autor no desqualifica el llibre en l'opinió de molts crítics. Potser perquè, som

204 Vegeu "Overhasty Propaganda", Tablet, gener 1937; "Red Hate", Saturday Review, 19/12/36, o "Partisan View of Spanish Rebellions", Western Mail, 26/11/36, com a exemples .

205 Vegeu La Setmana Tràgica de 1937, op. cit. El simple anunci del llibre també provocà les irès de l'Irish News el 20/11/36 expressades en un curiós article titulat "Propaganda in The Listener".

diu Fenner Brockwat(206) a Tribune, "Behind the Spanish Barricades is only political because it is impossible to write about the Spanish struggle without being political". Malgrat això, el crític afirma: "I know no book which conveys the 'atmosphere' of Spain and of the clash of its forces so completely". És un punt de vista que comparteix plenament el The Times Literary Supplement: "His sympathies are obvious, but his actual reporting of events is entirely objective. The whole book is the most convincing and the most vivid account of the civil war that has yet appeared; it has been written in a hurry, but bears little evidence of haste; previous knowledge, spontaneously remembered and applied as contemporary scenes are described, gives the picture a sort of three-dimensional reality"(207). Un dels crítics més entusiastes, en aquesta línia, és Gerald Brenan -que signa amb el pseudònim de "George Beaton". Al New Statesman, Brenan elogia la franquesa amb què Langdon-Davies afronta el fenomen dels incendis d'esglésies i el fet de la revolució social de base anarquista que ha esclatat a Catalunya. Recomana el llibre amb arguments semblants als dels crítics anteriors: "He has written an absolutely frank and honest account of his experiences, and short of going to Spain oneself I know of no better way of understanding what people are doing and saying there than by reading it"(208). Però potser les crítiques més ponderades i les que millor destrien els valors positius de l'obra de les servituds inevitables del reportatge

206 Fenner Brockway fou un destacat líder de l'Independent Labour Party i visitaria Espanya en relació amb la desaparició d'Andreu Nin i el judici contra el POUM. Harold Wilson el nomenà membre de la House of Lords.

207 The Times Literary Supplement, 5/12/36.

208 "George Beaton", "The Spanish Revolution", The New Statesman and Nation, 28/11/36.

impressionista són l'ànima del World of Reviews(209) i la de l'escriptor i bon coneixedor d'Espanya, V.S. Pritchett a The Spectator(210).

Als Estats Units, el llibre surt una mica més tard i la crítica americana recull l'impacte i els comentaris que ha obtingut a Anglaterra. La The New York Times Book Review(211) manifesta el seu acord amb el comentari del The Times londinenc que he citat més amunt i el Herald Tribune(212) es fa ressò de la negativa de The Observer d'inserir publicitat del llibre a les seves pàgines. El New Republic(213) aprofita les denúncies implícites contra la neutralitat britànica que fa Langdon-Davies per qüestionar la posició del govern americà en relació a la guerra civil. En general la crítica americana coincideix amb les valoracions dels periòdics anglesos. Uns i altres remarquen especialment el coneixement previ de la situació que té Langdon-Davies, les notícies que dona sobre l'organització cooperativista del Port de la Selva(214), la cita d'un catecisme en curs legal durant la guerra que resolía la pregunta, "What sin is committed

209 World Review of Reviews, gener de 1937.

210 V.S. Pritchett, "The Spanish Conflict", The Spectator, 4/12/36.

211 C.P., "Life Behind Spanish Barricades", The New York Times Book Review, 10/1/37.

212 John Gunther, "Behind the Spanish Barricades", New York Herald Tribune, 10/1/37.

213 Robert Neville, "Behind the Line in Spain", New Republic, 10/2/37.

214 Behind..., op. cit. pàgs. 65-73.

by those who vote liberal?", amb la sentència, "Usually, mortal sin"(215), i el capítol sobre l'incendi d'esglésies.

Es precisament al voltant de les qüestions religioses que el llibre desperta les polèmiques més vehements, sobretot a partir de les accions legals que emprenen i que guanya Langdon-Davies contra dos diaris catòlics, el Catholic Herald i el Catholic Times, acusant-los de difamacions pels seus comentaris sobre Behind the Spanish Barricades. El conflicte queda resolt amb una rectificació pública de l'empresa editora, "Catholic Herald and Bucks Press Ltd" i el pagament a l'autor de Behind the Spanish Barricades de 50 guinees. Langdon-Davies destina aquests diners a l'edició d'un opuscle titulat The Spanish Church and Politics(216), on reflexiona sobre les profundes diferències entre l'església catòlica del moment i els catòlics anglesos. Cita les ensenyances de l'església en relació amb la política que propugna el cèlebre catecisme del Reverendo Padre Angel Maria de Arcos per explicar la militància doctrinal i activa de l'església espanyola contra el sistema democràtic. Elogia algunes veus discordants contra la línia oficial, com les del cardenal Vidal i Barraquer i el canonge Carles Cardó, de qui cita un fragment del seu article a La Paraula Cristiana el març de 1936: "Christ, in our country, is cut in two: the Right Parties have his truth; but the Left Parties have his justice. Truth without justice is tyranny; justice without truth is anarchy".

L'opuscle és un intent de contrarrestar la gran quantitat de

215 La cita és extreta del catecisme Nuevo Ripalda, enriquecido con varios apéndices, 14a. edició, 1927.

216 J. Langdon-Davies, The Spanish Church and Politics, Watts and Co, Londres, 1937.

propaganda que presenta el general Franco com un croat de la causa cristiana contra l'ateisme(217). Langdon-Davies vol conscienciar els catòlics anglesos de la distància que els separa de la percepció de la vida política que sembla que tenen els seus correligionaris espanyols. Amb la seva habitual habilitat didàctica, Langdon-Davies remarca en el seu opuscle que: "English readers should remember that, to the Spanish Church, our present Government, our Conservative Party, the Primrose League, and Sir Henry Page Croft would all be tainted with "leftism", for the liberalism to which that Church is opposed is not a matter of party politics, but the very political atmosphere which an Englishman breathes unconsciously by virtue of his country's history".

Els opuscles i plamfets constitueixen una mena de subgènere literari molt popular a l'època. No ha d'estranyar, doncs, que The Spanish Church and Politics fos comentat per la premsa amb gairebé el mateix interès que el llibre(218). La producció de pamflets en anglès sobre la guerra civil és constant durant tot el conflicte(219) i adopta formes tan variades com l'edició d'un poema (el famós Spain de W.H. Auden), un qüestionari (Authors take Sides on the Spanish Civil War). Aquest darrer inclou, precisament, l'article de Langdon-Davies "What the

217 En aquest sentit vegeu per exemple la delirant obra poètica de Roy Campbell sobre la guerra civil, especialment Flowering Rifle, 1939.

218 L'opuscle provoca algunes reaccions interessants de diversos bisbes i teòlegs que s'adrecen directament a Langdon-Davies. Potser una bona síntesi d'aquestes opinions és el comentari del bisbe anglicà de Birmingham quan escriu "Strange variants of Christianity disgrace our civilisation!". Carta de 1/12/37. APLD.

219 Vegeu, com una mostra, la col·lecció particular de George Orwell que es conserva al British Museum, citada per M. Berga a Mil nou-cents vuitanta-quatre: radiografia d'un malson, Llibres a l'abast, 195, Edicions 62, Barcelona, 1984. Annex 3.

Fall of Irún Means to Spain and Us"(220).

De tota manera, les qüestions que han mantingut més l'interès de la historiografia posterior en relació a Behind the Spanish Barricades han estat la descripció que fa Langdon-Davies de la cooperativa de pescadors del Port de la Selva i l'organització comunal dels habitants d'Ansó, un poble aragonès. Les comenten Gerald Brenan a The Spanish Laberynth(221), Anthony Beevor a The Spanish Civil War(222) i Gabriel Jackson a La República Espanola y la Guerra Civil(223).

220 Es, de fet, la darrera crònica que Langdon-Davies va escriure per al News Chronicle, el setembre de 1936. Spain and Us, publicat pel Committee for Spanish Medical Aid, va sortir el novembre de 1936 coincidint amb la publicació de Behind the Spanish Barricades. Juntament amb Langdon-Davies, hi col·laboraren J.B. Priestley, Rebecca West, Stephen Spender, Ethel Mannin, Francis Meynell, Louis Golding, T.F. Powys i Catherine Carswell.

221 Gerald Brenan, The Spanish Laberynth, Cambridge UP, Londres, 1943.

222 Anthony Beevor, The Spanish Civil War, Orbis, Londres, 1976.

223 Gabriel Jackson, La República Espanola y la Guerra Civil, Ed. Critica, Barcelona, 1978.

1937 I ELS FETS DE MAIG

Anys més tard, quan reflexiona sobre la guerra espanyola, Langdon-Davies fa aquesta observació: "De fet, el deler inicial d'aconseguir la victòria sobre Franco donà pas al deler d'acabar la guerra al preu que fos"(224). Aquesta sentència sobre l'evolució dels sentiments col·lectius no té, naturalment, més valor que el d'una generalització opinable. És ben cert, però, que unes circumstàncies tan intenses i especials gairebé obliguen a una reacció permanent davant dels esdeveniments i, doncs, a redefinir les postures pròpies.

Així, Langdon-Davies, qui, quan escriu Behind the Spanish Barricades fa freqüents elogis de la situació revolucionària de domini anarquista que es viu a Catalunya, a mesura que passen els mesos es va apropant a les postures que defensa el partit comunista i, durant els anys 1937 i 1938, exerceix clarament i conscientment de "company de viatge". Gradualment, però, les seves energies en el transcurs de la guerra es van concentrant en les accions humanitàries d'ajut per les víctimes cada cop més nombroses que pateix el bàndol republicà. Observem aquesta seqüència fixant-nos en afirmacions del mateix Langdon-Davies. El 1936 elogia i justifica els comitès que sorgeixen a cada poble: "A Espanya, la força espiritual mai no li ha vingut de cap òrgan central, sempre ha sorgit de cada una de les cèl·lules, de cada teixit. S'havia

224 "The Spanish Civil War: Reporting", vegeu Apèndix 4.4.

de conquerir poble per poble i, mentre el poble restés amb les barricades intactes, Espanya no seria feixista"(225) i, més endavant, matisar les quantitats d'assassinats que s'atribueixen a les patrulles de control i, fins a cert punt, en vol fer comprendre la seva inevitabilitat(226). Ara bé, el febrer de 1937 manifesta a Marià Manent que tem que entre els anarquistes "pul.lulen molts agents provocadors" i en els escrits en relació als "Fets de Maig" d'aquest mateix any ja és obertament crític a la filosofia de la FAI: "Cada membre s'ha de disciplinar ell mateix, tot el que no sigui autodisciplina és proscrit. Aquesta teoria té molt d'atractiu, però té un inconvenient seriós. Seria probablement molt ben acollida precisament per tots aquells individus que volen fer la seva pròpia llei en el pitjor sentit... En primer lloc, tenen criminals declarats -la doctrina anarquista els ofereix possibilitats inaudites. Si teniu un ressentiment personal contra un ex amo vostre, o per la mateixa raó contra un treballador que pertany a la UGT, és fàcil decidir que és un 'contrarrevolucionari'; us el carregueu (com aquell qui res o com a mínim en privat) perquè no us agrada i públicament perquè així ajuden a la 'neteja de la reraguarda'. És realment impossible de fer la distinció entre un crim de venjança personal i la justícia pública"(227).

Aquest apropament a la línia comunista no és d'estranyar en un home que des de l'inici de la guerra col.labora intensament en organitzacions amb notable presència comunista, com Spanish Medical Aid o el Comitè de Seguiment del Pacte de No-Intervenció. També havia d'influir-hi

225 Behind the Spanish Barricades, op. cit.

226 Ibid., pàgs. 82-86.

227 El vel de Maia, op. cit. pàg.27.

l'admiració que desperta la crucial defensa de Madrid que protagonitzen les Brigades Internacionals en uns moments especialment delicats per a la República. Les mostres de màxima identificació amb l'ortodòxia comunista en el decurs de la guerra es produeixen amb la seva versió periodística dels Fets de maig de Barcelona i alguna col.laboració posterior al Daily Worker, que analitzaré més endavant.

Cal afegir-hi, encara, la insòlita efervescència d'intel.lectuals i escriptors britànics decididament partidaris de l'art "compromès" que caracteritza la dècada dels 30 i que la guerra d'Espanya ha posat a prova. En aquest camp, també, hi ha consciència generalitzada de quina és l'ortodòxia. Queda ben reflectida en la resposta del mateix Langdon-Davies en el cèlebre qüestionari Authors take sides on the Spanish War(228): "Two things make the futur real, the artist's imagination and the worker's hope. Fascism destroys both. Therefore the artist and the worker must unite to destroy Fascism. The Fascist artist is a traitor, the neutral is already dead. Art and antifascism are synonymous".

Tot i això, Langdon-Davies no "milita" en cap partit i manté gairebé sempre una actitud d'observador intel.ligent i crític malgrat les seves simpaties. Durant els anys que queden de guerra alterna les seves conferències i campanyes d'ajut a la República per Anglaterra i els Estats Units amb visites breus a Catalunya. De la primera d'aquestes, el gener/febrer de 1937, en tenim el testimoni de Marià Manent, que ens permet copsar la penetració crítica amb què Langdon-Davies va seguint els esdeveniments. Val la pena citar-lo textualment:

228 Left Review, London, juny 1937.

"7 de febrer. Vaig a ciutat perquè m'han dit que el meu amic Langdon-Davies, periodista anglès, em vol veure. Tinc la sort de trobar-lo al capdavant del passeig de Gràcia: amples espatlles, vestit gris, cara roja de Sant Jordi. Està molt content de veure'm. M'abraça. Diu que al principi l'opinió anglesa d'esquerres no s'interessava gaire per la guerra d'Espanya, però des de primers de novembre, a causa de la resistència de Madrid, es comença a entusiasmar. 'Es trist de dir-ho, però al poble anglès li agraden els que guanyen'. Es queixa de la premsa conservadora i de la catòlica, favorable als franquistes. Diu que els comunistes anglesos estan molt preocupats per l'actuació dels elements anarquistes d'Espanya, entre els quals ell tem que pul.lulen molts agents provocadors. Li pregunto si creu que la guerra serà llarga. 'No es pot dir res -contesta- perquè aquest conflicte s'ha convertit en una qüestió internacional. Jo crec que s'acabarà en una conflagració europea'. Li dic els meus dubtes, però insisteix que Alemanya vol la guerra. 'Nosaltres estem, si fa no fa, com vosaltres. Demà, precisament, cada anglès rebrà una màscara antigas. Això esclatarà qualsevol dia'. Tot seguit, però, concedeix que el conflicte general pot trigar encara un parell d'anys.

8 de

febrer... A migdia tinc una llarga conversa amb Langdon-Davies al bar "La Lluna". Diu que actualment lluiten 60.000 alemanys al costat dels rebels. Li pregunto: 'Però vós, és clar, confieu en la victòria dels governamentals?' Fa una ganyota: 'Si pot deturar-se la tramesa en massa d'alemanys...' Assegura que els italians també ajuden molt els franquistes. A

Mallorca hi ha hagut (no se sap si hi són encara) centenars d'avions de procedència italiana. Però no creu que Catalunya hagi de tèmmer un atac per mar, perquè Anglaterra no permetrà que Itàlia ataqüi 'openly'. Opina que l'atac vindrà per terra, de la banda de Terol.

Li conto que, aquests darrers temps, he llegit bastant Marx i Lenin. Diu que no li agrada el dogmatisme de certs comunistes que converteixen aquests dos doctrinaris en la Bíblia marxista: l'Antic i el Nou Testament. Després parlem de finances. És completament cert, segons ell, que a Anglaterra la pesseta té una cotització molt més favorable que la republicana. Els canvis, en relació amb la lliura, són 70 i 150 respectivament. "Això és absurd -comenta-, ja que la pesseta dels rebels no té cap encaix or. Però ningú no pot treure del cap dels conservadors anglesos la convicció que guanyarà Franco". Tornem a parlar de la premsa. Li pregunto per quina raó no es venen ací els diaris del seu país. "Perquè tots, llevat del News Chronicle, són favorables als franquistes". Però, i el Manchester Guardian? -objecto. "Bé, doncs tots menys aquests dos". Diu que prepara un llibre sobre l'anarco-sindicalisme català. Comenta que els més "místics" en aquesta lluita són els de la FAI. Cremen amb furor les esglésies perquè creuen que allí resideix un poder real que els amenaça, i per això el volen destruir. No opina que, en conjunt, aquesta sigui una guerra religiosa. Jo esmento el parer contrari de l'escriptor francès Ramon Fernández (expressat en un article de la revista VU). Abans d'acomiar-

nos parla molt despectivament de l'anarquista nord-americana Emma Goldman.

9 de febrer.- ...Ahir, amb l'amic Langdon-Davies, també vam parlar de Rússia. Segons ell, molts marxistes lamenten que el comunisme, en comptes d'implantar-se primer a Rússia, no s'hagués instaurat a Espanya. 'Així hauria tingut una caràcter menys rigidament dictatorial, més llibertari (encara que no pas en el sentit anarco-sindicalista, és clar)'. També em va dir que creu inevitable, a la llarga, una topada violenta de la CNT i el POUM, per una banda i la Generalitat i la UGT per l'altra. Els trotskistes -diu- són contrarevolucionaris, però bé que puguin presentar-se com els purs"(229).

El mateix febrer retorna a Anglaterra per preparar una nova edició, revisada i abreujada, de Behind the Spanish Barricades. Aquesta nova estada a Catalunya li ha servit per ratificar la hipocresia del govern britànic en signar el pacte de no-intervenció (vegeu els comentaris que fa a Manent) i l'encoratja a continuar la seva participació en la campanya contra el govern conservador en relació a la guerra civil, una qüestió que ha esdevingut un problema polític intern que divideix profundament l'opinió pública anglesa. Només la participació dels britànics, a títol individual, en les Brigades Internacionals, redimeix, segons Langdon-Davies, la tradició de lluita a favor de la democràcia i la llibertat que atribueix a la Gran Bretanya. Aquests voluntaris són "the keepers of our conscience".

La breu visita, però, li fa descobrir dos nous factors en

229 El vel de maia, op. cit. pàgs. 26-29.

l'evolució dels esdeveniments a Catalunya. D'una banda, constata alguns canvis subtils de l'ambient de Barcelona que revelen l'inici d'un altre "estat de coses" en relació a l'explosió revolucionària dels primers mesos de la guerra. Són els canvis que, uns mesos més tard, Orwell trobà tan colpidors. Al prefaci de la nova edició de Behind the Spanish Barricades, Langdon-Davies escriu: "When I went back to Barcelona in January, most of the barricades had been cleared away, the shortage of petrol had brought order to the streets, a bare space marked the spot where the Women's Prison had been, the Atarazanas barracks had been removed, the Via Layetana had become the Via Durruti, the "petit i modest burgès" on the Ramblas were risking hats and ties once more, every window was covered with strips of paper as protection against bombs. In the fifth district the houses of prostitution were covered with posters issued by the Libertarian Women's Associations proclaiming that prostitution was a counter-revolutionary act"(230).

Allò, però, que més impressiona Langdon-Davies de la nova situació és la presència dels milers de refugiats que comencen a arribar a Catalunya: But what struck me most was the number of refugees from the south that Barcelona had taken in. You saw them everywhere, crocodiles of little girls and boys. It is the most significant fact of all, this desperate exodus of the population of whole districts from the advance of the men who claim to be their deliverers". La reacció immediata del

230 Behind the Spanish Barricades, abridged edition, Secker and Warburg, Londres, abril 1937. A Homage to Catalonia, Orwell descriu amb paraules semblants les impressions que Langdon-Davies ha constatat al seu prefaci. Vegeu Homage to Catalonia, chapter IX. La diferència, és clar, és que allò que Orwell veu com una tradició ideològica, Langdon-Davies ho presenta com un èxit de l'esforç de la República per normalitzar la situació i, per tant, treure reticències a les democràcies europees que els neguen l'ajuda.

quàquer Langdon-Davies és la d'inspirar i animar un comitè, que aviat disposarà d'una bona organització a Anglaterra i als Estats Units: el National Joint Committee for Spanish Relief. La feina del comitè es concentra en un projecte de pares adoptius per a nens espanyols refugiats (Foster Parents Scheme, a Anglaterra, i Foster Parents'Plan, als EUA). Les visites de Langdon-Davies a Catalunya el 1937 són sempre per solucionar personalment les complicacions burocràtiques que suposa l'organització d'aquest projecte.

La situació dels refugiats, no cal dir-ho, és cada cop més dramàtica. Mesos més tard, quan escriu "The Tragic Week", Langdon-Davies en fa una descripció retrospectiva: "Into Catalunya were pouring hundreds of thousands of refugees. First when the rebels succeeded in holding on to Estremadura and vast tracts of Andalusia, lands where every peasant and worker was a loyal government supporter, there had begun a frenzied trek to the north. Whole villages had been deserted, the men hurried by mountain tracks towards the nearest place where they could rally as workers militia and face the foe, their women and children descended like locusts upon Madrid. As the autumn advance raced forward, the swarms increased. Towns like Toledo removed themselves en bloc to the capital. Then came the November days and the saving of the city only by an international miracle. Madrid, brim full of southern fugitives overflowed northward by the thousand. Malaga fell; those who escaped the machine-guns of Mussolini's birds of prey limped in to Almeria and on through Valencia to the Exhibition Stadium of Barcelona. To the eternal glory of the common folk of Catalunya there was scarcely a family that did not take a waif to share its already depleted larder. The Catalan Generalitat turned over to refugee

committees large hotels and private palaces and established colonies of children"(231).

El mes d'abril, Langdon-Davies comença a donar forma al projecte. El 8 d'abril el president Companys autoritza formalment la iniciativa en un telegrama adreçat a Langdon-Davies al News Chronicle. Companys expressa el seu agrafment i encarrega Grau Farré de coordinar les accions amb l'escriptor i el National Joint Committee for Spanish Relief.

El govern català es compromet a cedir cases per ubicar-hi colònies de nens refugiats i de nomenar responsables de l'educació i l'atenció dels residents. Per la seva banda, el Comitè de Pares Adoptius es responsabilitza de l'administració, a càrrec dels seus representants, l'americà Nick Carter i l'australiana Esme Odgers, i del finançament mitjançant les quotes que paguen els subscriptors del Pla per cada nen adoptat.

Així, el mes de juliol ja funciona la primera colònia, "Torre Inglaterra", a Puigcerdà i poc després una altra a Torrentbó, als afores de Caldetes. El Comitè inicia la campanya de subscripcions amb un fulletó explicatiu encapçalat per la frase "Will you be my Foster Parent?" sota la fotografia d'un tal Manolín de tres anys. El full explicatiu defineix els objectius i els mecanismes de funcionament de les colònies: "The scheme came into being last April under the inspiration of Mr. John Langdon-Davies. The object is that Spanish Refugee children from the war zones should be cared for in Spain in

231 "The Tragic Week", vegeu Apèndix 4.3.

colonies supported by English foster parents... A foster parent guarantees the sum of 1/- a day for a year, which covers the maintenance of one child. On receipt of the first payment, a child is chosen from the thousands of homeless children in Spain, and in due course, the foster parent receives name, age and a brief history and characteristics of the child, with a small photograph. The children are told clearly how and by whom they are being provided for, and encouraged to write letters to the foster parent. The foster parent also receives a monthly bulletin from the organisers in Spain, and news, letters, drawings, etc., at frequent intervals. Foster parents are asked to send photographs, letters, small personal gifts and if possible, clothing. In this way children who have lost all personal ties are encouraged to feel the existence of a personal friend rather than a vague dispenser of charity. This is the essence of the foster parent scheme"(232). Donen suport a aquesta primera crida un grup de personalitats, entre les quals figuren, Benjamin Britten, Richard Ellis, Francis Maynell, V.S. Pritchett i Stephen Spender.

El mes de desembre ja hi ha quatre colònies entre Puigcerdà i Alp que acullen 23 nens refugiats i el Pla s'ha estès als EUA sota l'organització d'Eric G. Muggeridge. Entre les personalitats que donen suport al Pla als EUA hi ha els autors Lillian Hellman, Helen Keller, Thomas Mann, Dorothy Parker, Thornton Wilder i també hi figura l'esposa del president Roosevelt. El mes de gener de 1938 es crea un comitè

232 Aquest full explicatiu es conserva al APLD. S'hi conserven, també, quatre bulletins informatius des de Puigcerdà (nov. i des. 1937; gener i febrer 1938), una carta de Langdon-Davies adreçada a tots els Foster Parents, dos números de Pirineos, peròdic infantil de la colònia escolar "Torre Inglaterra" (agost i setembre 1937), i un exemplar dels fulletons publicats pel Comitè americà el 1939.

la iniciativa de Langdon-Davies encara dona fruits, i molts dels nens espanyols que eren refugiats a Catalunya, i ara ho són a França, poden escapar dels improvisats camps de refugiats del sud de França per ingressar a les noves colònies que comencen a funcionar a Bayona, Ustaritz i Itxassou, als voltants de Biarritz.

Alternant aquestes gestions, però, Langdon-Davies continua escrivint i va preparant allò que havia anunciat a Marià Manent com "un llibre sobre l'anarco-sindicalisme català". de fet, aquest llibre mai no es fa realitat i només en queden alguns manuscrits indèdits, que hem de considerar l'embrió del llibre projectat. Són, bàsicament, dos assaigs històrics (MsA i MsB) i el titulat "The tragic week"(233). L'MsA és un intent d'explicar, amb perspectiva històrica, les explosions de rebel·lió popular que s'han produït a Barcelona i que han tingut la seva concreció urbana amb l'aixecament de barricades. L'assaig és, sobretot, una anàlisi de la Setmana Tràgica de 1909, que es presenta com un antecedent. Es tracta de fer entendre al lector anglosaxó el temperament i l'estratègia de les masses treballadores barcelonines en situacions de greu conflicte social, com les que es viuen quan Langdon-Davies redacta aquest assaig (1937).

L'MsB és clarament un capítol introductori del llibre projectat, en el qual l'autor vol analitzar la idiosincràsia de l'anarco-sindicalisme català a partir de dues constants històriques: la inhibició permanent de l'estat espanyol per tirar endavant la reforma agrària; i la tradició cooperativista del camperol que viu en les petites poblacions de la Catalunya rural. Langdon-Davies emmarca la qüestió al voltant del concepte de col·lectivisme agrari i les formes tradicionals d'ajuda

233 Vegeu Apèndixs 4.3, 5.1 i 5.2.

mútua: "Agrarian Collectivism is the doctrine that the State is bound to interfere with the rights of property in land whenever the peasant is hungry and the land uncultivated. Anarchism is the peasant's recourse to his traditional forms of mutual aid when the state refuses to perform this duty"(234). Pràcticament tot el manuscrit és dedicat a resseguir els antecedents teòrics que plantegen la qüestió entre els pensadors espanyols i que, segons Langdon-Davies, arrenquen de Juan Luis Vives i la seva obra De Subventionem Pauperum, sive de humanis necessitatibus (1526).

Vives, però, canvia radicalment de parer quan escriu el seu tractat De comunione rerum (1535), una apologia de la propietat privada. El canvi s'ha produït després de les revoltes que es produeixen a Alemanya, Holanda i Suïssa immediatament després de la mort de l'agitador Müntzer(235). Vives s'horroritza davant les conseqüències que es deriven de l'aplicació real d'algunes de les idees que professava. Langdon-Davies creu que "the Agrarian Collectivism of the bookish Vives had come into contact with the practical revolutionary Anarchism of the Anabaptists"(236). Tot i que l'assaig inacabat inclou cites d'altres pensadors com el jesuïta Juan de Mariana (1536-1624), és evident que Langdon-Davies presenta el cas de Juan Luis Vives com una referència paradigmàtica de l'evolució del seu propi pensament davant dels efectes d'una revolució anarquista "en la pràctica", com la que s'ha produït a Catalunya a partir del 19 de juliol de 1936. Això queda ben palès quan deixem les consideracions teòriques i les reflexions històriques

234 Vegeu Apèndix 5.2.

235 Thomas Muntzer (1468 o 1489-1525), teòleg reformat i revolucionari alemany que discrepà de Luter i s'uní als camperols i els anabaptistes en la "guerra dels camperols" alemanya. Fou decapitat.

236 Vegeu Apèndix 5.2.

d'aquests dos manuscrits i considerem el tercer, "The Tragic Week"(237), que vindria a completar el conjunt d'escrits no publicats amb reflexions sobre l'anarco-sindicalisme català.

"The Tragic Week", escrit el 1937 i revisat el 1966 o 1967 és, de fet, una crònica de la visita que fa Langdon-Davies a Catalunya des del 25 d'abril fins al 8 de maig de 1937. Constitueix, doncs, un conjunt d'observacions sobre la situació d'enfrontament latent que existeix a Catalunya entre anarquistes i comunistes. La seva narració culmina amb la descripció dels enfrontaments oberts, els "fets de maig", que havien de significar un viratge crucial en l'evolució política i militar de la república i, a nivell personal, una situació extrema que obliga Langdon-Davies a prendre partit. Veiem com l'escriptor, que malda, en aquest i en anteriors escrits, per comprendre les raons dels anarco-sindicalistes, els dedica referències entusiastes i justifica fins on pot la seva estratègia, es va decantant davant dels esdeveniments que culminen amb els "fets de maig" cap a les postures que pregona el partit comunista. És l'inici de la breu lluna de mel de Langdon-Davies amb el comunisme ortodox. Pocs anys després manifesta que se sent bàsicament utilitzat per aquest i escriurà, en una amarga i sarcàstica reflexió genèrica, que "It is true that they (el partit comunista) have invented the category of fellow traveller for the duchesses, bishops, gentlemen of independent means, publishers, artists and authors, whose various brands of humanitarianism or mere sentimentalism can be usefully employed along with any accumulated surplus value that may go with such people's other virtues"(238).

237 Vegeu Apèndix 4.3. Hi ha traducció catalana a La Setmana Tràgica de 1937: Els Fets de Maig, op. cit.

238 "Confession", 1946. Vegeu Apèndix 5.3.

Veiem, però, d'una manera detallada, com es reflecteixen aquestes actituds durant les dues setmanes crucials d'abril i maig de 1937. Tenim, d'altra banda, el testimoni de l'altre autor anglès que és també a Barcelona aquells dies: George Orwell. Orwell arriba a la ciutat després d'una estada de més de tres mesos al front d'Aragó. És el 26 d'abril, és a dir, l'endemà de l'arribada de Langdon-Davies. Serà útil, també, contrastar i considerar les descripcions i valoracions que fan els dos autors davant dels esdeveniments que presenciaren.

Cal, d'entrada, observar que tots dos constaten un canvi evident en l'ambient de Barcelona en relació a l'eufòria revolucionària dels primers mesos. Orwell ho explica així: "Everyone who has made two visits, at interval of months, to Barcelona during the war has remarked upon the extraordinary changes that took place in it. And, curiously enough, whether they went there first in August and again in January, or, like myself, first in December and again in April, the thing they said was always the same: that the revolutionary atmosphere had vanished. No doubt to anyone who had been there in August, when the blood was scarcely dry in the streets and militia were quartered in the smart hotels, Barcelona in december would have seemed bourgeois; to me, fresh from England, it was liker to a workers'city than anything I had concieved possible. Now the tide had rolled back. Once again it was an ordinary city, a little pinched and chipped by war, but with no outward sign of working-class predominance... A deep change had come over the town. There were two facts that were the keynote of all else. One was that the people -the civil population- had lost much of their interest in that war; the other was that the normal division of society into rich

and poor, upper class and lower class, was reasserting itself"(239).

Langdon-Davies corrobora les impressions d'Orwell i no les valora pas negativament. Com ja hem vist, a ell el preocupa, sobretot, l'impacte que està suposant l'arribada massiva de refugiats a Catalunya. A prefaci de la 3a. edició de Behind the Spanish Barricades, l'abril de 1937, que ja hem citat, hi anota que, "When I went back to Barcelona in January most of the barricades had been cleared away... the 'petit i modest burgès' on the Rambla were risking hats and ties once more..."(240).

El relat, a "The Tragic Week", del pas per la frontera i els primers contactes que té amb coneguts a Barcelona ja li és suficient per establir el fons de la qüestió:

239 Orwell, George, Homage to Catalonia, op. cit., pàgs. 106-107.

240 Però, potser qui ho explica d'una manera més gràfica i coincident amb aquestes impressions és Franz Borkenau quan visita, per segona vegada, Barcelona a mitjan gener de 1937: "Barcelona came as a shock, as in August, but in the opposite sense. Then it had overwhelmed me by the suddenness with which it revealed the real character of a workers'dictatorship. This time it struck the observer by the clean sweep of all signs of this same dictatorship. No more barricades in the streets; no more cars covered with revolutionary initials and filled with men in red neckties rushing through the town; no more workers in civilian clothes, but rifles on their shoulders; as a matter of fact, very few armed men at all, and those mostly 'asaltos' and guardias in brilliant uniforms; no more seething life around the party centres and no large car-parks before their entries; and the red banners and inscriptions, so shining in August, had faded. There was still no definitely 'bourgeois' element visible in the streets. Certainly the really rich people, if there are any, did not appear in public. But the Ramblas, the chief artery of popular life in Barcelona, were far less clearly working-class now than then. In August it was dangerous to wear a hat: nobody minded doing so now, and the girls no longer hesitated to wear their prettiest clothes. A few of the more fashionable restaurants and dancehalls have reopened, and find costumers. To sum it up, what one calls the petty-bourgeois element, merchants, shopkeepers, professional men, and the like, have not only made their appearance, but make a strong impress upon the general atmosphere.", Borkenau, Franz, The Spanish Cockpit, The University of Michigan Press, 1963, pàg 175.

"So when Borrull said that something serious was expected I knew what he meant. Here and now with Franco, Hitler and Mussolini at their doors the old fight between libertarians and authoritarians was on. It is a fundamental fight, a deep down cleavage in the human race. It had been the skeleton at every feast in honour of anti-fascist unity. It was the main hope of Franco's supporters; the basis of his Fifth Column action in Barcelona"(241).

A partir d'aquí, Langdon-Davies dona la seva versió i fa una sèrie de consideracions en relació a dos dels incidents de la darrera setmana d'abril, que són clars detonants de la situació que registra Barcelona el 3 de maig: Els fets de Bellver de Cerdanya i l'assassinat de Roldan Cortada, el secretari del Conseller de Treball, Rafael Vidiella.

Dels fets de Bellver, en remarca l'acció conjunta que es produeix entre el POUM d'Alp i el comitè de la FAI del cèlebre Antonio Martín "El Cojo de Màlaga", que controla Puigcerdà. D'altra banda, li semblen il·lustratius del problema de les diferents disponibilitats d'armament que hi ha al front i a la reraguarda: "It is said that for a moment or so after arrival the Guards stood speechless with astonishment. They had fought Franco for months short of arms and ammunition, and here were the men of Puigcerdà armed to the teeth, machine guns, rifles, handgrenades, bombs, enough to take Huesca in an hour"(242). Bellver, doncs, és una mostra de la probabilitat de l'enfrontament ideològic, però també ho és

241 "The Tragic Week", vegeu Apèndix 4.3.

242 Ibid. La versió dels fets de Bellver que dona Langdon-Davies (vegeu Apèndix 4.3) ha esdevingut una de les fonts per a l'estudi exhaustiu d'aquelles circumstàncies. Vegeu J. Solé i J. Pous, Anarquia i república a la Cerdanya (1936-1939), Biblioteca Serra d'Or, 74, Barcelona 1988.

de la potencialitat bèl·lica de fer-lo tràgic. No és estrany que el 29 d'abril, l'endemà d'aquests fets, sigui del primer que parlen quan retroba Marià Manent a Barcelona. Manent ho anota així: "Quan era gairebé davant de casa en Sunyer, veig davant meu un home alt, atlètic, nòrdic, amb vestit gris: era en John Langdon-Davies. Quin bell atzar! Vaig a la seva pensió i em parla de la greu situació interior de Catalunya, dels fets de Bellver de Cerdanya, on ahir hi hagué una terrible batalla entre la gent del poble i una columna de 500 homes de la FAI, procedents de Puigcerdà. Langdon-Davies creu que és inevitable la topada decisiva entre la UGT i la Generalitat per una banda, i la FAI per l'altra. Creu que aquesta serà derrotada per una espantosa lluita"(243).

La llarga anotació que fa Manent de les opinions de Langdon-Davies a l'entrada del seu diari del 29 d'abril de 1937, ens permet copsar fins a quin punt l'anglès està al corrent de la situació. Així, de la mateixa manera que denuncia a "The Tragic Week" el fet que els anarquistes de Puigcerdà disposessin d'un arsenal d'armament, Manent anota que, "en Langdon-Davies m'explica que anit, a les 12, mentre ell parlava per ràdio al Casal Carles Marx, adreçant-se al públic de Nord-amèrica i dient que a Barcelona tot està tranquil, constantment veia passar pel seu voltant homes que situaven metralladores dins l'edifici, on hi havia una guàrdia de 500 milicians i 500 soldats"(244). L'enfrontament es veu a venir, doncs, no només perquè és latent, sinó perquè uns i altres el van preparant deliberadament.

Però, més enllà del moment actual del conflicte, el diari de

243 Marià Manent, El vel de maia, Ed. Destino, Barcelona, 1975.

244 Ibid.

Manent ens permet "sentir" el que opina Langdon-Davies sobre diverses qüestions d'interès:

"Pensa que, després de la guerra, vindrà una dictadura centre-socialista, probablement presidida per Prieto. Però no un règim comunista, sinó un règim burgès. Jo li observo: 'Però feia un moment que em dèieu: -Al món no és possible un terme mitjà entre feixisme i comunisme. Cal triar entre aquests dos extrems. Com és, doncs, que preveieu per a Espanya un règim ni feixista ni comunista?' Ell em diu que el que vingui no serà una República burgesa democràtica com la del 1931, sinó una República socialista que, a la llarga, acabarà en règim comunista. 'Però ni els mateixos comunistes no volen per a Espanya la implantació del comunisme, ja que no és possible passar d'un règim feudal o semifeudal a un règim comunista; cal, abans, una etapa de democràcia burgesa'. Efectivament, ja coneixia aquesta tesi del Comintern i de la premsa russa.

Em parla de la derrota formidable de Brihuega i m'assegura que les tropes italianes es van amotinar. Diu que no se sap encara com ha reaccionat Mussolini. Els alemanys, segons Langdon-Davies, han retirat gairebé tots els contingents que tenien a Espanya: només hi queden uns 3.000 homes, la majoria aviadors i tècnics. En canvi, diu que lluiten amb Franco 80.000 italians. Jo li pregunto si creu possible un atac a Barcelona. "Sí, és possible, sobretot si cau Bilbao. No m'explico perquè no han atacat Barcelona; no deu ser pas perquè estigui fortificada. A Espanya només hi ha dues places ben fortificades: Bilbao i Madrid. La CNT es deixaria prendre Barcelona en sis hores".

Li pregunto per la premsa anglesa. Diu que Garvin, director de l'Observer, cremaria ciris davant l'efigie de Franco. El Times ha publicat articles filofeixistes de Merry del Val i Cambó. Els 'impressors de Sa Majestat Britànica' han acceptat d'editar un llibre sobre les 'red atrocities'. Creu que són justes les acusacions de l'oposició quan diu que el Govern anglès afavoreix Franco. Es que a Anglaterra estan esfereïts del comunisme. Segons Langdon-Davies, el Govern no voldria una victòria franca del feixisme a Espanya, perquè enfortiria el poder polític de Hitler i Mussolini, però tampoc no desitja un triomf roig, que implicaria possiblement la destrucció d'aquestes dues dictadures. Es veu -segons Langdon-Davies- que una solució Prieto fóra el seu ideal.

Em parla del llibre que està escrivint sobre l'anarco-sindicalisme català. No creu que aquesta sigui una guerra religiosa. Ho demostra -diu- el fet que al nord s'enfrontin i lluitin desesperadament els dos grups catòlics més forts del país: els requetès i els nacionalistes bascos. No és tampoc, segons ell, una guerra nacionalista, sinó originada per l'evolució econòmica d'Espanya (la interpretació marxista, és clar). Ara bé, el que complica les coses és que Espanya no constitueix cap unitat econòmica. Hi ha el sud feudal i el llevant industrial, burgès. Però, precisament a la regió més avançada industrialment, Catalunya, on caldria esperar en la massa obrera una ideologia comunista, hi ha una opinió anarquista, la teoria que correspon, no pas a un proletariat industrial, sinó a un proletariat agrari. (Segons Langdon-Davies, l'anarquisme és una teoria de pagesos.) I és que una gran massa del proletariat de Catalunya prové de regions

agrícoles: Múrcia, Andalusia. Aquest és l'origen de la complexitat del problema"(245).

Quan acaben aquestes divagacions que, com es veu, a Manent li semblen pròpies d'un home en sintonia amb els postulats del comunisme internacional, sorgeix el retorn a la situació immediata i als fets que ens ocupen:

"Quan ens acomiadem, em diu que faig molt bé de tornar-me'n a muntanya, perquè és molt possible que aquests dies a Barcelona hi hagi incidents greus"(246).

Ja he dit més amunt que l'altre detonant d'aquests "incidents greus" que Langdon-Davies recull a "The Tragic Week" és l'assassinat i la manifestació que provoca l'enterrament de Roldan Cortada.

El dimarts, dia 27, des del balcó d'un banc de la Rambla, presència el seguici dels funerals de Cortada. Molt a prop, des d'una finestra de l'hotel Continental, George Orwell contempla la mateixa desfilada. Juntament amb els sindicats i el govern de la Generalitat, desfilen milers de soldats del nou Exèrcit Popular. Orwell reflexiona davant l'espectacle: "At the end of April, just after I got to Barcelona, Roldan, a prominent member of the UGT, was murdered, presumably by someone in the CNT. The government ordered all shops to close and staged an enormous funeral procession, largely of Popular Army troops, which took two hours to pass a given point. From the hotel window I watched without enthusiasm. It was obvious that the so-called funeral was merely

245 Ibid.

246 Ibid.

a display of strenght; a little more of this kind of thing and there might be bloodshed"(247).

Langdon-Davies en fa, no cal dir-ho, una valoració més entusiasta:

"The challenge of anarcho-syndicalism had been accepted. For the first time the non-anarchist workers and petty bourgeoisie of Barcelona were standing up against a social revolution whose only offspring was chaos heading to defeat. For months every aggression had been met by withdrawal. In face of murder, robbery, threats, discrimination, the UGT policy had been to retire and wait. And here in this vast procession, felt the UGT, was the tangible proof that only through socialism can revolutions be successful. For after the Trades Union delegations -in which there was only one CNT flag, knotted with a red flag and carried by some United Youth organisation- there came something which Barcelona has never seen before in all its turbulent history. Marching rank on rank in perfect military formation, perfectly uniformed, obviously disciplined, came thousands of the new People's Army, the Army which the socialists and communists along with the republicans had strained every effort to build up out of early reckless brave militiamen, the Army which as an arm of a State, although a sympathetic anti-fascist state, the anarcho-syndicalists had thwarted in every possible way"(248).

247 Orwell, George, Homage to Catalonia, Secker and Warburg, Londres, 1938, chap. IX.

248 "The Tragic Week". Apèndix 4.3.

De totes maneres, Langdon-Davies coneix prou bé la situació i n'entreveu les implicacions i les contradiccions potencials. L'Exèrcit Popular no ho és pas popular per a tothom. "Consider this -escriu Langdon-Davies- here is Barcelona turning out by the hundred thousand to demonstrate for socialist order against anarchist disorder. But this is the same Barcelona that turned out a few months ago at Durruti's funeral to honour anarchism. And the same Barcelona that has turned out time and again at funerals to honour Catalan nationalism in its struggle against a central Spanish Madrid Government. That is what makes the situation so complicated"(249). A partir d'aquí fa una descripció dels tres tipus bàsics d'antifeixista, és a dir, l'anarcosindicalista, el socialista comunista i el nacionalista català(250), remarcant les complexes relacions que aquests sentiments polítics mantenen entre uns i altres i cadascun amb l'estat central. Això li permet de fer unes subtils i penetrants observacions que presenten -didàcticament- el lector davant de la complexa situació de l'ambient polític a Barcelona els dies anteriors als fets de maig: "You have then the complicated situation that your Catalan Bourgeois, fuddled with his nationalist ideals, actually prefers the anarchist who wants no dealings with the bourgeoisie, to the socialist who wishes for an antifascist alliance between worker and petty bourgeois in order to defeat feudal fascism. And so we can say that the crowds looking on, or staying away think as follows of Roldán Cortada's funeral. The anarchosyndicalists, 'they are using this murder as an excuse to rattle the sabre of authoritarianism. Every state is devilish and here we have the Stalinists threatening to enslave the worker in a communist state'. The Esquerra Republicana

249 Ibid.

250 Recordeu que a Homage to Catalonia, Orwell no dona cap importància especial al corrent nacionalista.

bourgeois: 'Thank goodness here is a force which will bring order to the rearguard and keep the murcian FAI in its proper place. But of course if this force tries to impose Valencia on Catalunya we will oppose it to the length of joining up with the anarchists'. Such was the state of 'anti-fascist unity' in Barcelona when May 1st 1937 came round"(251).

Anàlisis polítiques a part, però, aquests dies la màxima preocupació de Langdon-Davies és la de superar els entrebancs burocràtics per tirar endavant el pla de colònies per a nens refugiats que ja té llum verda del govern. Aquesta és la seva missió a Barcelona i, per això, ha de contactar amb una oficina que controla la CNT. L'ocasió es converteix en una oportunitat perquè Langdon-Davies pugui explicar el seu creixent enervament respecte als anarquistes: "Sometime between January and March the CNT had passed a resolution that it would be more consistent with the sacred principles of anarchism if the offices in their charge were run not by the head official but by a committee of the office workers. In this particular case it was no use my official making arrangements for such and such buildings to be turned over to house refugees; his decisions had to be reviewed and passed by a workers'committee representing the stenographers, porters, cleaners, messengers and so forth. And to show its contempt for all bureaucratic methods this excellent anarchist workers'committee had begun by nullifying all decisions previously made by their chief. It did not matter in the least that he was an anti-fascist, a representative of the workers' party and appointed by their own government. It did not mean that they had any quarrel with his decisions. It simply meant that as anarchists they must show once more their contempt of anything which

smacked of authoritarianism and the state"(252).

Finalment, mitjançant el seu amic "Borrull", que resulta ser el xofer de Martínez Cuenca(253), responsable a l'Ajuntament de Barcelona del departament d'Ajut als Refugiats, aconseguix acordar una visita a un convent d'Alella, que sembla que reuneix condicions idònies per a una colònia infantil. Martínez Cuenca no ha de passar comptes a cap comitè anarquista i s'ofereix ell mateix per acompanyar-lo amb el seu cotxe oficial. No li sembla opurtú, però, anar-hi de seguida perquè considera que l'ambient polític està massa enrarit i tem situacions compromeses en els previsibles controls dels comitès que trobaran pel camí. Martínez Cuenca vol esperar que passi el cap de setmana amb les celebracions del Primer de Maig i el cita pel dia 4. Aquest nou entrebanc provoca una altra reacció negativa de Langdon-Davies vers la praxis de les teories anarquistes en situacions com les presents: "In other words, it was at that moment unpleasant and not particularly safe for a non-anarchist to drive a car on the main roads of Catalonia, however official his business might be. And so once more I had to wait. It was not in the least that the anarchists disapproved of helping refugees; they had done wonder in their own way to help them. Let me repeat, anarchists are delightful people, kind, brave, self-sacrificing; but they do tend to hold up the business of running current affairs efficiently. Tied body and soul to their philosophy their needs must drag it along into the most inconvenient places. And so it was agreed that I should see the ex-

252 Ibid.

253 Martínez Cuenca (nascut el 1899), militant de la Unió Socialista de Catalunya; durant la guerra, regidor d'Assistència Social pel PSUC.

convent at Alella on Tuesday"(254).

En resum, Langdon-Davies viurà els fets de maig amb la impressió cada cop més ferma que, per dir-ho amb les seves mateixes paraules, "anarchist control meant that on occasions when the interests of the anarchist revolution and of the war clashed it was the interests of the war that went under"(255). En tot cas, el projectat viatge a Alella s'ajorna indefinidament quan esclaten els incidents de la Telefònica el dilluns 3 de maig. Així les coses, Langdon-Davies abandona el seu encàrrec humanitari i ha d'exercir, davant dels fets, novament de corresponçal especial del News Chronicle a Barcelona. El mateix dia 3 comença a escriure una carta a la seva esposa per explicar-li els primers incidents. Aquests continuen, però, i la carta es converteix en una crònica detallada de tot allò que el periodista veu a Barcelona durant els tres primers dies de combats i barricades als carrers. És un document singular, que Langdon-Davies transcriu al final del seu manuscrit sobre aquesta visita tan especial a Catalunya, "The Tragic Week".

Amb aquest estat d'ànim no sorprèn que Langdon-Davies comenci la seva crònica per al News Chronicle afirmant que "The net effect of Barcelona's new Tragic Week has been to bring realities into the open and to reinforce the need to control the 'uncontrollables'"(256). La major part de l'article és dedicat a la descripció dels incidents que el

254 Apèndix 4.3.

255 Ibid.

256 "First Inside Story of Barcelona Rising", News Chronicle, 10 de maig de 1937. Vegeu transcripció completa de la crònica a l'Apèndix 4.2.

periodista presencia personalment, però Langdon-Davies no s'està pas de sentenciar sobre les causes i els efectes dels enfrontaments: "This has not been an Anarchist uprising. It is a frustrated putsch by the 'Trotskyist' POUM, working through their controlled organisations, 'Friends of Durruti' and the 'Libertarian Youth'", i més endavant afirma: "By wednesday evening, however, it began to be clear who was behind the revolt. All the walls had been plastered with an inflammatory poster calling for an immediate revolution and the shooting of Republican and Socialist leaders. It was signed by the 'Friends of Durruti'. On Thursday morning the anarchist daily denied all knowledge or sympathy with it, but La Batalla, the POUM paper, republished the document with the highest praise... On Thursday La Batalla was raided and confiscated, but it did not prevent its reappearance. Its flaring headline, 'For three days the streets of Barcelona belonged to the people', reads curiously, seeing that for three days, thanks largely to the POUM, the streets of Barcelona belonged to no one". La crònica acaba amb un anunci contundent: "Two practical consequences of the rising will be: First, the elimination of the POUM and, secondly, a definite challenge to the 'uncontrollable' element within the anarchist FAI".

Sembla indubtable que en aquestes afirmacions preval més el seu sentiment progressiu d'animadversió contra la postura anarquista en la mesura que, segons Langdon-Davies, suposa en realitat un entrebanc en els esforços per guanyar la guerra, així com la voluntat de divulgar les explicacions "oficials" dels esdeveniments, que no pas la voluntat de donar una versió objectiva, ponderada i investigada dels fets. Les inconsistències hi són evidents i difícilment justificables en algú que coneix tan de prop la situació. És inexacte i malintencionat, en el

context, qualificar de "Trotskyist" el POUM o afirmar que els "Amics de Durruti" i les "Joventuts Llibertàries" eren organitzacions controlades pel POUM. Es també una decisió "a posteriori" resumir la rebel·lió com un "putsch" frustrat del POUM, quan a les seves notes dels tres primers dies (la carta a la seva esposa) no menciona el POUM ni una sola vegada. Una altra cosa seria qualificar l'actitud del POUM com a innecessàriament provocativa, sobretot quan La Batalla reproduïx el pamflet -que no "the inflammatory poster"- dels Amics de Durruti "with the highest praise".

Realment, l'actitud del POUM amb aquestes accions i la seva obstinació d'aplicar el principi marxista revolucionari segons el qual, quan els obrers es llancen al carrer, els partits revolucionaris tenen el deure de fer-los costat, semblaven fets a posta per donar arguments o proves a qui pogués estar interessat a eliminar-los. Però és que, això no obstant, era evident que l'acció de Rodríguez Salas d'ocupar la Telefònica de cop i volta s'havia d'entendre, també, com a deliberadament provocativa, i Langdon-Davies té prou elements de judici per poder-ho entendre així. Recordem que ell mateix diu a Manent, el 29 d'abril, que mentre parlava per ràdio al Casal Marx, és a dir, a la seu del PSUC, "constantment veia passar pel seu voltant homes que situaven metralladores dins l'edifici, on hi havia una guàrdia de 500 milicians i 500 soldats". En aquestes circumstàncies i amb aquestes informacions, és com a mínim ingenu creure que tot ha estat un "cop" planificat pel minúscul POUM, que la CNT n'ha estat al marge ("this has not been an anarchist uprising") i que ha agafat de sorpresa les forces governamentals. D'altra banda, els anuncis dels efectes de la crisi que fa al final de la crònica en uns moments tan prematurs per entreveure'n

el desenllaç -tot i que seran exactes- sembla que responen més a la divulgació de consignes que no pas a l'anàlisi periodística.

D'alguna manera, doncs, a partir dels fets de maig, Langdon-Davies està plenament convençut de la bondat de la línia comunista respecte a la guerra d'Espanya i col.laborarà a divulgar-la fins al final de la guerra. Aquesta col.laboració sense reticències es concretarà, fins i tot, en alguna contribució puntual al Daily Worker, que comentarem més endavant.

En tot cas, la reacció crítica a la crònica periodística de Langdon-Davies no surt publicada fins al cap d'un any(257). La trobem publicada a les pàgines d'Homage to Catalonia. Orwell, després d'analitzar les versions que la premsa comunista donà dels fets de maig diu: "The foreign capitalist papers, in general, laid the blame for the fighting upon the Anarchists, but there were a few that followed the Communist line. One of these was the English News Chronicle, whose correspondent, Mr. John Langdon-Davies, was in Barcelona at the time". Orwell cita a continuació un llarg fragment de la crònica del News Chronicle i, amb l'estil propi d'un defensor que vol convèncer el tribunal de la poca fiabilitat de les proves que presenta el fiscal, en fa aquestes consideracions:

"This does not agree very completely with the Communist

257 Si que surten, però, reaccions contràries a les versions dels fets que donen el News Chronicle i el Daily Worker, especialment a la revista de l'Independent Labour Party, New Leader. En defensa del POUM escriuen dos diputats de l'ILP: Fenner Brockway publica l'opuscle, "Truth about Barcelona", ILP, juny 1937; i John McGovern, "Terror in Spain", ILP, desembre, 1937.

versions I have quoted above, but it will be seen that even as it stands it is self-contradictory. First the affair is described as a 'Trotskyist revolt', then it is shown to have resulted from a raid on the Telephone building and the general belief that the Government was 'out against' the Anarchists. The city is barricaded and both CNT and UGT are behind the barricades; two days afterwards the inflammatory poster (actually a leaflet) appears, and this is declared by implication to have started the whole business-effect preceding cause. But there is a piece of very serious misrepresentation here. Mr. Langdon-Davies describes the Friends of Durruti and Libertarian Youth as 'controlled organisations' of the POUM. Both were Anarchists organisations and had no connexion with the POUM. The Libertarian Youth was the youth league of the Anarchists, corresponding to the JSU of the PSUC, etc. The Friends of Durruti was a small organisation within the FAI, and was in general bitterly hostile to the POUM. So far as I can discover, there was no one who was a member of both. It would be about equally true to say that the Socialist League is a 'controlled organisation' of the English Liberal Party. Was Mr. Langdon-Davies unaware of this? If he was, he should have written with more caution about this very complex subject.

I am not attacking Mr. Langdon-Davies's good faith; but admittedly he left Barcelona as soon as the fighting was over, i.e. at the moment when he could have begun serious enquiries, and throughout his report there are clear signs that he has accepted the official version of a 'Totskyist revolt' without

sufficient verification. This is obvious even in the extract I have quoted. 'By nightfall' the barricades are built, and 'at ten o'clock' the first volleys are fired. These are not the words of an eye-witness. From this you would gather that it is usual to wait for your enemy to build a barricade before beginning to shoot at him. The impression given is that some hours elapsed between the building of the barricades and the firing of the first volleys; whereas -naturally- it was the other way about. I and many others saw the first volleys fired early in the afternoon. Again, there are the solitary men, 'usually fascists', who are shooting from the roof-tops. Mr. Langdon-Davies does not explain how he knew that these men were Fascists. Presumably he did not climb on to the roofs and ask them. He is simply repeating what he has been told and, as it fits in with the official version, is not questioning it. As a matter of fact, he indicates one probable source of much of his information by an incautious reference to the Minister of Propaganda at the beginning of his article. Foreign journalists in Spain were hopelessly at the mercy of the Ministry of Propaganda, though one would think that the very name of this ministry would be a sufficient warning. The Minister of Propaganda was, of course, about as likely to give an objective account of the Barcelona trouble as (say) the late Lord Carson would have been to give an objective account of the Dublin rising of 1916"(258).

258 Orwell, George, Homage to Catalonia, Secker and Warburg, Londres, 1938, cap. 11. Curiosament, en l'article llarg sobre els fets de maig i la supressió del POUM que Orwell escriu quan torna a Anglaterra, "Eye-witness in Barcelona", *Controversy*, The Socialist Forum, vol.2, núm.2, agost 1937, critica les versions de la premsa

Sense donar-se per al.ludit ni referir-se a aquests comentaris, Langdon-Davies té l'ocasió de valorar el testimoniatge d'Orwell quan publica al Daily Worker una crítica d'Homage to Catalonia en una recensió de diversos llibres sobre la guerra civil.

Langdon-Davies despatxa el llibre d'Orwell, que d'altra banda passa bastant despercebut i és un fracàs editorial inicialment, amb unes poques frases: "Better than these (els llibres d'Allison Peers) are some books produced by individualists who have splashed their eyes for a few months with Spanish blood. Typical is Orwell's Homage to Catalonia. The road to Wigan Pier leads on to Barcelona and the POUM. The value of the book is that it gives an honest picture of the sort of mentality that toys with revolutionary romanticism but shies violently^{at} revolutionary discipline. It should be read as a warning"(259). Un autèntic tranquil·litzant per als pocs militants comunistes que podien haver llegit el llibre. Malgrat la seva brevetat, la crítica no té pèrdua i ens diu probablement més coses del que pensa en aquell moment el crític que no pas del tema del llibre, el qual, per cert, ni tan sols menciona. Langdon-Davies no creu que sigui l'hora dels individualistes ni dels romanticismes revolucionaris. Es a dir, ara no calen purismes revolucionaris, ara cal disciplina revolucionària. I què vol dir la disciplina revolucionària? Vol dir, senzillament, que no es pot permetre la crítica. Noteu la implicació de la frase, "The road to Wigan Pier leads... to the POUM". En altres paraules, les crítiques que Orwell

comunista però no menciona el News Chronicle ni el reportatge de Langdon-Davies.

259 "Books in Spain", Spain Weekend Supplement, Daily Worker, 21/5/1938.

formulava a la segona part de The Road to Wigan Pier acaben en postures contrarevolucionàries, que és el que aquí volen significar les sigles POUM.

Langdon-Davies creu, sincerament, que davant l'evolució de la guerra d'Espanya cal deixar de banda altres consideracions que no siguin les de la unitat per guanyar Franco i cal, doncs, com ell mateix ha fet, canviar i apropar-se a les posicions de "sentit comú" que defensen els comunistes i no fer com l'autor d'Homage to Catalonia, un llibre que, com ell explica en un altre paràgraf, "shows you the obstinate few who refuse to change"(260).

A part d'Orwell i el POUM, Langdon-Davies no desaprofita l'ocasió de sintetitzar la seva postura respecte a l'anarquisme, la qual ja hem tingut ocasió de comentar. En relació a la traducció del llibre de Ramón Sender, Seven Red Sundays, que Penguin acaba de publicar, escriu: "You cannot understand Spain without understanding anarchism also, for the superb, lovable human beings of that great movement had to be mentally changed by contact with reality before the power of the people in Spain could be effectively used". Estem, no cal dir-ho, en plena sintonia amb la filosofia de la inevitabilitat de prendre partit i assumir la causa sense reparar en els mitjans, perquè els fins són "objectivament" bons.

Es, justament, en funció d'aquestes idees que en el mateix article

260 No cal dir, però, que Homage to Catalonia serveix d'argument als qui s'obstinen a no canviar. A la crítica del llibre que publica la revista socialista Solidarity el novembre de 1938, Charles Doran escriu: "His description of himself, his wife, McNair and Cottman hiding from the police in Barcelona makes ironic reading for those who, like Pitcairn of the Daily Worker and Langdon-Davies of the News Chronicle, deliberately lied about the Barcelona Days".

desqualifica els llibres del professor Allison Peers, Catalonia Infelix i The Spanish Tragedy(261): Són exercicis acadèmics que no prenen partit i pretenen ser objectius. I és que no només les crítiques són contrarevolucionàries, ho és també la pretensió d'objectivitat. De fet, els únics llibres sobre Espanya que Langdon-Davies pot recomanar als seus lectors són "those which clearly show the impossibility of our standing aside, the unity of the conflict, and our consequent need of unity". Un llibre que respon a aquestes recomanacions és, segons Langdon-Davies, Spanish Testament d'Arthur Koestler. El llibre de Koestler, un al·legat contra els qui fan servir la mena d'objectivitat que qualifica tots els bàndols d'igualment dolents per justificar la seva neutralitat, conté frases contundents, com la que Langdon-Davies remarca a la capçalera del seu article: "Anyone who has lived through the hell of Madrid and pretends to be objective, is a liar".

El paradoxal del cas és que mentre Koestler és citat com a prova de l'encert de la línia del partit, aquell mateix mes, l'autor de Darkness at Noon fa una conferència a París, a l'Associació d'Escriptors Alemanys Desterrats d'Alemanya, davant centenars d'intel·lectuals refugiats, la majoria dels quals són comunistes, tot anunciant el seu distanciament del partit. Koestler acaba la conferència amb una cita de Thomas Mann, deliberadament escollida, que en aquelles circumstàncies i davant d'aquell públic és una declaració d'heterodòxia. La frase de Thomas Mann diu: "A la llarga, una veritat perjudicial és millor que una mentida

261 George Orwell també es referia críticament als llibres d'Allison Peers a "Views and Reviews: Two Franco Apologists", The New English Weekly, 24/11/1938. El professor Peers es mostrà en desacord i es produí un intercanvi de cartes polèmiques amb Orwell a la mateixa revista.

pietosa"(262).

El camí de Koestler serà seguit ben aviat pel mateix Langdon-Davies. De fet, el pacte germano-soviètic de Munic serà l'última estació per a molts dels intel·lectuals companys de viatge o militants del partit. En acabar la guerra civil, aquests tres participants actius en el conflicte espanyol -Orwell, Koestler i Langdon-Davies- compartiran la mateixa aversió vehement per l'estalinisme i, cadascun a la seva manera, escriurà duríssims atacs contra el comunisme soviètic(263).

262 Koestler, Arthur, Autobiografia: 5/La Escritura Invisible, Alianza Editorial, núm. 545, Madrid, 1974., pàgs. 126-28. Anys més tard, Langdon-Davies subscriuria la mateixa idea amb aquestes paraules: "A lie in the Daily Worker seems to me as deplorable, because as dangerous to social good, as a lie in the Daily Express". Vegeu Apèndix 5.4.

263 Malgrat tot, Langdon-Davies no acabarà mai d'empassar-se les acusacions que li féu Orwell a Homage to Catalonia. En el manuscrit "The Spanish Civil War: Reporting" (vegeu Apèndix 4.4.), escrit els anys 1966/67, encara ressona la seva crítica de 1938 al Daily Worker: "An excellent writer, George Orwell, has written about it all, but unfortunately he was impelled by a hatred of Stalinism almost as powerful as his love of Spain and liberty and apt to blind him; and what he wrote is most tendentious".

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En tot cas, el mateix mes dels greus incidents de Barcelona (maig de 1937) surt un opuscle que ens recorda la multiplicitat d'activitats de John Langdon-Davies en suport de la causa republicana. L'opuscle recull una sèrie de proves sobre el referat trencament del Pacte de No-Intervenció per part d'Itàlia i Alemanya. El responsable d'aquest informe, "Evidence of Recent Breaches by Germany and Italy of the Non-Intervention Agreement"(264), és el Committee of Enquiry into Breaches of International Law relating to Intervention in Spain. Langdon-Davies i Geoffrey Bing són els secretaris d'aquest comitè que s'havia format a Londres el 24 de setembre de 1936 sota la presidència de la diputada Eleanor Rathbone. El componen Lord Faringdon, el professor d'espanyol de Cambridge, J.B. Trend, l'advocat Mallalieu, R. McKinnon Wood, ex-cap de l'estat major del ministeri de l'Aire, i el diputat John Jagger.

La pertinença de Langdon Davies en aquest comitè provoca, molts anys després, una curiosa polèmica entre l'escriptor i l'historiador de la guerra, Hugh Thomas, que és reveladora de l'evolució del pensament de Langdon-Davies sobre el partit comunista i val la pena recompondre.

264 Edità l'opuscle P.S. King and Son, Londres, maig de 1937, amb un prefaci del professor Philip Noel-Baker.

Quan Hugh Thomas escriu The Spanish Civil War(265) menciona aquest comitè, i per descriure els seus components, utilitza com a font el llibre autobiogràfic d' Arthur Koestler, The Invisible Writing(266), on els dos secretaris són considerats membres del partit comunista. Thomas reproduïx l'error de Koestler i així, en la primera edició, Langdon-Davies és qualificat de militant comunista. Langdon-Davies presenta una queixa formal a l'editor en aquests termes:

"It has been brought to my notice that in a book on the Spanish Civil War recently published by you I am described as 'then member of the Communist Party'.

I have never at any time been a member of the Communist Party, and in view of my record as a consistent opponent of communism and my political and journalistic reputation, the statement is capable of damaging me seriously.

The line and a half in which I am mentioned contains two other errors of much less importance except that they suggest a frivolous approach to facts on the author's part"(267).

Finalment demana que l'editor prengui les mesures pertinents per arreglar la qüestió.

Els editors (Eyre and Spottiswoode) li trameten la resposta de Hugh Thomas quan s'assabenta de l'error: "I was very distressed that he

265 H. Thomas, The Spanish Civil War, Eyre and Spottiswoode, Londres, 1961.

266 op. cit., pàg. 27.

267 Carta de Langdon-Davies (no datada), probablement abril/maig 1961, APLD.

should have found an inaccuracy of this kind. The information that he was a Communist derives directly -as a footnote of the page in question suggests- from Koestler's volume of autobiography The Invisible Writing, page 323. In fact what I say is about the same as what Koestler says. So far as I know, Mr. Langdon-Davies did not challenge Mr. Koestler's point when it appeared in 1954, and Collins (Koestler's Publisher) tell me that they never had any complaint, but I should, of course, want to do anything to limit the distress this may have caused to Mr. Langdon-Davies and wonder if I should write to a number of leading papers and magazines with apologies and make clear that in any impression of the book the inaccuracy would be changed. But perhaps such a letter would only draw attention rather than the opposite"(268).

Això no és suficient per a Langdon-Davies i replica, el mateix dia, reclamant que s'aturi la distribució dels llibres i que no es posi a la venda l'edició americana fins que no s'hagi corregit el text. Fonamenta la demanda en aquests termes:

"My reasons for requesting quick action are, among others, the following. I have lectured in America on thirteen occasions and are likely to be doing so again. The statement that I am an ex-communist would cause great difficulty in obtaining a United States visa.

Second: I have a residence in Spain and a business there. I have already had satisfy the Falange that I was not a member of the Communist Party, it being accepted that I was in

268 Carta de Maurice Temple Smith d'Eyre and Spottiswoode a Langdon-Davies, 23/5/1961. APLD.

sympathy with the Republicans, and this statement in The Spanish Civil War might well bring the matter up again"(269).

Després d'una sèrie de converses telefòniques i un intercanvi de cartes dels editors anglesos i l'americà (Harper) s'arriba a un acord satisfactori per a les dues parts. Se suprimeix l'adjectiu "comunista" i a la nota de peu de pàgina s'hi afegeix: "In some copies of this book the secretaries were described as being then members of the Communist Party. I have since learned that Mr. Langdon-Davies was never a member of the Communist Party. I regret this mistake(270).

Tot plegat no és gaire més que una anècdota d'implicacions més aviat prosaiques, però clarament revelador de la distància ideològica que separaria el Langdon-Davies dels darrers anys del cronista dels Fets de Maig per al News Chronicle i del col.laborador ocasional del Daily Worker dels anys 1937 i 1938(271).

Ara bé, discussions i malentesos ideològics a part, l'activitat de l'escriptor a favor de la causa republicana continua sense interrupció. En començar l'any 1938, inicia un nou "Lecture Tour" pels Estats Units, aquesta vegada amb la guerra civil espanyola pràcticament com a tema únic. A Nova York, la visita de Langdon-Davies desperta l'interès dels

269 Carta de Langdon-Davies, 23/5/1961. APLD.

270 Un aclariment molt semblant surt en el butlletí informatiu de l'History Book Club dels EUA que ja havia distribuït còpies del llibre abans que no es produís la queixa.

271 De fet aquest incident propicià una relació epistolar entre Langdon-Davies i Hugh Thomas sobre diversos aspectes del llibre, de la qual, dissortadament, només se n'ha conservat una carta de l'historiador datada 7/7/1965. APLD.

catalans que hi resideixen, organitzats en el Comitè Català Antifeixista de Nova York. El seu secretari, Joan Gibernau, adreça una carta als catalans per animar-los a assistir a la conferència de "l'escriptor anglès tan amic de Catalunya, autor entre altres obres, de Dancing Catalans i del llibre sobre la lluita antifeixista, Behind the Spanish Barricades... L'amic que ha passat la majoria del temps des que va començar la guerra contra el feixisme a la nostra terra com a corresponsal del London News Chronicle i, al mateix temps, ajudant amb tot el seu esforç a la causa per la qual nosaltres també estem treballant"(272). La conferència de Nova York es fa a l'Institute of Arts and Sciences de la Columbia University el 13 de gener.

Als EUA deixa preparat un llarg article, "The Case for the Governement"(273) que The American Friends of Spanish Democracy editen en forma d'opuscle. L'article és una rèplica a "The Case for Franco" del periodista conservador Ian D. Colvin(274). De fet, Langdon-Davies fa una mena de síntesi de les argumentacions a favor de la causa republicana expressades a Behind the Spanish Barricades i a The Spanish Church and Politics. Les redacta amb un estil àgil i vigorós característic d'aquest tipus de publicacions que proliferen durant aquells anys. A part de l'anàlisi de la situació interna espanyola, hi són presents les preocupacions constants de Langdon-Davies quan escriu per al seu públic sobre la guerra d'Espanya: la projecció internacional del conflicte i la

272 APLD. El preu d'entrada a la conferència era 1 dòlar.

273 J. Langdon-Davies, "The Case for the Governement", The Atlantic Monthly, Nova York, març 1938. Editat com a separata per "The American Friends of Spanish Democracy". Segona impressió, setembre 1938.

274 Colvin era un dels directors de The Morning Post, el qual, juntament amb el Daily Mail fou un dels més entusiastes defensors de la causa franquista a la premsa britànica.

política cínica i miop de les democràcies, les quals amb la seva actitud acceleren les condicions perquè el problema esclati a casa seva. Al cap de vint mesos de guerra, el periodista sap prou bé que les possibilitats d'una victòria republicana són cada vegada més dubtoses. Per això hi ha més retret que esperança en l'últim paràgraf de l'article: "But will the Spanish Government win? That depends on a hundred imponderable factors, all of them outside Spain itself. The fate of Spain is tangled up with that of China, of France, of Czchoslovakia, of us all. We may still have to look back in a world purged of democracy and realize that our undoing came when we refused to support Spanish Government which was ruined because it tried to bring to Spain those conceptions of political and social welfare we accept as commonplaces in our own lands"(275).

El mes de març, Langdon-Davies fa una nova visita d'inspecció a les colònies de nens refugiats i, aquesta vegada sense tants entrebancs, prepara l'expansió de nous centres a Caldetes (Maresme). Els seus contactes ara els té amb el conseller de Governació i Assistència Social, Antoni Ma. Sbert, i la cap d'Assistència Infantil a Barcelona, Maria Solà. El problema ja no és, com l'any anterior, l'enfrontament entre els mateixos antifeixistes. El gran problema són els bombardeigs cada cop més indiscriminats i freqüents sobre les ciutats. Mentre és a Caldetes bombardegen Barcelona. Quan hi torna, troba una ciutat canviada: "Hitherto the bombing of Barcelona has been largely a matter of trying to hit military objectives. This was a terror raid pure and simple"(276). Han estat els impressionants bombardeigs dels dies 16, 17

275 The Case for the Government, op. cit.

276 "A Visit to the Fosterparents Home at Puigcerdà", full informatiu de Langdon-Davies adreçat als Foster Parents i publicat pel National Joint Committee of Spanish Relief, març 1938. APLD.

i 18 de març de 1938 sobre Barcelona(277). La seva reacció davant d'aquest nou experiment bèl·lic no es fa esperar. Sobre el terreny, Langdon-Davies es posa a investigar els efectes de l'operació "italo-germana" sobre la ciutat, té accés a la documentació de la Junta de Defensa Passiva i entrevista nombrosos testimonis. Amb aquesta informació comença a redactar un nou llibre, Air Raid(278).

La tesi del llibre és clara: aquests bombardeigs són un assaig general de les potències feixistes per preparar els eventuals atacs aeris sobre Londres ("There may never be a raid on London, but, if there is, March in Barcelona saw the dress-rehearsal"). Cal, doncs, explicar-ne detalladament les conseqüències per preparar les tècniques de defensa aèria adequades per als eventuals atacs sobre les grans ciutats.

Les dues novetats de l'atac són el que ell anomena "Tècnica d'aproximació silenciosa" (els avions volen a gran altura per no ser detectats pels radars i, quan són sobre l'objectiu, apaguen els motors i planegen), el tipus de bomba (bomba explosiva) i la freqüència dels atacs (tretze bombardeigs en menys de tres dies). Segons Langdon-Davies és evident que tot això respon a una estratègia que no pretén infligir un determinat nombre de víctimes o la destrucció d'objectius militars concrets, sinó que vol crear una situació de pànic generalitzat i la conseqüent desmoralització entre la població de les grans concentracions

277 Vegeu J. Villarroya, Els bombardeigs de Barcelona durant la guerra civil(1936-1939) Biblioteca Serra d'Or, Publicacions de l'Abadía de Montserrat, 1981.

278 J. Langdon-Davies, Air Raid, The Technique of Silent Approach High Explosive Panic, Routledge, Londres, juny 1938. Il·lustrat amb 32 fotos de l'autor.

urbanes. La conclusió de l'autor, vistes les experiències de Barcelona, és que les tècniques de prevenció contra atacs aeris han de contemplar i potenciar les possibilitats de reacció psicològica si es vol evitar el pànic generalitzat i la paralització de les grans ciutats.

El llibre suggereix diverses mesures i es converteix, de fet, en una denúncia sobre l'escàs interès que demostra el govern sobre l'ARP (Air Raid Prevention) i en l'inici d'una controvèrsia nacional que s'anima amb l'emissió d'un programa especial de la BBC(279), una mena de síntesi dramatitzada del llibre de Langdon-Davies que es publica a The Listener amb el títol de "Bombs over Barcelona"(280). Poc després, la controvèrsia s'acaba d'animar amb l'aparició d'A.R.P. del professor i científic J.B.S. Haldane(281). El llibre de Haldane conté un apèndix dedicat a comentar el llibre de Langdon-Davies i a l'anunci que malgrat alguns punts de vista divergents faran una declaració conjunta a Left News amb un memoràndum de les seves recerques sobre el tema. Haldane emfasitza, sobretot, la ineficàcia del govern per resoldre el problema i és, en bona part, un atac global a la política del govern conservador.

279 El productor del programa fou Guy Burgess, llavors militant comunista, que esdevingué famós els anys 70 amb la revelació de la seva condició d'homosexual i dels seus serveis d'espionatge per a la Unió Soviètica durant molts anys. Vegeu fragments autobiogràfics, Apèndix 4.4.

280 J. Langdon-Davies, "Bombs over Barcelona", The Listener, 14/7/1938. Vegeu la transcripció de l'article (fou el tema de portada) a l'apèndix 4.5. Hi ha traducció catalana a La Setmana Tràgica de 1937, op. cit.

281 J.B.S. Haldane, A.R.P., Gollancz, Londres, setembre 1938. Haldane es basa, també en experiències de la guerra d'Espanya, sobretot a Madrid, Albacete i Alacant. Haldane abandonà la militància comunista per les interferències sobre la recerca científica arran del cas Lysenko (1950). Vegeu, també, Apèndix 4.4.

Les consideracions de Langdon-Davies sobre el tema són rebudes seriosament tant per la premsa com, fins a cert punt, per les autoritats competents(282). Ara bé, el que potser sigui més interessant de remarcar és fins a quin punt el mateix tema, i especialment la reacció de la premsa, ens indiquen el grau d'inevitabilitat i d'imminència que té l'opinió pública anglesa sobre l'esclat d'una guerra general l'estiu de 1938. El mite de "la pròxima guerra", que havia estat habitual entre els intel·lectuals dels anys 30, ha esdevingut -un any abans de l'esclat real- un concepte prou obvi i quotidià (llevat, potser, per a Chamberlain) perquè un crític de The Listener que comenta el llibre de Langdon-Davies conclouï que "No one can any longer doubt that we are living in the very shadow of war, and anything that can mitigate the horrors of such a catastrophe must be done at once"(283).

D'alguna manera, amb la guerra d'Espanya en la seva darrera fase, Air Raid marca l'inici d'una nova etapa en la vida de Langdon-Davies. La seva activitat estarà més relacionada amb els esdeveniments que es produeixen al seu país i presidida per la seva militància de patriota antifeixista.

De moment, però, l'escriptor no oblida els seus amics catalans i, mentre continua impulsant les colònies de nens refugiats, posa en marxa

282 L'autor és cridat a consultes confidencials per diversos alts funcionaris del govern i inicia una col·laboració com a espia "amateur", amb el consentiment d'Alvarez del Vayo, amb l'encàrrec de portar materials bèl·lics alemanys a Anglaterra després de les seves visites a Espanya. El final de la guerra estronca l'operació. Vegeu fragments autobiogràfics, Apèndix 4.4. El 14 de novembre és cridat a donar una conferència reservada i confidencial, presidida pel coronel J.C. Somerville, a The Royal Institute of International Affairs de Londres. Hi ha còpia de la conferència i el debat posterior a APLD.

283 The Listener, 22/9/1938.

una de les accions més desconegudes i curioses en favor de la cultura catalana durant els darrers mesos de la guerra: el Pla d'Ajut als Escriptors Catalans.

Langdon-Davies coneix bé la fam que es pateix a Catalunya i que l'estiu de 1938 comença a esdevenir un problema gravíssim. El seu amic, Marià Manent, anota al seu dietari frases prou reveladores: "Avui hem menjat per primera vegada sopa de farina de sègol... Cal enginyar-se en aquests temps difícils"(284). Al cap d'un mes, però, rep amb entusiasme notícies referents a la idea de Langdon-Davies: "Rebem carta d'en Langdon-Davies anunciant que ens enviarà queviures: ens fa una extraordinària alegria. Ja somniem el sucre, el cacau, les galetes, la llet condensada... Aquesta alegria dóna la mesura exacta de les privacions que passem"(285).

La idea de Langdon-Davies consisteix a aconseguir -en la línia del sistema que ha fet servir per als Foster Parents- que cada escriptor anglès es comprometí a pagar una quota que permeti subministrar aliments a un dels seus col·legues catalans. L'operació es coordina mitjançant les oficines d'Assistència Social que dirigeix Maria Solà i des d'on es distribueixen els paquets d'aliments que es compren a Perpinyà. Manent suggereix uns quants noms d'escriptors que es troben en dificultats. Finalment, els beneficiaris del Pla són deu: Ferran i Majoral, López Picó, Carles Riba, Marià Manent, Sebastià Sánchez Juan, Josep Ma. Junoy,

284 M. Manent, El vel de maia, op. cit., entrada de 8 de juliol de 1938.

285 Ibid., 10 d'agost de 1938.

Joaquim Ruyra, Josep Lleonart, Jaume Bofill i Ferro i Feliu Elies(286). Les circumstàncies posteriors fan remarcar dos dels noms d'aquesta llista: el de Joaquim Ruyra, que moriria al cap de ben poc(287), i el cas paradoxal de Sebastià Sánchez Juan a qui aquesta acció de simpatitzants antifeixistes l'ajudà a sobreviure i passar-se al bàndol franquista, on exercí, precisament, de funcionari del departament de censura del nou règim.

A Londres, Langdon-Davies s'ocupa dels tràmits burocràtics. L'ambaixador, Pablo Azcárate, amb el qual manté una relació d'amistat durant aquests anys, li suggereix de donar projecció propagandística en aquesta acció humanitària: "...Do you not think... that it might be possible to arrange for a delegation of medical men to go to Spain under your auspices and make a direct study of the problem on the spot? This would be a greater value from the propaganda point of view, and if men of high standing and authority in their profession could be found to make the visit. I am quite sure that my government would view the proposal with the greatest sympathy"(288). Al final, però l'operació

286 Haig d'agraciar a Montserrat Barquès de Bonjoch el seu testimoni per tal d'establir aquesta llista. La senyora Barquès tenia 15 anys el 1938 i era l'encarregada de distribuir els paquets des d'Assistència Social. Això li suposà algun obsequi entranyable, com la dedicatòria d'algun llibre que Ruyra li va fer en les seves visites per recollir els paquets. Carta de Montserrat Barquès a l'autor, Barcelona, 27/5/1987.

287 Ruyra morí el maig de 1939.

288 Carta de Pablo Azcárate a Langdon-Davies, Londres 30/8/1938. Més endavant, Langdon Davies prepara una versió de Bodas de Sangre de García Lorca amb la finalitat de recaptar més diners per als fons destinats als escriptors i sol·licita de fer la representació a l'ambaixada d'Espanya. Azcárate, però, no ho troba convenient: "I realise the advantages of giving this here, and I should be only too glad to place the Embassy at your disposal, but I am afraid that this would create a precedent which might embarrassing on some future occasion". Carta de 19/10/1938. APLD. Durant aquestes setmanes Azcárate

queda reduïda als bons oficis de Langdon-Davies per "reclutar personalment els potencials subscriptors del Pla.

Dels escriptors anglesos que subscriuen el Pla es pot assegurar la participació de T.S. Eliot, J.B. Priestley, Stephen Spender, F.M. Delafield, Hugh Walpole i el mateix Langdon-Davies. És probable la d'Allen Tate, McLeish, Henry S. Canby i G. Macy(289). Alguns dels escriptors a qui Langdon-Davies fa la proposta es neguen a participar-hi. H.G. Wells, per exemple, argumenta que "I don't know any Catalan authors personally and this seems a rather complicated way of doing things"(290). Somerset Maugham tampoc no s'hi sent massa obligat: "I am going to ask you to forgive me if I do not subscribe to your relief scheme, but I have been overwhelmed with requests from Austrian exiled friends of mine whom it was not only a necessity but a satisfaction to help. I think their need will continue and I feel that I must do what I can for them rather than for persons who have really no direct claim on me"(291). E. M. Foster també se n'havia desentès suggerint que no era el

estava en plena negociació diplomàtica per treure el màxim rendiment de la resolució del govern de la República de procedir a retirar els combatents de les Brigades Internacionals. S'estava a punt, d'altra banda, de concretar el pacte anglo-italià i l'objectiu de l'ambaixador era el de forçar el govern Chamberlain a incloure en el pacte la retirada efectiva de les tropes i l'ajuda de Mussolini a l'Espanya franquista. És comprensible, doncs, que Azcàrate trobés "embarrassing" per a la seva tasca de mediació oferir la mateixa embaixada a persones i col·lectius clarament contraris a la política del govern conservador britànic. Per més detalls, vegeu Pablo Azcàrate, Mi embajada en Londres durante la guerra civil española, Ariel, Esplugues de Llobregat, 1976, especialment, pàgs. 60-81.

289 Vegeu Marià Manent, El vel de maia, op. cit., entrades de 30/8/1938, 3/9/1938 i 21/9/1938.

290 Carta d'H.G. Wells a Langdon-Davies, Londres 28/7/1938, APLD. En aquesta mateixa carta Wells s'interessa per la sort de José Ortega i Gasset.

291 Carta de Somerset Maugham a Langdon-Davies, 8/8/1938, APLD.

moment d'organitzar coses paral·leles i que més valia canalitzar qualsevol iniciativa mitjançant organismes com el PEN Club(292).

A T.S. Eliot, en canvi, la idea li sembla excel·lent: "I am sorry to find that it is a fortnight since you wrote to me about Manent and the Catalan writers. Your scheme seems to me an excellent one and I enclose cheque for a guinea. I shall be very glad to hear what success you have in enlisting support. Obviously it is impossible to start a public campaign when the number of beneficiaries is so small; and the only way to collect money is by private subscription. I should think that the Woolfs would be interested"(293).

Amb tot, la reacció més interessant i curiosa és la de J.B. Priestley. Priestley, que havia col·laborat en plataformes del Front Popular impulsades pel partit comunista com el Committee for Spanish Medical Aid(294) durant els primers mesos de la guerra civil, és ara especialment crític de l'ortodòxia comunista. Condiciona la seva ajuda a determinats supòsits i justifica la seva postura amb aquests raonaments:

"So long as the present situation exists in Spain and your particular organisation is functioning, I will undertake to send you a pound a week, which on your scale will be sufficient for two families out of the ten.

292 Carta d'E.M. Foster a Langdon-Davies, 9/7/1938, APLD.

293 Carta de T.S. Eliot a Langdon-Davies, 2/10/1938, APLD. No he pogut confirmar si, com suggeria Eliot, Leonard i Virginia Woolf participaren en el Pla.

294 Recordeu, per exemple, la seva col·laboració amb Langdon-Davies, Rebecca West, Stephen Spender i altres en l'opuscle Spain and Us, novembre 1936, que ja he citat anteriorment.

I make one stipulation, however, and that is that the two families chosen must not belong to writers who are Marxist-Communists. My reasons for this are as follows: that I blame the militant communists for much of the world's present trouble (for they brought the Fascists into existence); I dislike Marxism intensely; and I feel that members of the Communist Party, which takes a toll from all its members and has the support of Russia, can well afford to take care of all its writers' families. I do not stipulate that the writers themselves should be doing, roughly, the same kind of work that I do, but it would be nicer if they were, and not, say, sur-realists poets"(295).

En tot cas, ben aviat, el Pla de Langdon-Davies aconsegueix aplegar una quinzena de subscriptors i comença a donar resultats tangibles. A final de setembre arriben els primers paquets per als famolencs escriptors catalans(296).

A final d'any, Langdon-Davies realitza la que serà la seva darrera visita a Catalunya durant la guerra civil. Amb l'aval de l'ambaixada espanyola a Londres, arriba el 30 de setembre de 1938 per visitar "oficialment" el país com a representant del National Joint Committee for Spanish Relief, l'organització responsable de les colònies de nens refugiats. La visita també serveix per poder seguir de prop el

295 Carta de J.B. Priestley a Langdon-Davies, 13/9/1938, APLD.

296 Així es desprèn de l'anotació del 30 de setembre a El vel de maia, op. cit. Manent escriu: "A migdia ve l'avi, que duu part del primer lot de queviures, present de quinze escriptors anglesos: llegums, sucre, cacau, llet condensada i carn en conserva".

funcionament del seu Pla particular d'ajuda alimentària als escriptors catalans i per missions no tan oficials com la de recollir material bèl·lic de fabricació alemanya que havia de formar part d'una exposició frustrada a Londres(297).

Fins aquí la participació i les implicacions de Langdon-Davies en la guerra civil espanyola, un conflicte que catalitza les preocupacions morals, polítiques i generacionals de l'escriptor i periodista. Aquest període suposa, d'altra banda, un exercici en les possibilitats i limitacions de posar l'activitat periodística i literària al servei de causes polítiques específiques com el suport de la República espanyola o la col·laboració amb el partit comunista. O al servei d'una causa més general, com la de l'antifeixisme. Justament, els reptes del feixisme no s'acabaran pas amb la victòria de Franco. La militància personal i professional de Langdon-Davies contra aquesta amenaça general marcarà, encara els pròxims anys de la seva vida.

297 Vegeu Apèndix 4.4.

MUNIC I FINLANDIA: FINAL DE VIATGE
L'ANTISTALINISME, D'UN PATRIOTA ANTIFEIXISTA

Pocs dies abans de la definitiva desfeta republicana, el 19 de març de 1939, "The Stage Society" presenta al teatre Savoy la versió de Bodas de Sangre que ha preparat Langdon-Davies. La representació, que no s'havia pogut realitzar a l'ambaixada d'Espanya(298), té per objectiu recaptar diners per a la causa republicana. De fet, durant els mesos que separen el final de la guerra civil i l'esclat de la guerra mundial, Langdon-Davies continua involucrant-se en l'ajut als refugiats. A vegades són actes bàsicament simbòlics i de suport moral(299). És el cas de la difusió dels esforços i les troballes científiques dels serveis mèdics republicans en el curs de la guerra, que publica al News Chronicle.

En una època plena de reticències del públic respecte a les conseqüències de les transfusions de sang, publica un reportatge, "Blood Transfusion Is Essential To A.R.P."(300), que inclou una referència de reconeixement a la tasca del Dr. Duran i Jordà: "...Superintending all this highly technical work was Dr. Duran Jordà, director of the

298 Vegeu nota cap. anterior.

299 El 21/1/1939, per exemple, publica una carta a Publisher's Circular, demanant als llibreters i antiquaris anglesos que ajudin els seus col·legues de Barcelona. A la carta, explica les dificultats dels antiquaris Royo i Palau.

300 News Chronicle, 3/7/1939.

Barcelona Blood Transfusion Service, saver of thousands of human lives and today a homeless exile in London, doomed if he returns to Spain to the concentration camp or worse as a political criminal... Dr. Duran knew that of all violent deaths none was more tragic, because so unnecessary, as 'bleeding to death', and before the Civil War had broken out he had begun to organise a service for victims of accidents".

El reportatge provoca una sèrie de cartes al director sobre el tema en general i sobre la penosa situació del metge català, que les autoritats britàniques estan desaprofitant. El mateix Duran s'adreça a Langdon-Davies en una carta emotiva farcida de retrets personals i professionals per la manera com ha estat acollit a Anglaterra(301).

D'altres vegades, els ajuts de Langdon-Davies als refugiats

301 Carta de F. Duran i Jordà a J. Langdon-Davies, 4/7/1939. APLD. Entre d'altres coses, Duran escriu: "Hay una gran diferencia entre el trato que me da usted y el que he recibido personalmente de algunos colegas ingleses.

Hace cuatro meses que me trajeron aqui, a demandas de Mr. Cowell, coronel de Croydon, el que se hizo responsable de mi estancia. Este Sr. cirujano del Ejército habia visitado la Institución de Barcelona y quiso que yo diese a conocer mi método al Ejército. Después de una conferencia dada por mi en la Royal Society of Medicine, y de diversas conversaciones, me pusieron en contacto con el Dr. Beattie del Royal College of Surgeons, el cual se comprometió a pagarme cinco libras a la semana; después de unos pocos días de buena colaboración cambió repentinamente su mente y al quejarme del trato que recibía a Mr. Cowell, éste habló con el Dr. Beattie, lo que dió lugar a que me despidiesen del R.C. of Surgeons peor que a un criado y no cumpliendo el Dr. Beattie la palabra dada al Dr. Cowell sobre una pequeña cantidad. Tuve y sentí toda la humillación del sin patria delante del ciudadano de un Imperio... Los pobres soldados ingleses pagarán, algunos con su vida, el que las altas esferas hayan puesto al Dr. Beattie como organizador de estas materias que Dios nos libre de tener que recibir una transfusión con la técnica por él adoptada. Nuestra experiencia de guerra en los Institutos de Madrid y Valencia así como de Jaén nos han demostrado la bondad del digamos método inglés del Dr. Beattie. Humorísticamente y haciendo caso del Dante condenaría al Dr. Beattie a recibir unas cuantas transfusiones con su método en momentos apurados para su vida."

espanyols es concreten en aportacions econòmiques, com la tramesa de 8.500 francs francesos procedents del Committee for Spanish Relief, al "Comité d'Accueil aux Intellectuels Espagnols" de París(302). Gràcies a aquesta acció, reben ajuda directa Juan García Morales, Lluís Capdevila, Salvador Barcarisse, Rafael Alberti Maria Teresa León.

En l'aspecte professional, els seus treballs com a corresponal de la guerra d'Espanya han ampliat la seva reputació més enllà de les reconegudes aportacions que féu al periodisme de divulgació científica. Els resultats que se'n deriven són contractes estables amb el News Chronicle -mitja plana setmanal durant un any- i el setamanari Picture Post, per al qual escriu més de cent articles durant el mateix període. D'altra banda, l'esclat de la Segona Guerra Mundial confirma la necessitat d'agafar-se seriosament les seves consideracions a Air Raid i se'n deriven noves publicacions de divulgació sobre diversos aspectes del mateix tema, com ara, What To Do in Emergency(303), Parachutes over Britain(304) i Nerves versus Nazis(305). El procés de publicació d'un

302 El Comitè del qual era secretari René Blech i president Renard de Jouvenel era format per destacades personalitats del món de la cultura, com Louis Aragon, José Bergamín, Le Corbusier, André Malraux, Adrienne Monnier, Pablo Picasso, Jean Renoir, Tristan Tzara i una vintena de personalitats més. Curiosament, per a la secretaria del Comitè treballava José Ma. Quiroga Pla, qui, onze anys enrera havia donat classes de castellà al matrimoni Langdon-Davies en una pensió del carrer Madrazo de Barcelona. Aquesta circumstància fa que sigui Quiroga qui agraeixi la tramesa de Langdon-Davies, i ho aprofita per recordar l'antiga relació i explicar-li les seves peripècies personals durant la guerra. Quiroga havia estat un dels col·laboradors de confiança d'Alvarez del Vayo. En la carta que li envia en nom del Comitè des de París, el 10/7/1939, li confessa que un dels pocs llibres que conserva en el seu exili parisenc és Dancing Catalans de Langdon-Davies. APLD.

303 John Langdon-Davies, What To Do in Emergency, P.T.O., Londres 1940.

304 John Langdon-Davies, Parachutes over Britain, Pilot Press, Londres, 1940.

d'aquests tipus de llibre, Fifth Column(306) provoca una situació ben reveladora de les tensions i el clima intel·lectual de l'Anglaterra de principi dels anys quaranta.

Les galeres dels llibres han de passar la inspecció de la censura de guerra, que era competència del ministeri d'Informació. L'anomenat oficialment MiniForm s'ocupava, doncs, d'amagar informació al públic (cal encara especular sobre si Orwell feia ciència-ficció o bé ironitzava sobre el seu present). Curiosament, el censor encarregat de Fifth Column fou el novel·lista Graham Greene, que passà un temps en aquest ministeri abans de treballar per al Foreign Office. Greene, que troba el llibre "very useful", vol "persuadir" Langdon-Davies de la conveniència de retirar un paràgraf, on el règim de Salazar a Portugal és descrit com a simpatitzant de l'Alemanya nazi. Greene creu que els futurs interessos britànics aconsellen silenciar aquest tipus d'afirmacions poc convenients a l'opinió pública(307). En tot cas, Greene devia analitzar el llibre amb més d'un prejudici. El 29 de desembre de 1937 havia anotat al seu dietari l'opinió que li mereixia Langdon-Davies en aquests termes: "Ran into Arthur Calder-Marshall and lunched with him at a pub by Leicester Square station. He had been spending the morning joining the Communist Party. Langdon-Davies having lunch in the same pub. About to return to the Spanish Civil War to take moving pictures on sixteen millimetre film which he finally hopes to enlarge for public showing. L-D. one of those extreme left-wingers who

305 John Langdon-Davies, Nerves versus Nazis, Routledge, Londres, 1940.

306 John Langdon Davies, Fifth Column, John Murray, Londres, 1940.

307 Carta de Graham Greene a Langdon-Davies, 5/7/1940. APLD.

give the impression of a lack of intellectual hardness at the centre, Spender another. They are very pleased with violence and ruthlessness theoretically, but with them it is less a rational policy than a sentimental reaction to their own softness. Like Stevenson playing with pirates"(308). El censor devia quedar-se, malgrat tot, força tranquil en veure el tipus de llibres que escrivia Langdon-Davies d'ençà de l'esclat de la guerra.

El que passa en realitat és que la notable activitat i energia que Langdon-Davies desplega per la causa antifeixista, no pas ja com a simple amic de Catalunya sinó com a simple patriota d'un país que ha declarat la guerra a l'Alemanya nazi, anirà acompanyada d'un gradual abandó de les postures defensades pel partit comunista. El primer cop seriós per les conviccions de Langdon-Davies i molts altres "companys de viatge" havia arribat, sens dubte, amb la signatura del Pacte de No-Agressió entre Hitler i el líder soviètic, Stalin, el 23 d'agost de 1939. El pacte de conveniències basat en el repartiment de poder(309) entre els representants de dues ideologies aparentment tan oposades és una bufetada difícil d'encaixar, especialment, per als idealistes que han col.laborat voluntàriament en la lluita de la República espanyola.

L'endemà mateix, quan es coneix la notícia, una seva amiga americana que ha col.laborat en l'organització dels Foster Parents als EUA, li escriu per manifestar les seves primeres impressions

308 G. Greene, While Waiting for War, Granta, 17, Penguin, Londres, 1985, pàgs. 11-29.

309 Aquest aspecte del pacte quedà ben palès en Protocol Annex secret al Pacte Germano-Soviètic. Vegeu Walter Hoffer, Le National Socialisme par les textes, Plon, Paris, 1963, pàgs. 241-243.

d'astorament i angoixa que devia compartir, ben segur, el mateix Langdon-Davies: "I feel impelled to write to you after all these months because of the drastic turn events have taken. The terms of the Russo-German pact just appeared in this morning's paper, and the absence of an escape clause, as well as Article II, just seems to have shot our explanations from under us, unless we are able to analyze it a lot further when our emotional reactions have subsided somewhat. At the present moment I have an awful depression in the pit of my stomach... What is your analysis of the whole thing? And how do our friends react to it? We have our ears glued to the radio, of course, as no doubt you also have, but so far everyone seems to be very much in the dark. The one indisputable fact in the situation seems to be that the Soviet Union is now top dog, and has manoevered England into the position of isolation into which England strove so hard to manoever her"(310). La carta té el valor documental de l'expressió sincera d'un estat d'ànim personal davant de la notícia que és, molt probablement, el reflex del de milers de militants i simpatitzants comunistes aquells dies.

De tota manera, el pacte facilita a Hitler la desitjada invasió de Polònia, la qual provoca la declaració de guerra d'Anglaterra i posa fi a la inútil política d'"appeasement" de Chamberlain. El 3 de setembre de 1939, el Regne Unit declara oficialment la guerra a Alemanya i el conflicte inicia el procés d'internacionalització que no es clourà fins al 1945.

Si el pacte havia animat Hitler a invadir Polònia, poc després -el

310 Carta amb signatura no identificable a Langdon-Davies, 24/8/1939, APLD.

30 de novembre de 1939- Stalin es permet la invasió de Finlàndia. Quan comencen els bombardeigs soviètics sobre Helsinki, l'Evening Standard envia Langdon-Davies com a corresponal de guerra als fronts finlandesos. La primera crònica per a l'Evening Standard es publica el 5 de febrer de 1940 i en segueixen d'altres durant les últimes setmanes de la resistència finlandesa fins a la signatura del Tractat de Pau del 13 de març de 1940, pel qual Finlàndia perd la seva independència. L'exèrcit d'un milió i mig de russos s'imposa finalment als 33.000 soldats de l'exèrcit finlandès. Un cop més, les experiències del periodista seran la base d'un nou llibre, Finland, The First Total War(311). L'experiència esdevé, també, una prova evident, si calia, per argumentar el rebuig definitiu de la política stalinista i la denúncia dels intel·lectuals comunistes britànics, els quals, malgrat el Pacte de No Agressió amb Hitler i la invasió de Finlàndia, continuen defensant i justificant els canvis sobtats en la línia oficial del partit.

De fet, l'impacte immediat i profund de l'experiència finlandesa li confirma els pitjors pressentiments. Tot i que el llibre és, bàsicament, un estudi de la guerra "de guerrilla" que han practicat els finlandesos, la seva manera d'organitzar les defenses antiaèries a les ciutats (un complement de les vivències de Barcelona) i l'evolució socio-econòmica del país d'ençà de 1918 fin a la invasió soviètica, Langdon-Davies manifesta, d'entrada, els efectes que han sofert les seves conviccions polítiques.

El "company de viatge" que aprecià l'ajut del Germà Gran a la

311 John Langdon-Davies, Finland, The First Total War, Routledge, Londres, 1940, 202 pàgs.

soferta Espanya Republicana és, ara, testimoni d'uns mètodes i uns objectius que, tot i provenir del mateix Germà Gran, s'assemblen escandalosament als que sempre han utilitzat els dictadors feixistes. La política del poder s'imposa a la política de les ideologies. L'ex-"company de viatge" en pateix les contradiccions personals i en fa veure les manipulacions simplistes, però ja no pot estar-se de denunciar-ne la perversitat que comporta:

"Again, it seemed impossible that Russia should have to make war in the same brutal way which I had seen practised in Spain. I might have had many of my hopes for the Brave New World, to which one-sixth of the human globe belongs, dimmed by the Russo-German pact. I might have suffered a revulsion from the too-clever-by-half politics which seem to have brought Stalin and Hitler into the same moral morass. I might feel a sense of loneliness at discovering that those who have worked along with me, spoken on the same platform, felt the same moral indignation when it was a question of Italo-German aggression in Spain, were now callous and indifferent and fertile in excuses when it was a matter of Russian aggression in Finland; but until I had experienced it, I refused to believe that Russian methods of warfare would be indistinguishable from those of Hitler and Mussolini"(312).

La tragèdia finlandesa, un episodi de l'Europa en guerra, és per a Langdon-Davies un paradigma de la crisi de valors que pateixen tots els "ismes". La irracionalitat de tot plegat només pot apuntar a alguna

312 Ibid., pàg.1.

falla substancial. El problema no són les idees, són els homes que se n'aproprien: "The thing which is rotten is that individuals with no moral conscience have succeeded in dominating every political party. The decent conservatives, the decent liberals, the decent socialists, and the decent communists have been swamped by the too-clever-by-half politicians, the moral cowards, and the politically incompetent"(313).

La crisi ideològica que pateix l'home que el maig de 1937 havia contribuït, conscient i convençut, a divulgar i justificar la postura comunista a la guerra d'Espanya, ha tocat fons. En aquests anys crucials (1937-1940) ha acumulat i viscut suficients experiències per poder parlar amb propietat i autoritat moral. Curiosament, la declaració més franca i articulada de les seves conviccions un cop ha publicat el llibre sobre Finlàndia es troba en una carta al seu fill més jove, Robin. A partir d'ara, el seu patriotisme antifeixista comportarà la denúncia implacable de la política stalinista i dels intel·lectuals d'esquerra que la justifiquen des d'Anglaterra. S'alimentarà, d'altra banda, de la convicció que la victòria sobre Hitler obrirà el camí a profundes reformes socials i a l'organització de societats més pròximes a les somiades pels socialistes utòpics del XIX que no pas a les que ha consolidat el bolxevisme a l'URSS. Val la pena citar l'extensa carta tectualment, perquè és la millor prova documental d'aquest "turning point" en l'evolució ideològica de Langdon-Davies i el reflex d'una crisi generacional que obliga els més compromesos, sota pressió i gairebé contra-rellotge, a "donar respostes a la història":

"My Dear Robin,

313 Ibid., pàg.129.

With regard to what you say, surely the question as to whether the Soviet Union has departed from the revolution must be judged upon external effects.

There is first of all Warsaw, given over to the Nazis, with appalling results to the workers of Warsaw. This was done not to further the world revolution, but as part of one of the most ruthless pieces of power politics bargaining in the world's history.

There was then the Finish war. As you say, the Finnish people have been subjected to great misery in the war, and therefore, unless the excuse for the USSR is absolutely sound, the USSR must be held responsible for causing misery in Finland, just as Germany and Italy caused it in Spain. Now let us leave aside for a moment the line that it is so important that the USSR should survive in this capitalist world that anything which it does is justifiable, and that, therefore, although Finland was a pretty fine country, it is just too bad that Finland had to go. Let us leave that aside, I say, because it is not what the "Daily Worker" and the rest are saying. They are saying that the Finnish people were against the war, and were dragged into it for British capitalist interests by Mannerheim and the paid servants of imperialism. That is a lie.

They are saying that the Finns started the war by shooting off a gun, and causing a frontier incident. That is completely against all the balance of probability.

They are saying that, once they were provoked to war, they settled down to finish off the job scientifically and

skilfully. That is a lie. Quite on the contrary Russia send Russian peasants and workers badly prepared into battle, and sacrificed them uselessly through the sheer incompetence of their generals in precisely the same way as British generals and French slaughtered the young men of my generation.

They say that a reactionary government was holding down a depressed people in terms of virtual slavery with allow standard of living, and that there was a very large number of Finns anxious to be rescued and to support the Kunsinen government. The whole of that is a lie. All the evidence goes to show that, first that the Finnish people were more united than any other country I at least ever met; second that the social legislation and economic condition of the workers and peasants accounted for this, and that a far greater progress had been made since 1918 to bring social justice in Finland than in Russia during the same time.

Every one of the things offered in the Kunsinen manifesto had already been made law in Finland. The hollowness of the sham is proved by the fact that when the Kremlin had got what it wanted, it forgot all about the Kunsinen government; and the fact that the Finnish workers and peasants preferred their own government to the Russian was proved by not one of them remaining in the occupied territory after the war.

All these things I have myself seen. There can be no doubt about them. Yet the "Daily Worker", Ivor Montagu, D.N. Pritt continue their lies. Finally they say that Russia did not attack the civilian population in the same way as Germany and Italy did in Spain. That is a lie.

I myself have witnessed with my own eyes the totality and ruthlessness of Russian bombardment on civilians. The only difference between Spain and Finland was that the Finns were infinitely better at ARP than the Spanish, which made up for the fact that the Russians were a great deal better than the Germans and Italians at bombing them.

Now, if the case for Russia is as good as we had always supposed, why is it necessary to lean upon these lies in order to state that case? Why is it necessary to brand those people, who have honestly told the truth (as they did in Spain), as bourgeois liars paid by the capitalists?

I didn't suppose that you would think that I was "bought"; but you know very well that the majority of your fellow-communists, terrified of facing the facts, clinging to their religion, are saying that what I have had to say was either dishonest, or the result of poor, innocent little me being misled by the subtle Finnish propagandists. When I quote from a Russian Ski Manual to show how incompetent the Russians were, I am actually told that it is quite obvious that the Ski Manual is a forgery made by the Finns. I have the book, - over 200 pages in Russian, over 100 illustrations. People are so crazy in their religious mania that they won't face even a little fact like that, but talk pure nonsense.

But leave me out. Are you proud of your friends, who as late as last August unanimously desired Willie Forrest, a communist of eighteen years standing, to become editor of the "Daily Worker", and who now brand him too, as a bourgeois liar, because he cannot swallow the pact, Warsaw, Finland. A man

born in a Glasgow slum, who, as he said to me, lived communism, and regarde it, for example, as wicked to buy anything except at Co-op, is now described by the Montagus and the Pritts, who, I suppose have nothing to lose but their chains, as a bourgeois liar.

You say, 'Surely the policy of the C.P. regarding the war and Home matters is the only one that could be adopted by socialists'. You astonish me. Only perhaps one per cent, or one-tenth of one per cent of socialists in England agree with the policy of the C.P. Why should they? For many years the C.P. mobilised opinion against Nazism. The war came. Pollitt had his great opportunity. The policy of his first pamphlet seems to me the only policy for a socialist; but the gentlemen from Moscow came along, a famous meeting was held, in which Dutt and Rust expounded an opposite policy. The Muscovite informed the meeting that Dutt and Rust were right, and Pollitt was wrong, and Pollitt changed over in twenty-four hours. Anybody who has seen him since knows what that has done to his own conscience.

And look what the communists then did as individuals. There was Mr. Allen Hutt. I have it from his own editor that in the first week of the war he asked for leave of absence to join the army immediately and fight Hitler. A few months later, the party line having gone into reverse, he tried to pretend that he had always known that this was a millionaire's imperialism war.

Now they all go around reviling all those that they had lauded before. Their policy is precisely the policy which they

called Trotskyist before. The whole thing is a disgusting mess, and it is due to the fact that people who went into politics largely because they had decent ideas about social justice got caught up in the game of being too-clever-by-half, in fooling and deceiving the other people. And now they have forgotten every single one of the common human virtues, which even capitalists countries sometimes remember.

I am not the slightest bit interested in helping the Russian worker (who is after all at a far lower stage of civilisation) dominate and destroy the British and the French worker, for there is no evidence whatsoever that what is coming to us is going to be the destruction of our exploiting class thanks to an alliance with the Russian people.

If the wheel turns, we shall soon see a pact between Russia and the Chamberlain government. That will be found for finding it right by precisely those people who now say: 'You can't point out our dishonesty, and Russia's dishonesty about Finland, because that helps Chamberlain'.

One of the most nauseating things of the whole business is the attitude John Strachey, who cannot swallow the twisting party line, because they have some intellectual integrity, by who, on the other hand, does not face his responsibility for making thousands of young men put all their hope in communism. When asked at a meeting whether he realised that there were thousands of men who had been influenced by him to run the risk of losing their lives in the fight against Fascism, he replied, 'You flatter me'. And the communists who are trotting off to New Zealand and elsewhere,

people like Bruce and Margaret. That is not the way progress was won in the old days.

I cannot go on writing this letter, as I have a whole book to complete; and it is already about the size of a full chapter: but this I must say, that I believe we are rushing on to a turning point in history, and that, thanks to their present abandoning of moral decency and intellectual integrity, communists are going to lose their chance of influencing history at this moment. It is obvious to anyone that this war has already doomed capitalism; but that does not mean that a high-grade socialism will come. Marx always emphasized that socialism must come from the highest developed capitalist communities with the best technique, the best reserves of wealth, the greatest knowledge.

I believe that, if Russia and Germany win this war (because, make no mistake about it, Russia is the ally of Hitler in precisely the same way as Britain is the ally of France), that if Stalin and Hitler win this war, it will mean that they have brought to total ruin the whole technical basis of economic life. There may be no starting again; it will mean literally generations of utter misery, with interminable civil wars, and a total decline of culture.

If, on the other hand, Britain and France win this war with their enormously greater resources, it will not be Chamberlain and Daladier who will reconstitute the future. That is to say, it will not be Chamberlain and Daladier, unless the workers and progressive forces of England and France have been totally shattered, as they have been temporarily at least, by the fact that a group of intellectuals rather than a

substantial group of workers has refused to give up a belief that the Comintern can solve our difficulties.

The tragedy in my mind is not the almost laughable way in which the Dutts and Rusts squirm around to try to find a pretence of consistency; but that the whole thing has ruined the small beginning of solidarity that we saw over Spain. But I must stop.

With love, John"(314).

Les recensions crítiques a Finland: The First Total War remarquen aquest posicionament ideològic de l'autor i relacionen aquest llibre amb Behind the Spanish Barricades. Són especialment sensibles a la qüestió les publicacions angleses de tendència progressista, com Time and Tide(315) i Tribune(316) i el New York Nation(317) als EUA. En general, però, se'n comenten els aspectes militars i les experiències personals de Langdon-Davies en relació a les tècniques de "guerrilla" i les mesures preventives contra els atacs aeris. És precisament en base a aquesta reputació que Langdon-Davies inicia la seva aportació més directa i substancial als esforços de guerra britànics: el treball amb la Home Guard.

La guerra té també, efectes importants en la vida privada de l'escriptor. Betty Barr, la seva segona esposa, i Jennifer, la filla que han tingut, retornen als EUA. La separació, inicialment temporal i

314 Carta (ja citada parcialment) a Robin Langdon-Davies, 18/4/1940. És una resposta a la que el seu fill li envià des d'Oxford, el 16/4/1940. APLD.

315 Time and Tide, crítica de Willoughby Dewar, 28/9/1940.

316 Tribune, crítica de Margaret Cole, 29/11/1940.

317 New York Nation, crítica de Harvey S. Ford, 15/3/1941.

aconsellable per les circumstàncies, esdevindrà, però, definitiva. El mateix Langdon-Davies ho resumeix en una lacònica nota autobiogràfica: "Dunkirk. My second wife left, she being American, and did not return"(318).

LANGDON-DAVIES I LA HOME GUARD
LLIBRES AL SERVEI DE LA GUERRA (1940-1945)

Que un pacifista militant amb reputació pública de simpaties esquerranes esdevingui un dels grans animadors d'un cos paramilitar de voluntaris que compta amb la supervisió i el suport del ministeri de la guerra és un fet revelador de l'esperit d'unitat nacional que va aconseguir el govern que, amb Winston Churchill al davant, substituï el gabinet conservador de Chamberlain(319). La fulmimant expansió nazi per Europa durant 1940 i l'evacuació de Dunkerque aboca Anglaterra a una lluita en solitari, per la qual cal mobilitzar tot el país. Malgrat que Langdon-Davies té 43 anys i ja té els dos fills servint a l'exèrcit, l'un oficial d'artilleria, l'altre oficial de la R.A.F., aconsegueix prestar serveis prou importants a l'aparell defensiu britànic i a

319 Langdon-Davies fa confessió pública dels motius pels quals tenia sentit ser pacifista a la Primera Guerra Mundial i les diferents circumstàncies d'aquesta guerra que permeten establir un significat nou al sentiment patriòtic des de posicions progressistes. Vegeu "Notes on the Way", *Time and Tide*, 26/4/1941. Manifesta, també, la convicció personal que els grans "ismes", entesos com a dogmes, no han solucionat res i reafirma la seva militància progressista, en el mateix article, amb aquestes paraules: "There are many things that I, as a political being, desire to see: a greater measure of social justice, more intelligence in our economic machinery, less privilege, no exploitation of one man by another, better educated Cabinet Ministers, Civil Servants with more spirit of adventure... But the bitter lesson that all 'progressives' have to learn is that the battle for progress can only be fought as a battle for strictly limited objectives... Martyrs may afford the luxury of being one hundred per centers, but only at the cost of having no influence in the word of reality. The active extrovert who wants to 'do something useful' must be content with being something far less pure".

l'esperit col·lectiu de resistència com perquè se l'honorí, el 1943, amb l'M.B.E. (Medal of the British Empire).

Tot comença amb la publicació de The Home Guard Training Manual(320) i la secció semanal -"Home Guard Parade"- que escriu Langdon-Davies al Sunday Pictorial. El manual esdevé un autèntic best-seller. En menys de dos anys se n'han venut més de 125.000 exemplars, i se n'han fet sis edicions. Durant els primers mesos de 1941, Langdon-Davies fa un centenar de conferències, d'una punta a l'altra del país, als batallons locals de la Home Guard. La conferència transcrita a Home Guard Warfare(321) és plena d'anècdotes i referències a la guerra d'Espanya i la invasió soviètica de Finlàndia. Una mostra de la brillant oratòria, basada en la força didàctica i l'estil directe, que Langdon-Davies havia popularitzat en els seus "Lecture Tours" americans, dècades abans. D'aquesta intensa activitat al servei de la Home Guard, en resulta el seu nomenament, amb el grau de major, com a responsable de la "South Eastern Command Fieldcraft School", que es posa en funcionament a Burwash, sota la supervisió del general Paget, primer, i del cèlebre Montgomery posteriorment. L'escola té l'objectiu de formar i preparar els instructors de la Home Guard en les tècniques de guerrilla moderna que han d'implantar en les seves unitats locals.

La mobilització civil contra el nazisme que suposa la creació de la Home Guard genera un entusiasme en els ambients progressistes que sembla difícil d'associar amb un moviment que ha quedat etiquetat amb

320 John Langdon-Davies, The Home Guard Training Manual, John Murray and The Pilot Press, Londres, 1940. Hi ha edició americana a Chemical Publishing Co., Nova York, 1942.

321 Ibid., Home Guard Warfare, Butler and Tanner, Londres, 1941.

connotacions més aviat reaccionàries i lleugerament ridícules. Cal recordar, però, per entendre'n les implicacions inicials, la fascinació que havia exercit en molts intel·lectuals d'esquerra la formació de l'exèrcit popular a la guerra d'Espanya. El comunista Hugh Slater, per exemple, ex-combatent a Espanya, publica Home Guard for Victory(322) en la línia de les publicacions de Langdon-Davies. Aquest es manifesta convençut que l'ambient de solidaritat que provoca l'estat de guerra, les penúries i l'objectiu comú que la gent està compartint, són un "revolutionary ferment that is going on in men's hearts", la constatació que, "they are experiencing a spiritual revolution"(323).

Així que no és estrany que persones com ara Gerald Brenan li facin saber que assistiran a un curset de Hugh Slater sobre la Home Guard, li suggereixin idees per millorar les prestacions dels voluntaris civils i li expliquin les seves tècniques personals de camuflatge(324). El mateix George Orwell s'allista a la Home Guard. Les seves experiències amb els milicians del POUM no han passat en va in no para de reclamar la conveniència que la Home Guard esdevingui l'embrió d'una organització guerrillera revolucionària que haurà de substituir l'exèrcit regular un cop vençuda la guerra contra els nazis. El seu biògraf recull, no pas sense ironia, la participació d'Orwell a la Home Guard:

"Orwell took the Home Guard very seriously. He joined on 12 June 1940 what became C company of the 5th County of London

322 Hugh Slater, Home Guard for Victory!, Gollancz, 1941.

323 John Langdon-Davies, "Notes on the Way", Time and Tide, 3/5/1941.

324 Carta de Gerald Brenan a Langdon-Davies. No datada i incompleta, 1941. APLD.

Battalion (the St. John's Wood company).

He was made a sergeant immediately and had to train a section of ten men... The role he characteristically saw for the Home Guard was clear right from the beginning in a letter he wrote in June to Time and Tide urging the slogan 'ARM THE PEOPLE', an unusual line for their dramatic critic to take. He claimed that the Spanish war had shown 'that the advantages of arming the population outweigh the danger of putting weapons in the wrong hands'. Specifically he urged the issue of hand grenades 'within the next three days' as the key to street fighting and as capable of rapid manufacture (he quickly found an empty garage and put his section to work making their own petrol bombs out of milk bottles, by methods no longer safe to describe"(325).

Durant aquests anys, la producció literària de Langdon-Davies es concentra en temes relacionats amb la Home Guard. Al famós manual s'afegeixen publicacions que recullen les seves experiències a l'escola d'instructors, com The Home Guard Fieldcraft Manual o How to Stalk: A Practical Manual for Home Guards. Potser per això, el Nadal de 1941 es fa editar privadament una narració curta que havia escrit els anys 20, poc després de la seva estada a Ripoll. La titula A Trifling Reminiscence from Less Troubled Times i la utilitza com a felicitació d'any nou pel 1942. Un recordatori del que escriuen els literats en temps normals i, hem de suposar-ho, una deliberada "desintoxicació" de la literatura patriòtico-militar que s'ha vist abocat a practicar com a

325 Bernard Crick, George Orwell: A Life, Secker and Warburg, Londres, 1980.

col.laboració en la causa anti-nazi. En la narració, Langdon-Davies descriu les seves experiències com a guia d'un tour literari per París i els castells del Loira, en el qual va embolicar-lo un amic. Langdon-Davies hagué d'acompanyar quatre pintorescos personatges britànics en un tour que esdevingué més grotesc que no pas literari. Tant el to com les situacions de la narració evocuen, certament, l'ambient de "less troubled times".

Però per a Langdon-Davies no és el moment de la literatura per a la literatura i ja ha passat el moment de les grans causes idealistes que representà la guerra civil espanyola. Com diu ell mateix, l'abril d'aquest segon any de la guerra europea: "The active extrovert who wants to 'do something useful' must be content with being something far less pure"(326). Es evident que pensa en ell mateix. L'home dinàmic i extrovertit que ha animat i dirigit l'escola d'instructors de la Home Guard continua decidit a ser "útil" a la causa i a sacrificar "purismes", siguin els revolucionaris, els del pacifisme o els literaris.

La guerra, però, segueix el seu curs i les circumstàncies van canviant. D'una banda, l'estiu de 1941 l'Alemanya nazi ataca Rússia sense avis previ donant així per acabat de facto el pacte de conveniències que havien signat Hitler i Stalin. D'altra banda, Churchill i Roosevelt signen, el mes d'agost, la Carta Atlàntica. Això suposa la formalització d'una política comuna i, sobretot, d'una eventual participació directa dels EUA a la guerra, que l'atac japonès a

326 "Notes on the Way", Time and Tide, 26/4/1941. Article citat en notes anteriors.

Pearl Harbour, el desembre de 1941, farà inevitable. L'aïllament britànic contra Hitler s'acaba i els EUA són un aliat de guerra amb totes les conseqüències.

Es en funció d'aquestes circumstàncies que cal entendre el nou "servei" de Langdon-Davies. Es tracta de la publicació d'American Close-up: Portrait of an Ally(327). L'obra pretén minvar els efectes de la propaganda nazi, que vol, naturalment, dificultar la cooperació anglo-americana. Basant-se sovint en les pròpies vivències americanes, Langdon-Davies presenta la societat sorgida al voltant del New Deal i les polítiques impulsades per F.D. Roosevelt. Una vegada més, es tracta del fet de situar didàcticament experiències personals enmig d'anàlisis generals allò que dona força al llibre. Així ho remarca V.S. Pritchett al New Statesman(328) i el Sunday Times ho confirma categòricament: "Mr. Langdon-Davies's brief American Close-up contains more pertinent information and solid sense about our wester ally than most books on the same subject of four times its length; and it is fascinatingly written"(329).

Coincidint pràcticament amb la publicació del llibre i del segon aniversari de la inauguració de l'escola de Burwash, Langdon-Davies és

327 Langdon-Davies, J., American Close-up: Portrait of an Ally, John Murray, Londres 1943, 148 pàgs. Cal remarcar d'aquesta edició, dedicada a la seva filla anglo-americana, Jennifer, la qualitat de les 28 fotografies. El disseny de la coberta, en canvi, és desafortunat. Així ho creu el mateix L-D, o per dir-ho en expressió d'H.G. Wells, "Never have I seen so ugly a cover for a good book." Carta de Wells a L-D., 3/7/1943.

328 V.S. Pritchett, "Have you any American near?", New Statesman, 24 7/1943.

329 "Anglo-American Reports", The Sunday Times, 11/7/1943.

condecorat amb la MBE. Molts amics pensen que aquest reconeixement no fa prou justícia a l'enorme quantitat i diversitat d'energies que ha dedicat a la Home Guard. Per a Langdon-Davies, però, allò que importa és el reconeixement a una iniciativa, tot i ser poc convencional. ha estat carregada de dificultats per encaixar en l'estructura del Ministeri de la Guerra. Així ho confessa al seu correspondent més estable al llarg de la seva vida, el vell professor Hodge de Tonbridge: "When one thinks of the colossal amount of prejudice that has had to be worn down to get thus far, it is a miracle that my activities have been as acceptable as they have been"(330).

De fet, l'evolució favorable de la guerra disminueix la motivació per al moviment de la Home Guard. S'ha passat de l'aflament britànic i la imminència d'una invasió nazi després de Dunkerque a la decisiva invasió de les tropes aliades, que comença amb el desembarcament de Normandia el 6 de juny de 1944. Poc a poc, Langdon-Davies va reconduint la seva activitat cap al treball que havia estat l'habitual en el període d'entreguerres (1918-1936), és a dir, els temps "normals": el periodisme de divulgació científica.

El gener de 1945 deixa l'escola d'instructors de Burwash. A partir d'ara combina les col.laboracions "patriòtiques" amb publicacions per encàrrecs oficials, com Life Blood(331), on torna a recordar les aportacions científiques dels metges catalans durant la guerra civil, i

330 Carta de Langdon-Davies a Vere Hodge, 5/6/1943, APLD.

331 John Langdon-Davies, Life Blood, The Official Account of the Transfusion Services, His Majesty Stationery Office, Londres, 1945.

British Achievement in the Art of Healing(332), amb d'altres empreses privades com Measuring the Futur(333), un recull dels progressos científics als laboratoris Baird and Tatlock propiciats per les necessitats de la guerra, i Tea on Service(334) una publicació patrocinada per The Tea Centre de Londres.

D'altra banda, i a part de les col.laboracions ocasionals en diverses revistes, Langdon-Davies és nomenat, a partir de gener de 1945, Science Editor del Daily Mail. Una responsabilitat que sintetitza l'experiència del periodista professional amb la reputació de l'autor de nombrosos assaigs de reflexió sobre el desenvolupament científic i els seus esforços per popularitzar-ne les implicacions. La feina fixa al Daily News suposa, a més, un bon sou i, sobretot, molt temps lliure. Langdon-Davies deixa la casa de Burwash i es trasllada a Brighton. La nova situació li ha de permetre, com ell escriu a un amic, "break out in other directions".

332 Ibid, British Achievement in the Art of Healing, The Pilot Press, Londres, 1946.

333 Ibid, Measuring the Future, Baird and Tatlock, Londres 1947.

334 Ibid, Tea on Service, Oxford University Press, Londres, 1947. A la contribució de Langdon-Davies, "Home Guard Brew-up", pàgs. 45-53, hi ha una curiosa referència als fets de maig: "...In Barcelona in 1937 when the Republicans and certain "uncontrollable" forgot Franco and started fighting one another... there were barricades at every corner, armed with machine-guns and loud-speakers, and every barricade was regularly deserted from noon until 2.30 while opponents, who had been shooting at one another or blasting one another with wireless speeches from their rival leaders, sat down together to eat in the same restaurant and often at the same restaurant table". L'anècdota encaixa perfectament amb les observacions que Orwell feia des del terrat del Poliorama i que descriu a Homage to Catalonia. Orwell quedava astorat davant l'intercanvi de cerveses que es produïa entre uns i altres al llavors cafè Moka, al capdamunt de la Rambla, i que era just al davant del seu "observatori".

L'endemà mateix del llençament de la bomba atòmica sobre Hiroshima, Langdon-Davies publica un article sobre l'energia atòmica. Els efectes d'una energia que ha permès aquesta matança indiscriminada obre una etapa d'interès popular pels temes científics, i seccions com la de Langdon-Davies al Daily Mail apareixen en la majoria dels diaris. L'interès i la consternació pels efectes de l'explosió i la radioactivitat sobre les ciutats japoneses es converteix en el tema recurrent durant mesos fins al punt que la secció de Langdon-Davies es titula, a partir de llavors, "Atomic Age Column".

La bomba atòmica, epíleg de la Segona Guerra Mundial, representa també el final del dens "cicle de guerra" que ha patit Langdon-Davies. La dècada de guerres (1936-1945) que ha viscut tan directament ha suposat el fracàs del seu segon matrimoni i un dur reciclatge ideològic. El món que n'emergeix, repartit i controlat per les superpotències, és el nou marc on ha de resituar moltes de les seves referències: el pacifisme, la ciència, el patriotisme, el socialisme, la feina d'escriptor i el periodisme, la possibilitat de formar una nova família, els cinquanta anys que és a punt de fer...

Sembla un moment inevitable per fer balanç i prendre decisions. Les reflexions personals no es fan esperar. El 1949 escriu Confession(335), una reflexió teòrica del socialisme científic a partir de les seves experiències i una reflexió sobre la substitució del socialisme utòpic d'arrels angleses pel marxisme científic que es produí al final de la Primera Guerra Mundial entre molts joves universitaris. Durant aquests primers anys de la postguerra comença a prendre les decisions que

335 Op. cit. Assaig inèdit inclòs a l'Apèndix 5.3.

marcaran la darrera etapa de la seva vida, i que tenen com a eix bàsic la trobada amb la que serà la tercera i última esposa i el més llarg i definitiu retorn a Catalunya.

NOVES DIRECCIONS: 1947 - 1950

El 21 d'abril de 1947, Langdon-Davies reprèn la correspondència amb el vell amic de joventut, Ramon Casanova. L'escriptor ja està pensant en un retorn a Catalunya. De moment, els metges li han diagnosticat una bronquitis crònica. La salut és un argument afegit al seu desig de tornar a "escapar de la civilització mecànica". L'estiu de 1947 fa un breu visita a Barcelona i passa unes setmanes de vacances a Mallorca. L'amistat amb Casanova, però, ja no pot ser el que era. Ja no pot ser amb paraules del mateix Casanova- aquella amistat "quite young, even happily childish, with hopes only ahead, with no riddles and scars. When we were not interested, conscious, as old people seem inevitably to be, and called our vital tensions with better names as: Ideal, Love, Friendship, Culture, Progress, The Rights of Nations... and even discussed Religion"(336).

Mentre és de vacances, el Partit Liberal li proposa formalment de presentar-se com a candidat al Parlament. Langdon-Davies rebutja l'oferta sense considerar qüestions ideològiques i es limita a aduir raons de feina i de salut(337). A la seva nova casa de Brighton escriu

336 Carta de R. Casanova a L-D., 25/5/1947, APLD.

337 Cartes del secretari de la Liberal Central Association, Aubrey Herbert, de 16/7/1947 i 5/8/1947. Resposta de Langdon-Davies 31/7/1947. APLD.

African Stories, una sèrie de tres contes interrelacionats, inspirats en els seus records d'infància a Sud-àfrica, que no s'arriben a publicar(338). En realitat, durant aquests anys, Langdon-Davies està desenvolupant un interès per la psicologia que ja havia apuntat en llibres com Air Raid. Les col.laboracions a la revista People i la publicació de Conquer Fear(339) en són els primers resultats.

Conquer Fear és un dels treballs de divulgació habituals que Langdon-Davies adreça al públic no especialitzat. A partir d'una selecció de cartes que ell mateix havia rebut dels lectors que seguien els seus escrits a la revista People, l'autor explica allò que és conegut fins al moment, sobre les angoixes, les por irracionals, els estats de pànic, etc. Langdon-Davies suggereix maneres d'afrontar aquests problemes, que ell considera molt freqüents en la societat anglesa de la postguerra. Malgrat les simplificacions inevitables en aquest tipus de llibre, les crítiques de les revistes professionals són respectuoses i bàsicament elogioses(340).

Pocs dies abans de l'aparició del llibre, el mateix autor ha d'assimilar un esdeveniment amb prou connotacions d'angoixa i por irracional: la mort de la seva mare. Ethel Brown mor el 16 d'octubre de 1948. Langdon-Davies anota, l'endemà, una sèrie de reflexions sobre la frustrant relació que ha mantingut amb la seva mare. Els anys que han

338 Inèdit, APLD.

339 John Langdon-Davies, Conquer Fear, Feature Books, Londres, 1948; 2a. edició Sidgwick and Jackson, Londres, 1949, 173 pàgs.

340 Vegeu, per exemple, la de Mental Health, nov. 1948 o l'apreciació de J. A. Ryle, director de The Institute of Social Medicine d'Oxford en una carta a l'autor el 14/10/1948. APLD.

passat del retrat més aviat cruel que en va fer a Then a Soldier (1934) i la impressió de la mort no poden evitar que l'autor constati que "...with all her good intentions, she did her best to ruin me"(341).

El 1947 és nomenat assessor de la National Association of Mental Health i del Tavistock Institute for Human Relations de Londres. És precisament aquí on coneix Patricia Kipping(342), una jove secretària de l'Institut. Patricia esdevé la seva tercera esposa, i és amb ella que durant 1948 i 1949 planifica el nou i definitiu retorn a Catalunya. Els viatges breus a Catalunya per trobar un lloc per viure i, sobretot, el projecte d'un nou llibre a partir de l'afer Lisenko a la URSS omplen aquests dos anys. En tot cas, la decisió és ferma i Langdon-Davies, prou carregat d'experiències personals i de respostes "militants" a les convulsions del seu temps, entreveu la possibilitat de consolidar definitivament la seva carrera d'escriptor. Amb paraules seves: "The real object of the move is to help me devote the rest of my life to writing the books I feel I have in me, instead of continually dissipating my energy with a thousand and one bits of journalism. I am by no means sorry to have been a journalist for so long, because I believe it to be the best training for good writing; witness the two best writers of English prose, Defoe and Cobbett"(343).

Abans, però, l'Acadèmia de les Ciències de la Unió Soviètica pren una resolució -coneguda com l'"afer Lisenko"- que genera una

341 Vegeu "Dietaris", Apèndix 6.

342 Patricia Kipping, nascuda el 1924. Vídua de Langdon-Davies d'ençà de 1971. Continua vivint a Sant Feliu de Guíxols regentant Casa Rovira.

343 Carta de L-D. a Hugh Vere Hodge, 31/5/1949, còpia a l'APLD.

controvèrta periodística a la qual Langdon-Davies és doblement sensible: en primer lloc, per les seves implicacions científiques. L'Acadèmia només considera acceptables les explicacions sobre les lleis genètiques que dona un científic ucraïnès, T.D. Lisenko, totalment contràries a les formulacions de Mendel i als plantejaments de la ciència biològica. Les teories de Lisenko, que qüestionen fins i tot les de l'evolució de Darwin, neguen l'existència de factors hereditaris i són presentades com les úniques compatibles amb el materialisme dialèctic de Marx i Lenin(344). Les teories de Lisenko, que no presenten cap rigor científic, són defensades, això no obstant, per la premsa comunista anglesa. Es dona la circumstància que l'editor del Daily Worker és, en aquests moments, el biòleg J.B.S. Haldane, defensor ell mateix de les lleis hereditàries i que ja havia insinuat, el 1932, la possibilitat que el règim comunista "may lead to dogmatism in science and to the suppression of opinions which run counter to official theories".

En segon lloc, la polèmica representa la possibilitat, per a Langdon-Davies, d'acabar de formular el seu rebuig del comunisme soviètic, el qual d'ençà del Pacte de No-Agressió entre Hitler i Stalin, el 1938, ha anat articulant des de diversos angles i en relació als episodis que hem remarcat. Amb la guerra freda com a marc de fons i l'estalinisme en els seus darrers anys, Langdon-Davies veu com les

344 Paradoxalment, un altre líder comunista, Mao Zedong, propagaria durant els anys de la Revolució Cultural un eslògan de contundents afirmacions a favor de les lleis hereditàries per justificar la persecució dels fills de "revisionistes" i "agents de l'imperialisme". Deia Mao: "A dragon is born of a dragon, a phoenix is born of a phoenix and a mouse is born with the ability to make a hole in the wall". Vegeu el testimoni de Nieng Cheng, a Life and Death in Shanghai, Grafton Books, Londres, 1986.

pitjors premonicions es van confirmant i no deixa passar l'ocasió de contribuir a denunciar la perversió del concepte de llibertat aplicat a les arts, la filosofia o la ciència que s'està imposant a la Rússia stalinista.

Langdon-Davies entra a la polèmica amb un article a la Fortnightly Review, el qual titula "The Russian Attack on Reason"(345) i la publicació, pocs mesos després, de Russia Puts the Clock Back(346). És simptomàtic que l'editor del llibre sigui Victor Gollancz, un ex-company de viatge del partit comunista i editor de la col·lecció "The Left Book Club", especialment influent durant els anys trenta. L'anunci de la publicació del llibre per Gollancz sorprèn el seu vell professor, Vere Hodge, per a qui "Gollancz has been in the past a bit of a red propagandist!"(347) i genera un aclariment de Langdon-Davies, que és una declaració de principis i una afirmació de la posició política que manté en els moments en què es disposa a deixar Anglaterra definitivament: "With regard Gollancz, I suppose both he and I would be regarded by you as Red propagandists still! I am a good social democrat and I regard Cripps as the one man able to pull us through the present period just as Churchill was the one man able to pull us through the war. One difference between me and Gollancz was that during the "United Front" period he allowed himself to cooperate more fully with the Communists than I did, but we both of us regard Russian Communism as the chief danger in the world today, and particularly a danger to the British brand of socialism which emanates from Robert Owen through William Morris

345 Fortnightly Review,

346 Russia Puts the Clock Back, Gollancz, Londres, 1949.

347 Carta de Vere Hodge a Langdon-Davies, 25/5/1949. APLD.

without taint from Marxism"(348).

Russia Puts the Clock Back s'ha d'entendre, doncs, com la contribució de Langdon-Davies a la guerra freda, una situació sobre la qual l'autor -com era de preveure- opina que cal prendre-hi partit públicament. Així ho manifesta a Julian Huxley: "I think it is most important that the realities of the Cold War or Cold Peace, whichever it is, should be reiterated publicly, not in the political sphere but in the cultural sphere"(349).

Val la pena fer notar que, coincidint pràcticament amb l'aparició de Russia Puts the Clock Back, George Orwell publica la seva darrera novel·la, Mil nou-cents vuitanta-quatre(350), rebuda -sobretot als EUA- com un manifest anti-sovètic per contribuir a la guerra freda(351). És una nova coincidència, després dels fets de maig de 1937 i la Home Guard, entre dos autors que, sense conèixer-se personalment, han pres partit i s'han manifestat davant situacions similars. És revelador que Katharine Atholl, la cèlebre "Duquessa Roja" dels anys de la guerra

348 Carta de Langdon-Davies a Vere Hodge, 31/5/1949. APLD.

349 Carta de L-D a Julian Huxley, 11/7/1949. APLD. El professor Huxley, que havia fet elogis de Man and his Universe vint-i-cinc anys enrere, publicà poques setmanes després la seva visió de l'"after Lisenko" des d'una perspectiva més acadèmica a Soviet Genetics. Chatto and Windus, Londres, 1949. Durant el procés de publicació dels dos llibres, els autors mantingueren correspondència sobre diversos detalls de la polèmica.

350 George Orwell, Nineteen Eighty-four, Secker and Warburg, Londres, 1949. El llibre d'Orwell surt el juny i el de Langdon-Davies el setembre.

351 Sobre aquesta qüestió, vegeu M. Berga, Mil nou-cents vuitanta-quatre: Radiografia d'un malson, Barcelona, 1984, especialment el capítol "La recepció crítica a Mil nou-cents vuitanta-quatre", pàgs. 43-58.

civil, i ara presidenta de la British League for European Freedom, mostrés interès pel treball dels dos autors i els manifestés la possibilitat de col.laborar amb les activitats promogudes per l'Associació(352).

En tot cas, el llibre de Langdon-Davies tracta bàsicament tres qüestions: la qüestió estrictament genètica, les implicacions polítiques de la controvèrsia i la posició dels científics britànics que militen al partit comunista, molt especialment la del professor Haldane, ell mateix una autoritat en genètica mendeliana i editor del Daily Worker. Aquest "admirable little book", com el descriu Bertrand Russell(353), esdevé un èxit considerable i l'editorial Gollancz ja n'anuncia una reimpressió onze dies després de la publicació, el 7 de setembre de 1949.

El llibre propicia l'explotació periodística de la controvèrsia i no hi ha pràcticament cap publicació periòdica que no se n'ocupi. Si bé hi ha crítics que retreuen un involucrament emocional innecessari per part de Langdon-Davies en la polèmica(354), tots coincideixen a considerar-lo una presentació eficaç de la qüestió i més d'un en fa

352 Cartes de Katharine Atholl a L-D, 27/5/1949 i 28/10/1949. APLD. Orwell ja havia declinat una oferta de col.laborar amb la League of European Freedom després de la publicació d'Animal Farm, perquè, tot i els punts de coincidència, "...I cannot associate myself with an essentially Conservative body which claims to defend democracy in Europe but has nothing to say about British Imperialism". Carta d'Orwell a la Duquesa d'Atholl, 15/11/1945. CEJL, vol. 4, Londres 1968, pàg. 49.

353 Bertrand Russell, "Stalin Liquidates Heredity", Evening Standard, 7/9/1949.

354 Vegeu, per exemple, "Soviet Science", Times Literary Supplement, 23/9/1949, o "Russian Galileos", Tribune, 28/10/1949, o "The Giraffe Sticks its Neck out Again", Leader, 17/10/1949.

elogis entusiastes(355). Tot plegat obliga J.B.S. Haldane a replicar formalment a Langdon-Davies a les pàgines del Daily Worker. Lamentablement, el membre de la Royal Society, afllat en la professió sobre aquest tema, no fa cap refutació consistent i es limita a una resposta evasiva, posant en qüestió les qualificacions científiques de Langdon-Davies i demanant temps per conèixer més a fons les recerques de Lisenko. Quan la resposta de Haldane es publica, el més de novembre, Langdon-Davies està viatjant per Catalunya, més ocupat i preocupat per organitzar la seva nova vida que no pas per cap altra cosa. Marià Manent li ofereix una casa a Premià de Dalt, que els permetrà instal·lar-se provisionalment fins que trobin un lloc definitiu. Amb l'any nou, Langdon-Davies és a punt d'estrenar moltes coses: una nova residència, una nova companya i, sobretot, la il·lusió de poder-se allunyar definitivament de les polèmiques periodístiques i ideològiques en què s'ha vist immers sovint de cara a concentrar les seves energies i la resta de la seva vida a escriure "the books I feel I have in me".

Els Langdon-Davies tornen a Anglaterra per vendre's la casa, "empaquetar" i preparar el trasllat de llibres i mobles. El 7 de març de 1950 surten d'Anglaterra i el 9 de març arriben a Premià de Dalt.

355 Especialment Malcolm Muggeridge, a la English Review, nov. 1949, i C.E.M. Joad, a Europa Affairs, oct., 1949. N'arriba fins i tot una referència a la premsa catalana. Josep Pla, comentant les teories de Lisenko, escriu a Destino: "...imposición que mi querido amigo Mr. Langdon-Davies ha tan eficazmente combatido en Londres", a "Ciencia y Política", "Calendario sin fechas", Destino, núm. 663, 22/4/1950.

EL RETORN DEFINITIU A CATALUNYA

El mes d'abril, Langdon-Davies comença a escriure uns dietaris que, amb moltes interrupcions, arribaran fins al primer de gener de 1955. La primera entrada és una extensa reflexió autobiogràfica de les que l'escriptor ha anat formulant en diversos moments crucials de la seva vida. Titula aquest primer dietari "Journal of a Escape", un títol que retorna al tema de les prèvies escapades de la "civilització mecànica". Trobem aquí una confessió dels motius que l'han impulsat ara a prendre aquesta decisió i la concreció de les raons que hem anat apuntant en els darrers capítols:

"... Thus for fifteen long years (1935-1950) I had very little opportunity to escape from the effects of the collective foolishness of the human race, even had I wished to. The experiences of three wars were nevertheless having their underground effect. Quite early in our war I found myself saying: When this is over I am going to get out of it all and go and live simply in Spain. But though the geographical direction of my intended escape became thus early fixed, my idea of what escape itself involved was at that time unformed and very limited. I wanted to escape from a wet and weary climate, from too much income tax, from the vexations and distractions, the cluttered up existence of urban

civilisation, from having to earn money in order to spend it on things which did not really give me pleasure, thereby curtailing time and energy available for 'the work I really wanted to do'".

Finalment, però, el diari recull la confessió íntima d'allò que ha fet realment possible la decisió i sobre la qual Langdon-Davies no vol teoritzar: "I do not here wish to say anything about the most important aspect of my preparations to escape, of the unexpected and perfect friendship which made it possible to think of escape"(356). Quan escriu això, encara no sap que el primer fill de la seva unió amb Patricia Kipping ja és en camí.

Els primers mesos a Premià els dedica a la lectura, l'escriptura dels encàrrecs pendents i a planificar els projectes nous. Això no obstant, trobem als dietaris indicacions de les preocupacions polítiques que ara, als 53 anys, parteixen de la convicció del fracàs i perversitat del model soviètic de comunisme i la necessitat de formular l'esperança en un món fraternal i solidari amb ciutadans pacifistes i sense que les afirmacions nacionalistes condueixin a l'imperialisme. El 23 de maig escriu, fins i tot, un programa de deu punts(357) que hauria de ser instrumental per aconseguir un món que tingués les característiques següents:

- 1.- Wherein nothing is decided by force.
- 2.- Wherein no human being is the mere instrument of another.

356 Dietaris. Vegeu Apèndix 6.

357 Ibid.

- 3.- Wherein nature is wooed not raped.
- 4.- Wherein every man may live for himself as well as for the community.
- 5.- Wherein the state is concerned as an instrument and not as a collective being."

De fet, aquesta formulació de la utopia que fa Langdon-Davies, allunyat -per última vegada- de la "civilització mecànica", és un breu compendi del que hauria de ser un estat de coses ideal en relació a les seves conviccions més arrelades i que es correspondrien punt per punt a:

- 1.- El pacifisme.
- 2.- La llibertat individual.
- 3.- La ciència al servei de l'home i la natura.
- 4.- La solidaritat.
- 5.- L'estat al servei de l'individu.

Defensor de la llibertat personal i lluitador per la justícia social, ha estat testimoni, com a pacifista convençut, de tres guerres; com a divulgador dels avenços científics, de la bomba atòmica; com a entusiasta "company de viatge", de la transformació del comunisme en totalitarisme. Finalment, allunyat de les lluites ideològiques, a partir d'ara només se sentirà estimulat a creure en la utopia.

Durant aquests primers mesos a Premià, la lectura ocupa bona part del seu temps. Langdon-Davies dedica una estona diària a llegir en veu alta i comentar fragments de les lectures a la seva jove companya. Segons que es desprèn del dietari de Premià, la majoria són novel·listes

del segle XX, alguna incursió als romàntics, assaigs diversos, història i filosofia. Una llista dels autors més recurrents inclouria noms tan diversos com els de Wordsworth, De Quincey, Connolly, T.S. Eliot, Kafka, Lawrence, Joyce, Freud, Sartre, Kierkegaard, Huxley, Jaspers, Maritain, Santayana, Eckhart o E.H. Carr.

Malgrat el neguit per escriure els llibres que "porta a dins", la supervivència, fins i tot en el refugi rural que han trobat, imposa les seves lleis i Langdon-Davies ha de treballar bàsicament en dos llibres d'encàrrec: el Jubilee Book of the National Physical Laboratory(358), una història d'aquest centre d'investigació nacional per celebrar el cinquantenari de la seva creació, i un altre treball també amb implicacions per a la història de la ciència, Westminster Hospital(359), un estudi de l'evolució de l'organització, els serveis i la recerca mèdica d'aquest centre d'ençà de la seva fundació, a partir de la iniciativa d'uns quants filàntrops el 1716. Són dos treballs que s'ajusten perfectament a les habilitats reconegudes de Langdon-Davies, i no sorprenden, doncs, ni la satisfacció dels responsables de l'encàrrec ni frases com les del New Statesman, que parlen d'un resultat "both brilliant and unique", i que afirmen que "it is very hard to imagine how such a history could have been done better", referint-se al darrer(360).

Naturalment, però, no és pas per això que Langdon-Davies és a Catalunya i les entrades als dietaris revelen clarament l'obsessió de

358 John Langdon-Davies, NPL: Jubilee of the National Physical Laboratory, His Majesty's Stationery Office, Londres, 1951, 104 pàgs.

359 John Langdon-Davies, Westminster Hospital: Two Centuries of Voluntary Service, 1719-1948, John Murray, Londres, 1952, 274 pàgs.

360 "Westminster Hospital", New Statesman and Nation, 1/11/1952.

l'autor per abandonar el periodisme científic. Després de diverses proves, sembla clar que els projectes que agafen cos són un llibre Catalunya i un assaig històric sobre la sexualitat. D'alguna manera, sembla que Langdon-Davies vulgui fer revisions aprofundides i actualitzades de treballs de vint anys enrera, com ara, Dancing Catalans o A Short History of Women.

Mentrestant, el novembre de 1950, neix el primer fill del nou matrimoni, Nicholas. Les evolucions i progressos de l'infant ocupen moltes de les observacions que el pare va anotant al dietari. D'altra banda, malgrat la vida de semi-reclusió que porten a Premià, tenen ocasió de veure els vells amics catalans en les visites esporàdiques que fan a Barcelona. Cal mencionar, especialment, un parell de conferències a l'Institut Britànic la primavera de 1951. El llavors director de l'Institut, Mr. Brady, li encarrega les dissertacions que Langdon-Davies titula: "In England now: A Poetic Criticism" i "What is the Human Body". En aquell focus de catalanisme cultural que l'Institut Britànic permetè de crear els anys cinquanta, es produeixen trobades -en forma de "sherry parties"- amb Carles Riba, Tomàs Garcès, Marià Manent i d'altres. Són ocasions, per a Langdon-Davies, de comentar l'evolució de les coses a Espanya sota el franquisme, de parlar de literatura i d'anar contrastant i arrodonint el llibre sobre Catalunya.

Ocasionalment, Langdon-Davies anota reflexions sobre la situació política del país i busca "claus" per entendre l'enorme canvi que s'ha produït després de la convulsió de la guerra civil. Quan ho fa, sol ser en forma de comentaris a notícies que publica La Vanguardia. Una de les més elaborades acaba amb aquesta constatació: "...Indeed Spain to-day is

a fascinating example of mass-repression of uncomfortable thoughts. That is the key to understanding it. The majority of Spaniards on whichever side they may have been have blood on their hands and yet they have blotted out that fact from their conscience and their consciousness. The Franco people really believe that their fiction of the "Reds" is fact"(361).

L'estiu de 1951 el passen en una casa davant de mar que han llogat a Llafranc. Són uns mesos dedicats a treballar en Gatherings from Catalonia, que l'escriptor ha anat planificant els mesos anteriors. L'estiu a Llafranc permet visites freqüents al Mas Pla de Llofriu i la conversa amb Pla esdevé estimul constant i, sovint, font directa dels primers esborranys del llibre. Les visites són de pas, com la del 19 de juny, durant la qual, "Josep Pla and his mother entertained us with champagne, cherries, loquats and doughnuts. Pla gave us a watercolour, two of his books, a litre of milk and some doughnuts", i en alguna ocasió un Pla insòlitàment generós i hospitalari els convida a passar uns dies al mas.

Langdon-Davies està il.lusionat amb el llibre perquè deu estar convençut, com li escriu un amic, que "Few people are so likely as yourself to tell us something worth hearing about Catalonia, especially after so long a residence in the country"(362), però també perquè, juntament amb l'assaig sobre història de la sexualitat és el tipus de llibre que té ganes d'escriure, independentment de les consideracions d'ordre econòmic d'un escriptor professional. En certa manera,

361 Diataris, entrada 26/5/1951. Vegeu Apèndix 6.

362 Carta de Vere Hodge a Langdon-Davies, 24/7/1951, APLD.

Gatherings... és el "luxe" personal que Langdon-Davies es permet durant el primer any del retorn a Catalunya. Poc després, ja s'ha de fer autoimposicions i bons propòsits per poder escriure "allò que vulgui". El 15 d'octubre de 1951 anota al dietari: "At the moment I wish simply to relate a resolution made yesterday -oct.14th- that as from now on I have to do so many things to books largely designed to make money I shall try to keep up an average of 1000 words a day on some book not meant for immediate publication. I will record the progress of this on a special page of this diary"(363).

De moment, però, l'estiu a Llafranc ha estat fructífer i el 2 de setembre ja pot constatar que "The Gatherings from Catalonia m.s. is approaching a final stage. Pla has the first chapter and Patricia and I are hard at work revising the Barcelona chapter"(364).

363 Dietaris, entrada 15/10/1951. Vegeu Apèndix 6.

364 Ibid., 2/9/1951.

GATHERINGS FROM CATALONIA I CASA ROVIRA

El gener de 1952, Langdon-Davies passa unes setmanes a Londres per lliurar el manuscrit de Westminster Hospital, negociar la publicació de Gatherings... i per començar les recerques sobre la projectada història de la sexualitat.

Un llibre sobre Catalunya que no és ni una guia turística convencional ni un estudi acadèmic, no pot trobar fàcilment un editor, tot i el fenomen incipient del turisme britànic a la Costa Brava. Finalment, Cassells accepta el manuscrit i el llibre es publica el juny de 1953.

Langdon-Davies ja adverteix d'entrada als seus lectors que es tracta d'un "subjective account of personal experience", que no pot, per tant, competir amb la claredat o el detallisme d'una guia normal. Es potser l'única manera possible d'afrontar el tema quan es volen sintetitzar les experiències de 30 anys de relació apassionada i crítica amb el país, la seva gent i els esdeveniments històrics que s'hi han anat produint. Aquesta reflexió sobre Catalunya arriba en un moment de la vida de l'autor que en condiona la perspectiva. D'una banda hi ha el bagatge de dues publicacions prèvies, les primeres impressions de Dancing Catalans (1929) i la crònica de les convulsions provocades per l'esclat de la guerra a Behind the Spanish Barricades (1936). D'altra

banda, hi ha la seva pròpia evolució personal i ideològica que ha deixat enrera dos fracassos matrimonials i una trajectòria circular que ha hagut de patir les expectatives i decepcions de la fe comunista, les guerres ideològiques, els nacionalismes, l'aparició dels estats totalitaris i la reducció del debat polític a la política de repartiment de poder de les grans potències, per retornar a les conviccions d'arrel quàquera i a la inspiració del socialisme utòpic que marcaren la seva primera joventut.

Tot plegat pesa prou perquè Langdon-Davies senti la necessitat de deixar ben clar en els primers paràgrafs del prefaci que: "Though much could be said about Spanish politics, nothing will be said here. Some will attribute this to mere cowardice on my part, but others will applaud me. For nothing has so diminished our cosmopolitanism, our sympathy with the daily life of human beings beyond our own boundaries, as the fact that we scarcely think of foreign countries nowadays except to fit them into the chaos of international power politics... This book is not written out of hatred for America or for Russia, not even out a fervent belief in social democratic government, but for love of Spain, its people, and Catalans in particular". Retirat novament a la seva Catalunya, l'autor de Russia Puts the Clock Back sembla que està definitivament cansat de la política, per tant, cal entendre aquestes afirmacions com l'armistici personal que s'atorga en la darrera confrontació ideològica en què ha militat: la guerra freda. Efectivament, a partir d'ara, Langdon-Davies ja no publicarà més llibres ni farà més periodisme de contingut polític.

El títol del llibre, un eco del cèlebre Gatherings from Spain

(1846) de Richard Ford, no serveix només per insinuar la varietat i dispersió del contingut. Vol ser, també, una refutació dels tòpics que originà i, no cal dir-ho, una divulgació de la realitat plurinacional del país. Per a Langdon-Davies, el llibre de Ford és un document "d'època", perquè "Ford was a man of many prejudices. He wrote soon enough after the French Wars to have strong feelings about Napoleonic generals and even stronger feelings about Spanish generals in the Peninsular War. He disliked the Roman Catholic Church, taking a poor view of anything but 'Bible Christianity', and he despised almost every Spaniard of prominence whether in politics or in military affairs. One feels that as he jogged along on his horse his chief pleasures were his indignations... My book deals with a very small corner of Spain in which I have lived, off and on, under Alfonso, Primo de Rivera, the Republic, and the present Caudillo... My account could not, even if Ford had written it, be so romantic as Ford's, for we no longer live in a romantic age. It may help, however, to dispel some strange misconceptions about 'Cosas de Espana' to be found even among intelligent Englishmen".

Las "Cosas de Espana" o tòpics establerts que tenen els anglesos sobre Espana es resumeixen, diu Langdon-Davies, en tres prejudicis: "the Gib. attitude", segons la qual els espanyols són ganduls, bruts i fan pudor d'all; "the Carmen attitude", segons la qual, els espanyols porten vestits fantasiosos, flors a la boca o a les orelles i es passen el dia ballant; i "the Black Legend", segons la qual, els espanyols són un poble endarrerit, cruel i supersticiós. Si tot això és discutible en termes generals, encara ho és més quan fa referència als catalans, els quals "being more bourgeois than the rest of the Peninsula's

inhabitants, are more superficially like ourselves".

Els agraïments a diversos catalans que l'han ajudat a l'hora de preparar el llibre són prou reveladors. En primer lloc, Josep Pla, "an indefatigable conversationalist with a complete knowledge of his countrymen". Més endavant, Langdon-Davies reclama que l'obra de Pla "should be translated into European languages so that the author can take his place as one of the most interesting writers of our day". Hi ha, no cal dir-ho, Marià Manent. L'autor aprofita l'ocasió per recordar l'obra de divulgació de la literatura anglesa que va fent el poeta català: "English Literature owes much to Manent who has translated into Catalan and Castilian a very large part of the corpus of English poetry from Chaucer to Dylan Thomas, and particularly Keats, Shelley and T.S. Eliot".

Fa una referència al seu amic barceloní Joan Puig Giralt, "with whom I have enjoyed the less serious side of life intermittently for many years", i encara el reconeixement, malgrat la fredor i el distanciament que s'ha produït en la seva amistat, el vell amic de joventut de Ripoll: "In earlier years I learned much also from Senyor Ramón Casanova i Danés who, I hope, has forgiven me by now the many things about which we disagree. Some day I shall describe senyor Casanova's pioneer and virtually unknown work on jet-propulsion which I remember as long ago as 1921".

Finalment, als dos amics de Sant Feliu de Guixols, el fuster Vicenç Gandol, que havia esdevingut alcalde amb el règim franquista, i el carter, Joan Pagès, de conviccions menys adaptables.

El llibre s'organitza en tres capítols: "Catalonia and the Catalans", "Notes on Everyday Life" i "Barcelona". El primer és, en realitat, una introducció general que s'estructura al voltant dels cinc possibles itineraris pels quals es pot arribar a Barcelona. El conjunt de rutes que suggereix acaba donant una visió de la geografia del país i de la "dialèctica" entre mar, plana i muntanya, que sintetitza amb les teories sobre el garbí i la tramontana que li exposa Josep Pla. D'altra banda, la ruta amb tren, l'aprofita per descriure la unitat lingüística dels Països Catalans.

La part central del llibre és una exploració, de tons antropològics, de la vida diària i els costums dels catalans. Hi ha de tot, des de l'organització d'una masia a la gastronomia, els aplecs, l'estructura de les cases, la religió... fins a, naturalment, la història i la tècnica de la sardana. Sobre cada aspecte, l'autor sempre té alguna anècdota personal per il·lustrar les seves opinions.

El darrer capítol és una mena d'assaig sobre Barcelona seguint, en bona mesura, la Guia de Barcelona(365) que Carles Soldevila acabava de publicar. Al costat de les descripcions de la ciutat, la seva evolució, els edificis singulars (Langdon-Davies aprofita per ratificar la seva permanent mania a dos edificis barcelonins: l'estàtua de Colom i la Sagrada Família de Gaudí), va sorgint una crònica de la ciutat dels primers anys cinquanta. Són les impressions d'un visitant, assidu i sistemàtic, que constata les realitats d'una ciutat que es mou entre la postguerra, el mercat negre, la immigració i el barraquisme. Entre el

365 Carles Soldevila, Guia de Barcelona, Destino, Barcelona, 1951.

neguit per oblidar les nafres i els traumes de la guerra que les masses submergeixen en les places de braus i als camps de futbol als rebots devaluats del Pla Marshall i l'entrada a l'ONU. En el seu conjunt, esdevé una visió única sobre la capital de la Catalunya pre-turística i molt probablement, la darrera possible d'un escriptor estranger.

Al llarg de Gatherings from Catalonia hi ha la voluntat de divulgar la vitalitat i particularitat de la cultura catalana. Així, a part d'escriptors com els esmentats Pla i Manent, trobem referències als treballs de personalitats en diversos camps: els professors Bosch i Gimpera i Pericot; els metges Duran i Trueta; els arquitectes Gaudí i Domènec i Montaner; el director de l'Orfeó Català, Lluís Millet; el pintor Dalí; les teories filosòfiques de Francesc Pujols... Per deixar ben clar als seus lectors que el català no és cap dialecte inclou un apèndix amb tres versions de "La vaca cega" de Maragall. L'original en català, una traducció castellana de Fernando Gutiérrez, "La vaca ciega", i la seva pròpia en anglès, "The Blind Caw"(366). Ho reforça amb la comparació d'unes quantes frases corrents en català, castellà i francès. A l'hora de donar referències bibliogràfiques als seus lectors, a part de la guia de Soldevila i diverses obres de Pla, Langdon-Davies suggereix una visita a The Dolphin Book Company, la llibreria que regenta, a Oxford, Joan Gili. De llibres anglesos sobre Catalunya, menciona el relativament recent, The Spirit of Catalonia(367) del Dr. Trueta i el seu propi Dancing Catalans, de 1929.

366 Vegeu Apèndix 7.1.

367 J. Trueta, The Spirit of Catalonia, Oxford University Press, Londres, 1946. Sembla que Langdon-Davies oblidí els llibres del professor Allison Peers que hem mencionat en capítols anteriors.

Ara, malgrat les seves peculiaritats, la crítica anglesa tracta el llibre generalment en la perspectiva dels llibres de viatge o les guies turístiques habituals. Un crític acaba el seu comentari comparant-lo, precisament, al llibre de Trueta, i sentència: "His is not an immensely serious book -it will not supersede Dr. Trueta's The Spirit of Catalonia in that regard- but the intending visitor to the Costa Brava will find it invaluable"(368). És clar que el mateix Trueta hi troba referències que difícilment preocuparien el turista de la Costa Brava. Especialment l'espanyolització progressiva de Catalunya d'ençà de 1939, que Langdon-Davies constata i que Trueta admet, però només com un fenomen circumstancial:

"It is true that even I after spending a month in Catalonia noticed how much the Spanish habits and even the language have been introduced into my country during the years of my absence but I could still detect under the chaotic uncertainty, the lack of punctuality and even formality, the tendency to shout and express themselves in almost a violent form, etc., the old restraint which had been the most permanent of the catalan characteristics, a passion for work and the impulse to establish order out of the chaos. Unfortunately all these factors are daily defeated by the present current and we must await better times..."(369).

368 John Crawford, "One of the Bright Stars of the Middle Ages", The Irish Press, 11/7/1953.

369 Carta de Trueta a L-D, Oxford, 9/7/1953. Són frases que recorden els últims paràgrafs de The Spirit of Catalonia (1946), en què Trueta, citant valoracions semblants a les de Havelock Ellis a The Soul of Spain (1908) i de Waldo Frank a Virgin Spain (1926), creu que la situació de Catalunya sota el franquisme és només un altre interludi d'una seqüència històrica recurrent, en la qual Catalunya "once again... will return".

Són igualment escassos els intents d'analitzar la situació política que el mateix Langdon-Davies ha volgut evitar. Un bon coneixedor d'Espanya, però, com l'escriptor V.S. Pritchett, no pot estar-se de coincidir amb l'autor de Gatherings... sobre les conseqüències de la guerra en la conducta de molta gent: "...The passions raised by the civil war are far more alive outside the Spanish frontiers than within them, where appalling memories, deep guilt, years of suffering have combined with the prohibition of debate, to make the subject almost taboo. The Spaniards find our inquires embarrassing. Sancho Panza has emerged: whoever wins is right"(370). En un altre sentit, el comentari del llibre provoca una declaració de principis -força generalitzada entre els estrangers que simpatitzaren amb la República- de l'escriptor i diplomàtic Harold Nicholson: "My wife is always wanting me to come to Spain again, but I have a strange and eccentric objection to visiting a country ruled by a man who established his dictatorship by using foreign and native troops against his own countrymen"(371).

El que tots els crítics remarquen, però, és el coneixement profund i de primera mà que l'autor té de Catalunya. Així l'hi reconeix Julian Symons, qui celebra l'aparició del llibre perquè "a real book about any country is rare and worth applauding", i afegeix, "it is the work of a man who has spent many years in the country he writes about, whose every

370 V.S. Pritchett, "The Spanish Tourist", New Statesman and Nation, 4/7/1953.

371 Carta de Harold Nicholson a L-D, Londres, 9/7/1953. Recordeu que la seva esposa, Vita Sackville-West, era descendent de les relacions il·legítimes de Lord Sackville amb una gitana espanyola, Pepita.

chapter is written with passionate feeling for catalan landscape, architecture, food, customs and people"(372). La simpatia òbvia envers el país no constitueix pas un obstacle perquè l'autor en doni una visió crítica. Desmond Pratt, en una crítica entusiasta, ho fa notar com un valor afegit a l'obra: "Every intelligent reader should have this in his library. It will, I feel, become a classic ranking with Borrow's Bible in Spain. Mr. Langdon-Davies's title is an echo of Richard Ford's famous Gatherings from Spain, which appeared in 1846. Whereas Ford, however, was very prejudiced and much of what he said is no longer true, Mr. Langdon-Davies is writing about the immediate present and has the open mind of a journalistic training"(373).

D'altres consideren que la seva familiaritat amb el tema produeix una certa monotonia en el tractament detallista que en fa. En aquest sentit, Cyril Connolly, tot i acceptar que "he really knows his Catalonia as a scholar and a resident and has written an admirable chapter on Barcelona", i que, "we are at least conscious of an educated mind which has studied the subject", considera que, "he is almost too prosaic and thorough and his style lacks both humour and charm"(374).

372 J. Symons, "How to write a Good Travel Book", Manchester Evening News, 25/6/1953.

373 D. Pratt, "In Love with Catalonia", Yorkshire Post, 26/6/1953.

374 C. Connolly, "Recent Books on Spain", The Sunday Times, 26/7/1953. Marià Manent discrepa d'aquesta apreciació de Connolly i en dona una prova a L-D: "How can Connolly say that your style is humourless? Roser (una seva filla) who is back from England, has told me that Mr. Strubell (Amèlia Trueta's husband) was reading your Gatherings when she was staying with them in London and frequent peals of laughter interrupted the reading". Carta de Manent a L-D., 27/8/1953. APLD. A la mateixa carta, Manent menciona un article que L-D. vol enviar a Destino sobre el turisme a la Costa Brava. L'article no es va publicar, però hi ha el text original a l'Apèndix 7.5.

En conjunt, i malgrat la bona rebuda de la crítica, l'obra presenta uns problemes de plantejament que dificulten la possibilitat que el llibre superi el valor atribuïble a un document d'època intel·ligent i singular, escrit amb sensibilitat i coneixement de causa. El crític del Times Literary Supplement és, potser, qui formula millor la qüestió: "...His book lacks of coordination, of which he has fairly forewarned us by calling it Gatherings from Catalonia, but which even so leaves us with a much more fragmentary final impression than is warranted by the amount of information and insight that he supplies. It is perhaps the reflection of a conflict of attitudes in Mr. Langdon-Davies himself"(375). Una observació que no podia agafar Langdon-Davies per sorpresa. El seu amic i corrector d'estil de molts dels seus llibres anteriors, S.K. Ratcliffe, ja li havia comentat el manuscrit en termes semblants: "The book is extraordinarily fresh, stimulating, various. But there, surely, is the plain fact: it has been written in a sustained glow, and the material is such that the utmost care is demanded in selection, arrangement, and writing. You must wish it to be more than a 'succès d'estime': it ought to reach a wide and continuous public. And the conclusion for me would be that thorough revision, and in some cases recasting, are necessary".

Gatherings from Catalonia conclou la trilogia sobre Catalunya que Langdon-Davies havia iniciat el 1929 amb Dancing Catalans i continuat el 1936 amb Behind the Spanish Barricades. Juntament amb The Tragic Week (1937) i els altres manuscrits inèdits que s'inclouen als apèndixs constitueix el corpus escrit més complet i dilatat en el temps que cap escriptor estranger hagi escrit mai sobre Catalunya. Potser no és l'obra

acadèmica més important, ni una obra de primera qualitat literària. Certament, però, es tracta d'una crònica única dels grans esdeveniments del nostre segle, constatats per un observador anglès que s'ha involucrat amb el país i la seva cultura sense renunciar a la possibilitat de l'observació distanciada, crítica i intel·ligent. Sobre el contingut de l'obra planen l'habilitat del periodista professional, l'interès profund de l'antropòleg i els entusiasmes i les decepcions de l'humanista compromès amb un temps històric vertiginós. El testimoni de Langdon-Davies adreçat al públic britànic i americà és una imatge de Catalunya que cal entendre segons la definició que en dona Pierre Vilar: "La imatge (fins i tot si és inexacta) que transmet d'un país un testimoni escoltat (fins i tot si les seves raons són discutibles) forma part de la història d'aquest país"(376).

Simultàniament al procés de preparació de Gatherings... va prenent cos el projecte de regentar un petit hotel que permeti una certa estabilitat econòmica per fugir del llibre "d'encàrrec" i que suposi una oferta de connotacions culturals al fenomen incipient del turisme britànic a la Costa Brava. Es perfila un model de vida ("This book was written before I retired to become a hôtelier at Sant Feliu de Guixols", diu al prefaci de Gatherings...) prou atractiu: feina d'escriptor fora de temporada i una barreja de negoci i vida social de juny a setembre. Tot plegat es concreta quan troben una antiga casa senyorial als afores de Sant Feliu, Casa Rovira, la qual, amb una petita remodelació, esdevé

376 P. Vilar, Introducció a Història de Catalunya, vol. 1, Edicions 62, Barcelona, 1987, pàg. 30. Vilar fa aquesta reflexió després de comentar l'Homage to Catalonia en aquests termes: "No crec que Orwell hagués entès gaire el sentit del combat en què havia volgut participar. Però, donant als seus records el títol "Homenatge a Catalunya" llança aquest nom a un ressò múltiple. La imatge..."

el propi habitatge i "The Langdon-Davies Guest House", amb una capacitat de nou habitacions dobles. Deixen, doncs, la casa dels Manent a Premià i Langdon-Davies s'instal·la novament a Sant Feliu, just a punt de preparar la temporada turística de 1952.

L'opció de Sant Feliu, ara amb una nova família, ha de semblar la més òbvia a Langdon-Davies. El record de la primera estada al passeig de Mar és probablement el d'un dels períodes més feliços de la seva vida. Recordem, si més no, les impressions que deixà escrites el 1928 quan, a punt de marxar-ne, vol resumir els gairebé tres anys que han viscut a Sant Feliu:

"We had made very little difference to the life of Sant Feliu although we were perfectly familiar to nearly everybody in the town. Probably we had been much discussed by some of our neighbours, but the infinite politeness of the unsophisticated Catalan had quite prevented any speculations of a personal sort reaching our ears. They had accepted our habits, and the genial respect for the foreigner which seems to be increasing all over Spain had provided excuses for every eccentricity. We were leaving behind us only a few friends and hundreds of pleasant faces known by sight; people with whom we had danced the Sardana; who had listened to our large gramophone, from the road outside, on hot nights, and applauded the fifth Symphony or Paul Robeson's negro spirituals; who had sold us things in the market and in the shops; who, for the most part, had merely learned to greet us as we strolled up and down the Passeig by the side of the blue

harbour, or sat drinking vermouth at little tables on the sidewalk. We have never perhaps, before or since, felt so much at one with the surrounding community as we did during those three years at Sant Feliu de Guixols"(377).

Vint-i-quatre anys més tard, amb la inauguració de Casa Rovira, Langdon-Davies passa a formar part definitivament d'aquesta comunitat.

El petit hotel de l'autor de Gatherings from Catalonia presenta, no cal dir-ho, peculiaritats en relació amb l'oferta turística de la Costa Brava. D'entrada, no cal confondre-ho amb un hotel normal. Casa Rovira, segons que aclareix el fulletó de propaganda "is run as a private house" i es recomanen diversos hotels de Sant Feliu per als qui vulguin els serveis i l'ambient típics d'un hotel. Ells només s'anuncien en un diari londinenc, "to remind our friends of our existence". El menjador és un cobert exterior i les comoditats són les més bàsiques. Donen per entès que els seus clients gaudiran amb les sardanes, "the national dance of Catalonia", o els concerts de les societats corals locals, i el menú de la casa, que es basa en les fruites i verdures de la temporada, té com a plats fixos els canalons, l'escudella i carn d'olla o els calamars farcits. D'altra banda, "Mr. Langdon-Davies conducts two excursions a week for those who want to see the countryside still unspoiled by tourist popularity". El fulletó recorda que "everyone will try to discuss politics with you at the café", però recomana que "It is however wiser to avoid expressing opinions about Spanish affairs whatever the

377 Vegeu "The Open Road", 1928, Apèndix 1.3.

provocation"(378).

La publicació de Gatherings... i l'aventura de Casa Rovira suscita un nou contacte epistolar amb Gerald Brenan. Tot i que s'han vist molt poc, les seves biografies tenen molts aspectes en comú: tots dos han nascut fora de la metròpolis (l'un a Malta, l'altre, a Sud-àfrica) amb pocs anys de diferència; han viscut en els cercles d'influència del grup de Bloomsbury; s'han construït "refugis espirituals" personals (l'un a Andalusia, l'altre a Catalunya) a l'Espanya d'abans de la guerra; amb la rebel·lió militar contra la República han reaccionat -com hem vist anteriorment- amb postures ideològiques i entusiasmes coincidents; s'han interessat especialment pel fenomen anarquista; i ara continuen escrivint llibres des del paisatge humà i geogràfic que els ha captivat respectivament.

Brenan, en efecte, ha publicat The Face of Spain(379) a partir de les notes d'un viatge amb la seva esposa, Gamel, els mesos de febrer i març de 1949. El títol, però, és enganyós i hauria estat més exacte dir-ne "Gatherings from Andalusia" o, més exactament, "Gatherings from Southern Spain". El propòsit inicial també s'assembla molt al de Langdon-Davies: "I was tired of politics", escriu Brenan, "especially of

378 Tot i això, el 2 de juny de 1953 s'organitza a Casa Rovira un acte d'afirmació monàrquica, com recull la revista local Ancora, Sant Feliu de Guíxols, 11/6/1953. Amb el titular "La Colonia Britànica en nuestra ciudad celebra la Coronación de Isabel II", la revista comenta aquesta trobada de germanor entre britànics i ganxons. El parlament de Langdon-Davies fou contestat amb versos d'un poeta local que el periodista d'Ancora descriu d'aquesta manera: "A tan gentil peroración, contestó Don José Buhigas con otras palabras no menos simpáticas ni menos pacifistas como es un tema sardanístico, despertando con ellas, todo el entusiasmo que por la Sardana siente Mr. Davies, perfecto bailaror de la misma".

379 G. Brenan, The Face of Spain, Turnstile Press, Londres, 1950.

the hopeless politics of the Peninsula -and wished to give my attention to the more permanent and characteristic features of the country". Per a Brenan, però, l'intent és en va i aviat ha de confesar que "It was with a certain dismay... that I was to find that such an attitude was impossible". Fins i tot acaba per aventurar solucions polítiques per a l'Espanya dels cinquanta, que haurien de passar per la restauració d'una monarquia de "reconciliació nacional" i un règim autoritari d'orientació liberal. Simultàniament, s'hauria d'acabar amb el bloqueig econòmic internacional, que no servia per enderrocar Franco i, en canvi, imposava una situació de misèria general entre la població. The Face of Spain, doncs, sota la forma aparent d'un llibre de viatges, és una crònica de l'Andalusia de la postguerra amb contínues observacions i testimonis personals de l'"abans" i el "després" de la guerra. Aquest itinerari turístic aparent el presideix permanentment -a les observacions de l'autor i les converses que té amb vencedors i vençuts- l'espectre de la guerra civil. Si no fos perquè la historiografia encara no havia incorporat el concepte, The Face of Spain seria considerada la primera "història oral" de la guerra civil espanyola. Malgrat aquesta diferència essencial i els àmbits diferents, els llibres de Brenan i de Langdon-Davies tenen moltes coses en comú i, com a reflexos d'una mateixa època, d'una manera o altra es complementen.

Des de Churriana (Málaga), Brenan li comenta el Gatherings... "a most readable book and I learned a great deal from it -all the more as I have only a passing acquaintance with Catalonia" i remarca algunes coincidències en l'actitud dels pagesos catalans i els andalusos respecte a la religió. Brenan conclou que el llibre "is full of

fascinating things and, I think, very fair and balanced"(380).

En la mateixa carta, Brenan explica els seus plans d'escriure una biografia de Santa Teresa, que ja havia començat els anys 1924-1925, però que se li emportaren els soldats italians després de la invasió de Màlaga, el 1937, convençuts que es tractava d'un document oficial relacionat amb Winston Churchill! També fa referència a la recent publicació del llibre de Josep Ma. Gironella, Los cipreses creen en Dios, del qual ha fet un informe editorial per a un editor anglès. Arran d'això, Brenan ha escrit a Gironella sobre el seu llibre en una carta interessant que fa arribar a Langdon-Davies(381).

380 Carta de Brenan a L-D., 7/7/1953. APLD.

381 La carta adreçada a Gironella és al APLD. Està datada el 23 de juny de 1953. El text íntegre és el següent: "Distinguido Sr.: Acabo de terminar su novela 'Los cipreses creen en Dios'. Es un libro magnífico y lo he leído con un interés y admiración enorme. Lo que más admiro es su objetividad, que me parece casi inconcebible en un falangista -quiero decir, en una persona quien se afilió a un partido que entonces era de los más extremistas y exaltados. En un libro como este, que es realmente un libro de historiador, lo que importa más en el escritor es el amor de la verdad que sólo en estas circunstancias, tan cerca de los hechos, puede salir de un generosidad y de un sentimiento humanos que son muy raros. Aun entre forasteros, la guerra civil española suscitó pasiones más fuertes que las de la guerra europea, y no sé cómo Vd. ha podido dominarlas lo suficiente para ver las cosas tan claras. Creo poder decirle que su libro, como ese admirable poema de Leopoldo Panero, "Canto personal", hará comprender mejor en mi país las ideas nobles y generosas que inspiran a muchos (desdichadamente no a todos) de los que siguen a José Antonio. Si algún día estas ideas vinieran a llevarse a cabo más efectivamente que hoy, España tendrá una gran influencia moral en el mundo.

Pero cómo podrá Vd. seguir su libro y describir la guerra? Dudo que la misma objetividad le sea posible, aún si lo publica Vd. en América. Pasaron tantas cosas terribles, tantos fusilamientos y crueldades inútiles, lo mismo por un lado que por otro, y si a su segundo tomo le falta la verdad desnuda del primero, su libro perderá mucho. Galdós pudo describir la imbecilidad de los Liberales, aunque era Liberal, pero se calló sobre los detalles de la guerra Carlista. Para escribir sobre esta guerra civil se necesitaría la pluma de un Goya. Casi espero que no lo hará Vd., porque hay cosas que es mejor callar. Estamos, desde que se levantaron Lenin, Stalin y Hitler, saciados de horrores.

Para mí la guerra civil era una guerra en que varias ideas y

Els temes més recurrents d'aquesta correspondència, cinc cartes de Brenan durant el període juliol 1953-gener 1954, giren al voltant de qüestions de literatura espanyola i catalana. Langdon-Davies pretén, per exemple, fer que llegeixi la poesia d'Ausiàs Marc i l'obra de Pla. Brenan, però, manifesta que no té l'energia suficient per fer l'esforç ("I read Catalan with effort and would never be able to undertake Pla"). Per la seva banda, Brenan li recomana el "Canto personal", el llarg poema de Leopoldo Panero.

Sovintegen les referències al llibre que Langdon-Davies ha estat preparant durant el darrer any i que té títol decidit: Sex, Sin and Sanctity. Brenan està molt interessat en el tema i, tot i que no pot acceptar de comentar-li el manuscrit ("I am simply too over worked") fa una llarga dissertació sobre la poesia amorosa a l'Edat Mitjana(382).

Un tema més prosaic acaba, però, per dominar la correspondència.

naciones extranjeras lucharon para el alma de Espana. Esto pasa cuando una nación ha estado mucho tiempo durmiendo y ha perdido conciencia de si misma. Se despierta, y no sabe qué hacer. Todas las ideas forasteras le atacan con violencia, porque no tienen en si el poder de ajustarse a la realidad y a la justicia. Y los intelectuales que han debido de ayudarla, han sido por la mayor parte violentos y irresponsables, como por ejemplo Baroja. Un poco de anticlericalismo pasa -es una reacción natural del clericalismo- pero los mismos ateos han podido pensar que atacar a la Iglesia Católica era atacar a Espana. Aquí en Espana ha faltado mucho el respeto para las creencias del vecino. Ha faltado el sentido de la convivencia. Desde luego creo que el intelectual espanol debe interesarse más en los pueblos y en el campo. Ahí están las riquezas espirituales y materiales de Espana, pero hay pocos que las conocen.

Perdone Vd. esta carta tan larga, que se debe a la admiración que suscitó en mí su novela y reciba un afectuoso saludo de su servidor, Gerald Brenan."

382 Carta de Gerald Brenan a L-D. no datada. Probablement el set/oct 1953, APLD.

Els Langdon-Davies necessiten treballadors per a Casa Rovira i Brenan sembla que pot persuadir algú del seu poble, Churriana, per anar a treballar a Sant Feliu. Després de diversos intents que mai no s'acaben de concretar perquè, diu Brenan, "Andalusian are children, change their minds easily, have no formalidad", Langdon-Davies registra al seu dietari: "...A fiasco about the servants promised by poor Gerald Brenan in Málaga. They never came and from December 20th to January 17th we were without any help except an enormous and efficient char"(383)

* * *

Els ajustaments ideològics, familiars i econòmics motivats pel retorn definitiu a Catalunya han acabat i la nova situació ha quedat prou estabilitzada. Les energies d'aquests primers anys s'han concretat en la publicació de Gatherings from Catalonia i la preparació de Sex, Sin and Sanctity, un habitatge definitiu a Sant Feliu, que és alhora un negoci amb bones perspectives, i el segon fill Andrew, que li ha donat la seva jove esposa. El 9 de desembre de 1953, en l'inici d'un nou dietari que Langdon-Davies es proposa escriure, resumeix la situació

383 Dietaris, entrada 29/1/1954. Vegeu Apèndix 6. Com a exemple de les discussions "antropològiques" sobre aquestes operacions fallides servirà un fragment de la carta de Brenan a L-D, 17/10/1953, APLD, que diu: "I've found you a woman of about 45 -not a girl. She is a person who was widowed young and had to maintain herself and her children and going out to wash. She worked in the "best houses" and earned good money and in fact she is quite a superior type. She says she likes cooking and all house work. My "ama de llaves" who is a good judge and has known her over some years approves of her and after half an hour's talk my wife and I both think she is capable, sensible and a decent person. She obviously has excellent health and plenty of vitality, and is cleanly dressed. Wears leather shoes and stockings -a mark of exceptional respectability here. In short I think she will do you if you don't insist on an unmarried woman. Without an older woman to chaperone her, no decent girl or girls would be allowed to go so far from the village. But if you take her, it will be easy to find a young girl to go with her. We have a list of half a dozen candidates..."

lacrònicament: "This will be my final attempt to keep a diary. If I fail again, it will no longer be worth while to try."

I am 56, Patricia 31, Nicholas 3, Andrew 4 months. we have lived at Casa Rovira for a year and a half. I am almost at the end of my book, Sex, Sin and Sanctity. The world is considering a speech by President Eisenhower to the U.N. on atomic energy control. The Spanish papers are only interested in the feast of the Purissima Concepció celebrated yesterday"(384).

Tot i que continuarà vivint a Catalunya durant els anys següents, d'alguna manera la seva obra relacionada amb el país es pot considerar acabada. No apareixen més escrits publicats ni inèdits que augmentin substancialment el corpus literari que ha tingut com a eix vertebrador les relacions de l'autor amb Catalunya, i com a darrera contribució el Gatherings from Catalonia. No es produeix, tampoc, cap nou trasbals ideològic o personal que no sigui el mateix procés d'envelliment. Langdon-Davies presencia des del seu hotel de Sant Feliu el "boom" turístic de la Costa Brava i l'assentament del franquisme sobre la base de la reactivació econòmica dels anys seixanta i la passivitat de la societat catalana en general. Els seus lligams amb el món cultural català queden reduïts, fonamentalment, a les relacions d'amistat amb Josep Pla, Marià Manent i, menys assidus, amb Tomàs Garcès.

Això no obstant, la seva carrera d'escriptor donarà encara molts fruits i ampliarà la seva obra amb projectes nous que augmenten els registres literaris d'una dilatada vida d'escriptor i periodista.

384 Diaris, entrada del 9/12/1953. Vegeu Apèndix.

Procuraré, en una breu cronologia, deixar constància en el capítol següent, del darrer període de la vida de Langdon-Davies.

ELS DARRERS ANYS DE LANGDON-DAVIES

A CATALUNYA (1954 - 1971)

Victor Gollancz, l'editor de Sex, Sin and Sanctity(385) llegeix el manuscrit i anota una colla de discrepàncies, de detall o de concepte, amb l'autor; tot i això es mostra entusiasmat amb el llibre: "I think it is, if I may say so, a very remarkable achievement (and I always tell the truth about these things -this isn't a compliment). It is a book utterly impossible for anyone even remotely interested in such matters to put down: I read it throughout Saturday, and finished it on Sunday morning. There is deep understanding in it, and it wears with a graceful lightness an immense weight of learning and long years of reading"(386). Sembla, doncs, que el treball dels primers anys de la nova etapa a Catalunya té bones perspectives.

Aquesta mena de revisió del seu A Short History of Women (1927) intenta situar la conducta sexual en la perspectiva de diverses civilitzacions i, especialment, de la tradició cristiana i els avenços dels mètodes anticonceptius que s'albiren els anys cinquanta. Les expectatives de l'editor, però, no són confirmades per una crítica que, generalment restringida a revistes especialitzades o religioses, és fins

385 J. Langdon-Davies, Sex, Sin and Sanctity, Gollancz, L'Ondres, 1954, 358 pàgs. El llibre és dedicat a Patricia.

386 Carta de Victor Gollancz a L-D., 8/3/1954. APLD.

i tot en algun cas obertament hostil(387). Això no obstant, el llibre troba el seu públic i dona la suficient reputació a Langdon-Davies perquè rebí futurs encàrrecs de llibres educacionals sobre la conducta sexual.

El mateix any 1954, Langdon-Davies publica un breu assaig titulat The Ethics of Atomic Research(388) en la popular col·lecció dels Casement Booklets. Tot i que es tracta d'una història succinta del descobriment de l'energia atòmica, escrita en el seu millor estil divulgatiu i didàctic, el llibret està marcat per l'evolució ideològica de l'autor, el qual té, precisament, un dels seus punts d'inflexió en l'ús de la bomba atòmica i l'article que el mateix dilluns, 6 d'agost de 1945, ha d'escriure per al Daily Mail en saber-se la notícia. El problema de l'energia atòmica "is not a scientific problem but a political one, perhaps a religious one", escriu Langdon-Davies. Trobem, al final de l'assaig, una afirmació reveladora de les preocupacions del Langdon-Davies dels darrers anys. Definitivament allunyat de la passió que exercí en ell el socialisme científic i desenganyat amb la política de les superpotències i els entrellats de la guerra freda, els seus impulsos humanistes el van apropant a les formulacions característiques

387 Es el cas de John Raymond a The Observer, qui afirma: "The most wrongheaded way of writing about sex is to theorise about it, and this is what Mr. Langdon-Davies never stops doing", "A New Puritan", The Observer, 29/8/1954. Curiosament, un altre editor -Michael Howard, de Jonathan Cape- opinarà molt favorablement sobre el llibre anys més tard, i intentarà reeditar-lo: "It seems still more timely now than perhaps it did eight years ago... We shall certainly consider very seriously the possibilities and ways and means of getting a new edition on the market". La nova edició queda encallada, però, a causa de problemes de drets amb el primer editor, Gollancz. Carta de M. Howard a L.-D., 22/2/1963. APLD.

388 J. Langdon-Davies, The Ethics of Atomic Research, Casement Booklets, núm. 29, Londres, 1954.

del socialisme utòpic: "Perhaps indeed we should be grateful to the scientists who stumbled on, rather than worked to produce, the present terrible dilemma; for their work has set before us, fair and square, the ultimate question: Which is stronger in the world of men, love or hate? If hate, then life will disappear amid the incandescence of a new star; if love, then further research will remove from humanity its age-long burdens of toil, poverty, disease and premature death"(389).

Abans d'acabar l'any, Langdon-Davies rep una notícia que per força té de mal assimilar: la seva primera esposa, Connie, amb qui havia vingut a Ripoll els anys vint, se sufcida el 13 de desembre. El seu fill primogènit, Peter, li'n fa saber els detalls: "My dear father: My mother died early this morning and it is quite clear from the circumstances that it was a suicide by gas poisoning". Ja feia temps que Connie estava malalta i que patia alteracions nervioses. Vivia sola i la cuidava una infermera. A la mateixa carta, Peter conclou: "This is the most terribly sad thing I can ever imagine happening. I cannot bear to think of my mother who I loved so much and who had so many friends dying alone in this way"(390).

No és estrany que, amb l'impacte d'aquesta notícia tan recent, Langdon-Davies faci un balanç poc optimista de l'any transcorregut. A l'entrada del que serà el seu darrer intent d'escriure un dietari, l'1 de gener de 1955, anota: "Superficially at least the year opens in gloom for us... My own depression will not lift. This morning I woke to

389 Ibid., pàgs. 33-34.

390 Carta de Peter Langdon-Davies a John Langdon-Davies, 13/12/1954. APLD.

remember it was New Year's Day and then the thought thrust itself forward that on November 11th 1918 I went with another man and two girls to an Armistice Celebration. Now the other man, C.E.M. Joad(391) has died terribly with cancer of the prostate and both the girls ended their lives with their heads in gas ovens. Vera Meynell and poor Connie; how different they were. In both cases their sons found them... Highlights of 1954 -the slaughter of my Sex, Sin and Sanctity by Mr. John Raymond et al; -the highly successful season of Casa Rovira; -the New American Library and Seeds of Life; -Dingwall's(392) visit; -the telepathy of Asunción, Eusebia y María; -Connie's death".

Hi ha, també, altres records ("-picnics alone with Nicholas;-sardanas; -Patricia's birthday party; -Andrew begins to walk; -Aldous Huxley's Doors of Perception"), que li permeten una valoració global de l'any: "1954 was in many ways the happiest year yet, but with some heavy shadows".

Hi trobem, finalment, una constatació important en aquesta última entrada. Langdon-Davies abandona els dietaris i comença a pensar a escriure, si de cas, reminiscències de personalitats que ha conegut i en una nova i definitiva autobiografia: "It is laughable to be beginning a diary once more! I shall perhaps do better if I remember that at my time of life diaries should be reminiscences rather than recordings. Perhaps I shall really get down to my biographies of contemporaries. Yes reminiscences rather than recordings. I have begun to have an old mind,

391 Vegeu retrat literari de C.E.M. Joad a l'Apèndix 7.4.

392 Vegeu retrat literari de Dingwall a l'Apèndix 7.3 i 7.4.

with the past more vivid than the present..."(393).

De moment, però, els anys següents, Langdon-Davies dedica la major part de les seves energies a un tema nou: la percepció extrasensorial. Descobreix, casualment, que una cuinera de Casa Rovira té poders de telepatia i endevinació; l'autor prepara una sèrie d'experiments amb cartes de joc, en les quals la jove andalusa registra uns percentatges d'endevinació clarament anormals, cosa que anima Langdon-Davies a investigar aquestes qüestions(394). Un famós psicòleg que s'ha especialitzat en aquests fenòmens, el doctor E.J. Dingwall, director de The American Society for Psychical Research, ve a Sant Feliu a ratificar els experiments de Langdon-Davies, que aquest descriu a Extrasensory Perception among Peasant European Populations(395). També J.B Rhine, director de The Parapsychology Laboratory, a la universitat de Carolina del Nord, als EUA, segueix els treballs de Langdon-Davies i mantenen una correspondència continuada entre els anys 1955 y 1958. Dingwall i Langdon-Davies preparen conjuntament un llibre sobre parapsicologia i fenòmens de percepció extra-sensorial clarament adreçat al lector no especialitzat. De l'edició de butxaca de Unknown, Is it Nearer?(396) se n'imprimeixen 400.000 exemplars.

393 Diaris, entrada 1/1/1955. Vegeu Apèndix 6.

394 Les proves de Casa Rovira són ratificades en unes sessions a casa dels Manent, a les quals participen diversos membres de la família Manent, juntament amb Max Cahner. Vegeu carta de L-D. a Marià Manent, 9/12/1955. APLD.

395 Comunicació de Langdon-Davies al "Ciba Foundation Symposium on Extrasensory Perception", Londres, 1956.

396 E.J. Dingwall i J. Langdon-Davies, The Unknown, Is it Nearer?, Signet Key Book, The New American Library, Nova York, 1956, 160 pàgs. Vegeu el retrat d'E.J. Dingwall amb referències en aquest llibre a l'Apèndix 7.4.

De l'entusiasme de Langdon-Davies sobre aquests temes durant aquells anys en tenim una subtil evocació de Marià Manent. L'autor d'El vel de maia rememora un dinar que comparteix amb l'anglès i l'amic comú, Josep Pla:

"Durant una bona estona, la conversa es referí a uns experiments que, amb gran entusiasme científic, realitzava Langdon-Davies sobre la 'E.P.', sigla que, traduïda de l'anglès, vol dir: 'Percepció Extrasensorial'. Era, en realitat un text per comprovar la possibilitat de la transmissió del pensament. Els experimentadors s'asseien, encarats, i cadascun d'ells tenia un imprès on apuntava la seva reacció quan el company li adreçava el fluid mental. Langdon-Davies va descriure els èxits de les seves provatures, i allargà, potser desmesuradament, les teories sobre la possibilitat de percepcions en les quals els sentits no tenen cap intervenció. Tot d'una, Josep Pla es mirà fit a fit l'escriptor anglès, clogué encara una mica més els ulls, i li va dir, molt pausadament: 'Vós sou un home magnífic, però ho serieu encara més si no diguéssiu aquestes coses'. En rigor, Pla no va dir "aquestes coses": aplicà un mot gruixut que utilitzava amb freqüència per designar niciezes evidents o imaginacions desgavellades i absurdes"(397).

Sigui per la contundent exhortació de Pla a favor del sentit comú o

397 M. Manent, "Amb Josep Pla i Langdon-Davies", La Vanguardia, Barcelona, 25/11/1986.

sigui per altres raons, el cas és que Langdon-Davies torna ben aviat a conrear els treballs seriosos de divulgació científica que li han donat fins ara la reputació més sòlida i popular. Així, el 1957, dedica als seus fills(398), Seeds of Life, The Story of Sex in Nature from the Amoeba to Man(399), un tractat didàctic sobre els mecanismes sexuals i de reproducció que es produeixen a la natura, amb un capítol dedicat especialment a la sexualitat de l'home. Potser, com fa notar un crític(400), la manca d'il·lustracions en un text d'aquest tipus fa perdre eficàcia a Seeds of Life.

El 1960 publica el que ha de ser el seu darrer assaig de divulgació científica. La primera part de Man, The Known and the Unknown(401) és un repàs als avenços que la biologia, les teories de l'evolució i l'adaptació de l'home al seu entorn han sofert paral·lelament a l'aprofundiment del coneixement científic. La resta del llibre és dedicada a argumentar la conveniència de l'aplicació dels mètodes científics a tots els fenòmens considerats "paranormals", ja que l'autor es mostra convençut que els avenços futurs de la humanitat hauran de fonamentar-se en la comprensió i control de la ment humana, més que no pas en el domini de la realitat "física" dels fenòmens naturals. El

398 A més de Nicholas i d'Andrew, el matrimoni ha tingut una nena, Debbie i el darrer fill, James.

399 J. Langdon-Davies, Seeds of Life, The Story of Sex in Nature from the Amoeba to Man, Watts, Londres, 1957, 172 pàgs. Hi ha edició americana a The New American Library, Nova York, 1957.

400 T.H. Hawkins escriu: "Presumably, the form of the book has been dictated by economy; one fails to see how the publisher hopes to sell it in competition with the well known cheap paper-backs which are copiously illustrated", Nature, Londres, 27/7/1957.

401 J. Langdon-Davies, Man, The Known and the Unknown, Secker and Warburg, Londres, 1960, 226 pàgs. L'edició americana és On the Nature of Man, Mentor Books, The New American Library, Nova York, 1961.

llibre combina la claredat expositiva amb la capacitat per despertar polèmica i suggerir noves qüestions, característica de les seves millors obres d'aquest tipus, i aconsegueix, com diu el Times Literary Supplement, ser un "stimulating and wide-ranging book"(402).

Ara bé, potser el més interessant i revelador del llibre són, de cara als nostres propòsits, les primeres pàgines de la introducció. Langdon-Davies, superats ja els 60 anys, fa un balanç d'allò que ha marcat la seva generació i específicament a ell, interrelacionant els desenvolupaments científics amb els gran trasbalsos històrics. Són unes pàgines testimoniales i un al·legat contra els reduccionismes que han provocat la confiança excessiva en el racionalisme (The Age of Reason). Reverberen en aquestes pàgines les desil·lusions del militant humanista i progressista i la preocupació per formular un nou humanisme capaç de conviure i sobreviure en l'era de l'energia nuclear. Val la pena citar-les íntegrament:

"You have heard, no doubt, of the Lost Generation of the 1920's, the one which grew up with the century, its beginning so fitly marked by the death of Queen Victoria and the coming of the Edwardian era. It is the generation to which I belong.

Insofar as we 'were' lost and have never yet found ourselves -and I suppose this perpetual state of being lost is true of some of us- it was put down to the spiritual havoc wrought by the First World War. That war rooted up landmarks. It left us marooned without signposts in a featureless desert, covered with broken faiths, abandoned hopes, lost illusions.

402 "The Way Ahead", TLS, 10/2/1961, pàg. 91.

So the story goes.

Yet we have not had a Lost Generation after the Second World War. Except for a few Angry Young Men, the generation of the 1950's does not consider itself let down by the universe, as some of us may have done now and then.

I do not think these tired decades can be put down solely to wars. After all, there have been peoples simultaneously warlike and intellectually energetic -the Athenians, the Romans, the Napoleonic French. There must have been some others factors, since tiredness is not an inevitable aftermath of war, anymore than is world-wide influenza. What sapped our vitality was something more fundamental, and there is no doubt at all what it was.

It was the third hammer-blow of modern science against the dignity of man -a final insult added to previous insults. We were not, of course, individually conscious of this; but it poisoned the spiritual atmosphere and debilitated us as a little unsuspected carbon monoxide may do.

The first hammer-blow had been the new physics, or, to give it a better name, the new celestial mechanics, created by the great men from Galileo to Newton. This had torn us away from the centre of the universe, and placed us, disinherited machines, on a remote and inconspicuous star. Worse still, their successors showed that the universe itself was running down. No longer was the world a playground invented for our particular delight, or even a training ground where we could qualify for future delight, but a prison in which we, like everything else, lay doomed to destruction by unalterable laws

of energy-decay.

Neither Galileo nor Newton, of course, would have accepted this implication of their work. They clung to compensating superstitions, but, as we became more and more enlightened, the superstitions dropped away, leaving us but dust doomed to return to dust, and without hope of resurrection on another day.

Next there had been the new biology, which, for all the brave Victorian effort to saddle the nightmare, Evolution, with the trappings of necessary progress, pulled man down from his throne, a little lower than the angels, and set him on the bare ground, a beast among beasts, the product of a ruthless struggle for existence and doomed to continue the struggle, until the second law of thermodynamics in its infinite mercy should release the tired universe from the burden of sustaining any life at all.

And then in our own time came the third hammer-blow: the 'new' psychology. Hitherto mankind had been left one illusion. Condemned to annihilation we might be, but at last we could retain our dignity, and remain bloody but unbowed. We had lost our dreams, but we had what was almost divine -our reason. We could hope to learn at long last how to follow the dictates of reason and thereby to keep a good opinion of ourselves. We might be dust on stardust, we might be the product of inevitable jungle-law -so much the more cause for pride had we, that into this dungeon universe, prisoners though we were, we had smuggled a little lamp of our own invention to throw light and disperse shadows.

Then Freud blew out the light.

Our reasons for action were no more than rationalizations thought up afterwards to justify our insatiable longing to play with dirt. The tree of knowledge had yielded us bitter fruit, man was a Yahoo playing with dirt till a machine called the Universe ran down and stopped.

To illustrate in precise terms the view of human nature most commonly held at this time, let me quote from the philosopher who had most influence on my generation when it was young -Bertrand Russell:

'That man is the product of causes which had no prevision of the end they were achieving; that his origin, his growth, his hopes and fears, his loves and his beliefs, are but the outcome of accidental collocations of atoms; that no fire, no heroism, no intensity of thought and feeling, can preserve individual life beyond the grave; that all the labours of the ages, all the devotion, all the inspiration, all the noonday brightness of human genius, are destined to extinction in the vast death of the solar system, and that the whole temple of man's achievement must inevitably be buried beneath the debris of a universe in ruins -all these things, if not quite beyond dispute, are yet so nearly certain that no philosophy which rejects them can hope to stand.

Only within the scaffolding of these truths, only on the firm foundation of unyielding despair, can the soul's habitation be safely built... Such in outline but even more purposeless, more void of meaning is the world which Science presents for our belief'.

Here you have in a paragraph the sum of wisdom as it seemed to the intelligent young man setting out on his individual voyage of discovery in the 1920's. This is all that the achievements of reason throughout the ages had to offer him.

Very soon came the 'pay-off'. The best educated nation on earth relapsed into mass hysteria out of which came Auschwitz and Belsen and other unspeakable horrors. The most scientific ideology -in the eyes of its professors at least- produced purges, exiles, Lisenko, brain-washing. Britain and the USA released nuclear power and immediately used it for mass destruction.

Thirty years have gone by since humanity touched bottom in its descent into logically proved despair, and the interval has been spent in reaping the whirlwind. And now on every side there are signs that people are recovering. It is no longer taken as evident that pessimism is the inevitable result of honest thought about man's nature. There is a new look about physics, about biology, about psychology. The Cult of insignificance and Futility is no longer unchallenged by scientists themselves. Of course this is not all good, since we see old superstitions holding up their heads again, a new obscurantism seeking to lead back to an Age of Faith which can never return; but also we see that people have begun to believe that just as the Age of Faith gave way before the so called Age of Reason, so the Age of Reason must give way before a new Age of Sanity.

Let us frankly admit that the Age of Reason has given us

no more excuse for optimism about our future or about the future of the Universe than does, in retrospect, the Age of Faith; and then let us see whether all kinds of faith and hope are really as idle as they have often seemed. And perhaps if faith and hope can be rehabilitated, their sister, charity, may be revived also; and that, after all, is the chief need now that men have thermonuclear powers of destruction at their elbows"(403).

Durant els anys seixanta, Langdon-Davies consolida la fórmula de l'"hòteller", que li permet de passar una llarga temporada d'estiu a la Costa Brava i la resta de l'any a Anglaterra -on estan escolaritzats els fills-, dedicat a preparar noves publicacions. Els seus lligams amb el món intel·lectual anglès es limiten a les relacions amb diversos editors, la permanent correspondència amb el vell professor de Tonbridge, Huguere Vere Hodge, les freqüents trobades amb la novel·lista Rebecca West, que ja havia passat unes vacances a casa Rovira l'any 1955, i l'esparsa correspondència amb Gerald Brenan.

En certa manera, amb Man, the Known and the Unknown, l'autor abandona la seva obra de divulgació científica, si n'exceptuem un típic llibre d'encàrrec amb finalitats educatives, The Facts of Sex(404), un llibre molt ben acollit per la crítica que es publica el 1969, i del qual se n'haurà de fer una edició de butxaca el 1972, la qual ell ja no podrà veure.

403 Man, the Known and the Unknown, op. cit., pàgs. 9-12.

404 J. Langdon-Davies, The Facts of Sex, McGibbon and Kee, Londres, 1969, 142 pàgs., i en edició de butxaca a Panther Books, Granada Publishing Ltd., Londres, 1972.

De tota manera, Langdon-Davies inicia nous projectes que marcaran la seva activitat durant aquests darrers anys d'una manera importantíssima. Es dedica, ara, intensament a la investigació de temes històrics, la qual cosa dóna un nou registre a la versàtil i prolífica obra de l'escriptor. Els primers treballs d'aquesta nova etapa es publiquen el 1962 i tindran conseqüències decisives de cara a la seva activitat posterior.

El primer treball que té a punt de publicació prové d'una curiosa i llarga gestació. Quan l'hivern de 1940, Langdon Davies recorria el país fent conferències sobre les tècniques de guerrilla a les unitats de la Home Guard, solia entretenir el temps lliure buscant materials a les llibreries de vell per a la seva col·lecció de pamflets radicals. En una d'aquelles ocasions, a Edinburg, el llibreter li oferí una carpeta sobre l'anomenada "Cato Street Conspiracy". Contenia diversos gravats, articles periodístics de l'època i la reproducció facsimil de les "últimes paraules" que els conspiradors havien escrit a requeriment del seu advocat defensor, Mr. Adolphus.

La troballa despertà l'interès de Langdon-Davies sobre aquesta conspiració descoberta el 23 de febrer de 1820 en un estable de Cato Street, un carrer lateral d'Edgware Road de Londres. Els conspiradors, personatges miserables, pràcticament analfabets, encara que abrandats per les idees radicals de les classes treballadores durant els anys negres posteriors a la batalla de Waterloo, pretenien assassinar la totalitat del govern de Sa Majestat, George IV, que era en un sopar a casa de Lord Harrowby, a Grosvenor Square. Un cop detinguts, són

empresonats a la Torre de Londres, i cinc d'ells, penjats i decapitats públicament davant la presó de Newgate. El 1950, Langdon-Davies ja va publicar un article sobre aquest episodi, tractat sempre molt de passada per la historiografia anglesa, amb el títol de "The Cato Street Conspiracy"(405).

Finalment, el 1962, Langdon-Davies publica amb el mateix títol el seu llibre sobre la qüestió. Temerós que la seva reputació de periodista allunyi el seu treball dels cercles acadèmics, publica The Cato Street Conspiracy(406) amb el pseudònim de "John Stanhope". És una bona idea i el llibre és rebut amb interès especial pels historiadors d'influència marxista, els quals celebren l'oportunitat d'aprofundir en la història dels moviments radicals i les classes treballadores. Tot i que hi detecten un enfocament insuficientment contextualitzat, massa centrat en el mateix judici i les personalitats dels conspiradors, historiadors de prestigi, com E.P. Thompson(407), Michael Foot(408) o E.J. Hobsbawm(409) s'ocupen de l'obra d'aquest historiador "anònim".

D'altra banda, l'obra de Langdon-Davies servirà de base documental

405 J. Langdon-Davies, "The Cato Street Conspiracy", John O'London's Weekly, 14/4/1950.

406 Ibid., The Cato Street Conspiracy, Jonathan Cape, Londres 1962, 190 pàgs. Langdon-Davies torna, doncs, a publicar amb Cape, els editors del seu Dancing Catalans (1929).

407 E.P. Thompson, "Citizens, Advance", Peace News, 7/12/1962.

408 M. Foot, "Plot and Counter-Plot over Walnuts and Wine", Tribune, 9/11/1962. Foot relaciona aquesta forma de protesta desesperada del "lumpenproletariat" amb l'actitud crítica contra el mateix govern dels poetes Shelley i Byron o dels líders polítics Hazlitt i Cobett, que contribueixen a mantenir viva "the cause of English freedom in the teeth of desperate odds".

409 E.J. Hobsbawm, "Assassins", New Statesman, 4/1/1963.

al dramaturg Robert Shaw per a la seva Cato Street, una adaptació al teatre que s'estrena al Young Vic de Londres el novembre de 1971 amb Vanessa Redgrave de primera actriu en una de les típiques interpretacions "militants" que li donaren celebritat durant els anys seixanta.

Quasi simultàniament amb l'aparició de The Cato Street Conspiracy, el mateix editor, Jonathan Cape, treu un altre llibre d'història amb pseudònim. Langdon-Davies, que signa ara "John Nada", publica Carlos, The Bewitched (The Last Spanish Hapsburg, 1661-1700)(410), un estudi biogràfic de Carles II que aconseguix una major difusió que el llibre anterior i diverses edicions i traduccions a d'altres llengües(411). Com en el cas de Cato Street, l'obra esdevé també una de les fonts documentals de Peter Barnes, que estrena The Bewitched, amb la Royal Shakespeare Company a l'Aldwych Theatre de Londres, el maig de 1974.

Gerald Brenan escriu als editors del llibre per saber qui s'amaga darrera aquest "John Nada" que ha escrit Carlos, The Bewitched i que Brenan ha llegit a Churriana "with great interest" i sobre el qual opina que: "It seems to me an admirable book and contains much material that is new to me. I hope it will sell as well it deserves to"(412).

410 John Nada, Carlos, The Bewitched, The Last Spanish Hapsburg, 1661-1700, Jonathan Cape, Londres, 1962, 272 pàgs.

411 Hi ha, efectivament, edició americana sense pseudònim, Carlos, the King who would not die, Pentice Hall, Englewood Cliffs, Nova York, 1963; i traduccions a l'alemany, Karl Der Behexte, P.Z. Verlag, Hamburg, 1963; i al castellà, Carlos II, el Hechizado, Lluís de Caralt, Barcelona, 1968.

412 Carta de Gerald Branan a Michael Howard, director literari de Jonathan Cape, 23/5/62. Còpia tramesa per Howard a Langdon-Davies, al APLD.

Assabentat de la identitat de l'autor, Brenan reprén la correspondència amb Langdon-Davies per felicitar-lo per l'"splendid book" i animar-lo en el nou projecte "històric": una biografia de Felip IV que hauria de ser una seqüela de l'anterior(413).

Tots els nous projectes, però, queden estroncats quan comença a agafar forma una idea que sorgeix inicialment d'una manera gairebé casual. Quan l'editorial Jonathan Cape planeja la promoció de The Cato Street Street Conspiracy, li envien la reproducció facsimil de diversos documents i gravats de l'època per anunciar l'aparició imminent del llibre. A Langdon-Davies se li acut que una presentació semblant de temes històrics podria ser molt atractiva i útil per als estudiants. Comenta aquesta intuïció amb un professor d'escola secundària, el qual li confirma l'interès del projecte i ben aviat formalitza la proposta dels "Jackdaws" al seu editor. La nova aventura té un èxit enorme i manté Langdon-Davies ocupat quasi exclusivament amb els "Jackdaws" des de 1963 fins a final de la dècada. Un èxit tan extraordinari s'explica, potser, per les característiques d'un projecte que sintetitza perfectament la recerca acadèmica amb les qualitats de pedagog natural que tothom reconeix a Langdon-Davies.

L'autor entreveu de seguida les possibilitats que té la idea, i la primera presentació formal del projecte a l'editor ja en preveu les implicacions d'expansió i de futur. Les idees bàsiques que Langdon-Davies especifica a l'editor són les següents:

"1. The dossiers should from the start be planned as a

413 Carta de Brenan a L-D., 7/9/1962, APLD.

continuing and expanding series, with about twenty-five titles coming out during the first year and objective of some hundred titles in five years. There should be ten published together to start the venture off.

2. A symbol should be chosen to identify the whole venture in the public mind as with 'Penguins'. I suggest, as the series will be a collection of oddments, that 'jackdaw' might be a suitable symbol. Each dossier would be 'A Jackdaw Collection of Original Documents'.

3. The container would have this title on the lower margin and the distinctive word History in a distinctive colour, say red, in the top left corner. This would prepare for a possible expansion of the idea into other subjects e.g. Geography a green series, or Art a blue series.

4. Each dossier should contain ten facsimiles, where possible in colour. Of these, one should be poster size and one, when possible, a facsimile of a contemporary newspaper.

5. Besides these there should be a text of about eight thousand words in typescript on separable sheets, each sheet being self-contained so that the teacher, if he wishes, can distribute them to separate boys or groups to prepare for conveying the subject matter to the classe as a whole"(414).

Langdon Davies proposa els primers deu temes: Trafalgar; Plague and Fire of London; Gunpowder Plot; The Armada; Columbus; Battle of Hastings; Waterloo; The First Steam-engine; Highwaymen; Shakespeare Acts

414 Carta de L-D. a Michael Howard, de Jonathan Cape, 26/11/1962. APLD.

in his Own Play. En tot cas, la idea inicial així desenvolupada aconsegueix un èxit de públic i de crítica immediat. El 1966 s'ha de crear una editorial independent, la Jackdaw Publications Ltd. L'acte de presentació se celebra a la Torre de Londres amb l'assistència del ministre d'Educació laborista, Anthony Crossland(415). El 1970 ja s'han editat 100 títols de la sèrie i se n'han venut més d'un milió d'unitats a tots els països de parla anglesa.

Quan Michael Howard escriu la història dels primers cinquanta anys de l'editorial Cape no oblida aquesta brillant operació, que suposà canvis radicals i poc convencionals en la tradició de la casa. Howard recorda que: "Langdon-Davies had been trained under Stefan Lorant in the first year of Picture Post. He believed strongly in a visual rather than a literary approach to learning, and had been impressed by the evident dislike shown by the younger generation for books in the traditional form. He showed the wallet to a schoolmaster friend, Raymond Groom, who immediately remarked that collections of that kind would be a splendid aid to teaching history. Langdon-Davies then conceived the idea of a series of such dossiers..."

415 Vegeu M. Howard, Jonathan Cape, Publisher, Cape, Londres, 1971. Michael Howard valora la significativa presència de Crossland a l'acte: "It is unusual for a minister to speak at a commercial function. When Graham invited Anthony Crossland to do so he sent him some sample Jackdaws as witness to their educational value. As the party date drew near and no reply had been received from Crossland, Graham telephoned his private secretary, who said it would not be proper for the minister to lend support to the promotion of an individual publication; but that he would look into the matter and find out why no answer had been sent. An hour later the secretary reported that the minister had taken the samples home to show his children, and would like to send a dispatch rider to collect another set, which was duly sent round to the ministry. After another hour the secretary telephoned again. He said, 'It's absolute chaos here, with Jackdaws all over the floor. Everybody is looking at them, and the minister has said yes, he will do it. It is most improper, and I really can't advise him to, but he insists'. Such is the persuasive power of Jackdaws.", pàg 296.

Així, els editors que anys enrera s'havien deixat escapar Animal Farm d'Orwel per "raons patriòtiques", aposten ara per una aventura inicialment arriscada però que en la perspectiva actual representa l'antecedent més notable de la implantació dels mitjans àudio-visuals en el sistema educatiu. Howard rememora els petits detalls de la gestació dels "Jackdaws":

"The obvious parallel between this venture into popular educational publishing and the success of Penguins and Pelicans, together with the propensity of Jackdaws for collecting oddments, prompted Langdon-Davies to suggest that name for his collection. It was adopted, and we all set to work. The first Jackdaw, The Battle of Trafalgar, was published with two others on December 2nd, 1963. Three more were almost ready, and the wallets carried on the back a list of some forty subjects which were to be included in the series. These were announced as being "in preparation", a bluff to discourage immediate imitation; for although we could protect the name and trade-mark, we could find no way to patent the idea of Jackdaws, and until the first six had been tested out the series remained little more than a list of ideas. But although the sales were initially pitifully small we went ahead, and Langdon-Davies compiled half of the projected titles. By then it was clear that the idea held such possibilities of expansion that we should enlist other compilers. The range of subjects has widened to include Science, Geography and Literature, and in History extends now

from the early Egyptians to the assassination of President Kennedy. By 1966 Jackdaws had become so well established as a new form of publishing that it was time for Jackdaw Publications Limited to be constituted as a separate company"(416).

Un cop consolidada l'experiència dels Jackdaws, Langdon-Davies continua treballant en nous projectes literaris. A partir de 1966 se'n concreten tres. En primer lloc, un llibre monogràfic sobre les seves experiències de la guerra civil espanyola aprofitant escrits inèdits i reflexions amb la perspectiva dels 30 anys que han passat d'ençà 1936. No troba cap editor prou entusiasmats i el projecte queda reduït als escrits que s'apleguen a l'Apèndix i a l'edició pòstuma, en català, de La Setmana Tràgica de 1937(417).

D'altra banda, prepara una sèrie d'apunts literaris d'una dotzena de personatges del món intel·lectual que ha conegut al llarg de la seva vida. Aquests retrats breus havien d'aparèixer setmanalment al New Statesman. Finalment, però, restaren inèdits(418).

El tercer projecte frustrat és la seva autobiografia definitiva. A part de la publicada el 1934, Then a Soldier, Langdon-Davies ha treballat sovint en escrits autobiogràfics més o menys dispersos. A

416 Jonathan Cape, Publisher, op. cit., pàgs. 294-295.

417 Op. cit., Barcelona, 1987.

418 Són aplegat a l'Apèndix 7.5. La llista de personatges inclou H.G. Wells, Lytton Strachey, E.M. Foster, E.J. Dingwall, M. Muggeridge, J. Murray, W. Bernstein, Lord Redesdale, G. Cannan, Middleton Murry, C.E.M. Joad.

partir de 1968 es proposa aplegar-los, ordenar-los i reescriure una versió definitiva. El plan inicial preveu onze capítols dels quals només pot completar-ne els sis primers, que cobreixen la seva vida fins al 1924. L'obra, doncs, queda incompleta i inèdita(419).

En realitat, i en una mostra última de la fatalitat que ha patit reiteradament en la seva dilatada vida d'escriptor professional, les úniques obres que es publiquen són resultat de dos encàrrecs: The Facts of Sex, que ja hem mencionat, i una guia turística d'Espanya, Spain(420), que inclou una sèrie d'interessants reflexions sobre els efectes del turisme a Catalunya i que serà la seva darrera obra publicada.

D'ençà de 1960, quan comença a passar els hiverns a Sevenoaks (Kent) i les temporades d'estiu a Casa Rovira de Sant Feliu, la seva salut s'ha anat deteriorant. Langdon-Davies pateix un enfisema i una bronquitis crònica. A partir de 1969, una insuficiència en el sistema nerviós li provoca una paràlisi de les extremitats que el condemna a dependre d'una cadira de rodes i a haver de dictar els llibres a la seva esposa Patricia durant gairebé dos anys.

L'estiu de 1970 es traslladen de Sevenoaks a una casa de Shoreham, el poble del costat, on John Langdon-Davies mor el diumenge 5 de desembre de 1971, als 74 anys. El seu cos és incinerat al crematori de la plàcida estació termal de Tunbridge Wells. Els obituaris dels diaris

419 Aquests sis primers capítols i el pla inicial de l'obra són a l'APLD.

420 J. Langdon-Davies, Spain, B.T. Batsford, Londres, 1971, 209 pàgs.

li dediquen epítets que revelen l'amplitud dels seus interessos i la seva activitat: "M.B.E., anthropologist, popular lecturer, author, journalist, broadcaster, sociologist..." The Times el recorda com un "born popularizer, with a gift for making abstract subjects clear and simple"(421) i algú, cinc dies després, fa notar que a la nota biogràfica han oblidat que "He was the instigator of a Series which has been called the most highly original publishing idea since the foundation of Pennguin Books: Jackdaws"(422).

Amb tot, potser la definició més penetrant d'aquesta personalitat fascinant i prolífica la dona el mateix Langdon-Davies quan, a la introducció de l'autobiografia incompleta escriu: "I call myself a Quaker not only because I was received into the Society of Friends as a very young man but also because I do not believe that any violence solves any problem or even helps to solve them; an agnostic because I do not believe in any dogma or doctrine of any faith; a bourgeois because I am one; anarchist because I am of the left yet feel that a Marxist revolution only produces a Stalin out of a line of Czars"(423).

Una confessió serena i sincera de la suma de contradiccions, preocupacions i passions que han mogut els fils d'una vida agitada pels idealismes i lligada indissolublement a la història intel·lectual-terrible i vertiginosa- de l'Europa d'aquest segle.

421 The Times, 8/12/1971

422 The Times, 13/12/1971.

423 De l'autobiografia inèdita. APLD.

LES FONTS

L'estiu de 1983, la senyora Patricia Langdon-Davies, viuda de l'autor, va tenir l'amabilitat de posar els papers del seu marit a la meua disposició. A més d'una bibliografia gairebé completa de Langdon-Davies i una part de la seva biblioteca personal, hi havia, dispersos en una sèrie de caixes, els escrits no publicats de l'autor, una sèrie de dietaris del període 1948-1955, la correspondència que s'havia conservat, moltes fotografies, una considerable quantitat de retalls de premsa relacionats amb la seva obra i una miscel·lània de papers personals. Aquest conjunt de documents, actualment ordenat, constitueix l'Arxiu Patricia Langdon-Davies(APLD), que ha estat la base fonamental del meu treball.

Aquestes fonts documentals han estat completades amb les referències a l'autor, aparegudes en altres llibres, revistes o diaris, que es van citant en el curs del treball. Una font de consulta bàsica l'ha constituït la Newspaper Room de la British Library, traslladada d'un temps ençà a Collindale, Londres. Aquesta hemeroteca ha estat essencial per recuperar articles de Langdon-Davies, editats en diverses publicacions periòdiques, així com per completar les recensions i crítiques dels seus llibres.

En relació al període de la guerra civil i la participació

britànica, la col·lecció més exhaustiva és la que es conserva a la Marx Memorial Library, a Clerkenwell Green, Londres. Ha estat especialment útil de cara a les qüestions relacionades amb el Partit Comunista Britànic i la guerra civil. Per a qüestions més parcials i específiques, he pogut consultar, també, l'Arxiu Orwell, de l'University College de la Universitat de Londres.

Un problema inevitable ha estat no poder equilibrar l'evident desproporció entre les cartes rebudes per l'autor i les que ell mateix va escriure. Això no obstant, n'he pogut recuperar algunes d'interès considerable, adreçades al seu fill Robin, al seu amic H. Vere Hodge, a Hugh Thomas i a Marià Manent. Langdon-Davies va decidir conservar, d'altra banda, còpies d'algunes de les cartes que adreçà als seus editors.

Finalment, per complementar les referències escrites, he recollit el testimoni oral de persones que tractà l'autor. A nivell familiar, el fonamental de la seva viuda i el dels fills dels seus tres matrimonis (set, en total). Ha estat especialment útil el del seu segon fill, Robin Langdon-Davies, actualment resident a Bristol. D'entre els amics catalans, el més important ha estat el de Marià Manent, juntament amb el de l'ex-alcalde de Sant Feliu de Guíxols, Vicenç Gandol i el de la senyora Cristina Casanova, viuda de Ramon Casanova.

A part de les referències bibliogràfiques que apareixen a les notes, he inclòs una relació completa de la bibliografia de l'autor i una selecció de la bibliografia de treball que m'ha semblat d'un abast més general.

ELS APÈNDIXS

Els Apèndixs que s'inclouen en aquest treball són, al meu entendre, una part substancial i fonamental de la recerca. D'una banda, com s'observa en el primer volum de la tesi, constitueixen una font de la qual he extret, freqüentment, dades indispensables per vertebrar el mateix treball. D'altra banda, cal no oblidar que la majoria d'escrits provenen d'un arxiu particular, on han romàs inèdits i desordenats durant els darrers quinze anys. En altres paraules, es tracta d'uns materials que, essent rellevants per al treball en qüestió, tenen un interès per ells mateixos que justifica plenament el fet de posar-los més a l'abast de futurs investigadors.

Fora dels 3.1, 3.2, 4.2 i 4.5, tots són inèdits i han estat seleccionats i transcrits directament dels manuscrits originals. Aquests quatre casos són transcripcions d'articles i cròniques sobre l'Espanya republicana (bàsicament la situació a Catalunya), els Fets de Maig de 1937, i sobre els bombardeigs de 1938 a Barcelona aparegudes al News Chronicle (diari ja desaparegut) i a The Listener, que són clarament complementaris de l'obra de Langdon-Davies dedicada a Catalunya i a la guerra civil.

He agrupat els escrits en 7 apèndixs. Llevat del setè, ("Miscel·lània") segueixen una seqüència cronològica i cada apèndix

presenta una certa unitat temàtica.

L'apèndix 1, "Tres viatges", aplega tres manuscrits: "Andorra" (1.1, pàg. 1), la narració incompleta d'un viatge pel Pirineu català i Andorra, escrit probablement l'any 1931 o 1932, però amb reminiscències de la primera estada a Catalunya. El segon manuscrit, "Journal of a Spanish Journey" (1.2, pàg. 27) és el dietari dels 40 dies d'un viatge que Langdon-Davies fa el juliol i agost de 1928 amb la intenció d'observar i registrar les condicions de vida al nord rural d'Espanya. Precedit d'un pròleg, on l'autor especifica els objectius del viatge, és un document que, per més d'un motiu i en la perspectiva dels seixanta anys que han passat, té un notable interès històric. Completa aquest apèndix, "The Open Road" (1.3, pàg. 175), un breu dietari on s'anoten les impressions de l'autor quan, després de dos anys, deixa Sant Feliu de Guíxols el 1928. Només recull anotacions dels primers dies del viatge per les comarques de Girona i s'ha d'entendre com un preludi sentimental al viatge de "recerca" pel nord rural de la península.

"Escrips Americans", el segon apèndix, aplega diversos escrits motivats per les experiències de Langdon-Davies com a conferenciant professional en els circuits dels "Lecture Tours" americans. A més de dues narracions d'ambientació americana, "Flags" (2.2, pàg. 219) i "A Clean Man" (2.3, pàg. 235) s'inclouen tres escrits clarament autobiogràfics -"Primeres Impressions" (2.1, pàg. 211), "Lecture Tours" I i II (2.4, pàg. 273 i 2.5, pàg. 283). Plens de jovialitat i humor ens donen el to del període 1924-1934, durant el qual Langdon-Davies combina els "Lecture Tours" amb la publicació dels llibres. Revelen, sobretot,

la confiança i l'optimisme del jove escriptor, brillant i popular, que viu intensament la consolidació de la seva carrera.

L'apèndix 3 aplega dos aricles que descriuen, analitzen i posen en perspectiva històrica els canvis que suposa la proclamació de la República espanyola i una sèrie de cinc reportatges, especialment interessant perquè foren escrits a poques setmanes de l'esclat de la guerra.

Tant a "The Country of Quixotes" (3.1, pàg. 1) -The Listener, juny 1931- com a "Revolution in the Land of Quixote" (3.2, pàg. 12) -inèdit- es pot apreciar fins a quin punt Langdon-Davies està familiaritzat amb la problemàtica política específicament catalana i amb la personalitat dels principals líders polítics. Els cinc reportatges publicats al News Chronicle de maig a juny de 1936 (3.3, pàg. 44) donen una visió força global i penetrant del procés de radicalització que viu la societat espanyola i de la difícil situació política i social que és a punt d'abocar el país a una guerra civil.

El quart apèndix, "La Guerra Civil", recull una sèrie d'escrits que complementen els dos llibres de Langdon-Davies més directament relacionats amb el tema de la guerra (Behind the Spanish Barricades, 1936 i Air Raid, 1938) i ens ofereixen, doncs, una crònica -ben segur que la més completa d'un observador estranger- de la guerra a Catalunya i de les situacions més rellevants explicades amb l'habilitat del periodista professional i l'apassionament del militant antifeixista que coneix i estima el país.

"A las Barricadas!", 1936 (4.1, pàg. 86), escrit en l'efervescència dels primers mesos és un intent d'explicar al lector anglès el fenomen anarquista a Catalunya i l'especial percepció que les classes treballadores tenen del paper que ha jugat històricament l'església catòlica a Espanya. He inclòs la crònica dels Fets de Maig per al News Chronicle (4.2, pàg. 113) -10 de maig de 1937- no sols perquè és la primera d'un testimoni estranger que es publica a la premsa britànica sinó també per les especials connotacions que delata i que s'analitzen al capítol corresponent. "The Tragic Week", 1937 (4.3, pàg. 124), una anàlisi de la situació a Catalunya els dies anteriors als enfrontaments de la primera setmana de maig, és un manuscrit d'un interès notable pel que significa de contrapunt a les apreciacions d'un altre escriptor anglès, George Orwell, i per les anotacions detallades que conté de tot el que Langdon-Davies observa a partir dels primers trets. "Civil War: Reporting", 1966 (4.4, pàg. 213) és una barreja de fragments autobiogràfics, impressions escrites durant la guerra i reflexions posteriors, que Langdon-Davies començà a estructurar amb la idea de publicar un llibre sobre les seves experiències durant la guerra. Abandonà el projecte, però, i el manuscrit ha quedat inacabat. Clou aquest apèndix un article llarg, publicat a The Listener el 14 de juliol 1938, 4.5, pàg. 278) amb el títol "Bombs over Barcelona". Aquest article sobre els efectes dels terribles bombardeigs del 17 de març a Barcelona causà un impacte considerable en l'opinió pública britànica i va estimular la recerca de mesures preventives contra els bombardeigs aeris en les grans ciutats.

L'apèndix 5, "Reflexions teòriques i autobiogràfiques 1936-1946", conté dos manuscrits (5.1, pàg. 1 i 5.2, pàg. 10) que eren, en realitat,

capítols d'un llibre sobre l'anarco-sindicalisme català que no s'acabà de concretar. "Confession" (5.3, pàg. 28) i "Reflexions de la dècada 1936-1946" (5.4, pàg. 74) són documents fonamentals per entendre la profunda transformació ideològica que pateix Langdon-Davies durant el període que va de l'esclat de la guerra civil a Espanya a l'esclat de la bomba atòmica a Hiroshima.

"Dieteris 1948-1955", l'apèndix 6, és el conjunt de les diverses temptatives d'escriure un dietari seguit que fa Langdon-Davies durant aquest període. Fragmentats, a vegades en pocs dies, a vegades durant uns quants mesos, permeten, però, constatar les preocupacions personals i familiars i les reflexions de l'autor sobre la política, l'Espanya franquista, les seves lectures i, per damunt de tot, les relatives a la seva feina d'escriptor.

Finalment, en l'apèndix 7, "Miscel·lània", he inclòs "Some Catalan Poets", 1922 (7.1, pàg. 240), un breu assaig de divulgació sobre poesia catalana amb algunes traduccions de poemes a l'anglès que escrigué durant la primera estada a Catalunya com a testimoni de la seva amistat amb alguns joves poetes catalans. "Spanish Adventure" (7.2, pàg. 245) i el retrat del psicòleg E.J. Dingwall (7.3, pàg. 274) reflecteixen l'interès pels fenòmens de percepció extra-sensorial que professà durant els anys cinquanta. "Twelve Sketches" (7.4, pàg. 287), uns breus apunts que havia preparat per al New Statesman, però que han romàs inèdits, són una sèrie de breus reminiscències d'intel·lectuals i escriptors britànics que Langdon-Davies tractà amb més o menys intensitat. "Un article no publicat a Destino" (7.5, pàg. 329) és un manuscrit escrit probablement el 1953, ple de observacions sensates sobre la problemàtica

de l'incipient fenomen turistic a la Costa Brava, que coincideix amb la seva retirada per regentar un petit hotel a Sant Feliu de Guixols.

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notes a peu de pàgina)

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A-1: TRES VIATGES

1.1: Andorra

Chapter 2Andorra

So we took ship down the valley, getting out now and then to tread on orchids in tiny fields each a few yards square and bounded by thick walls of stone from the river beds. In the valley of the Carol there is no law of primogenitive and property gets subdivided into a patchwork quilt of small, many flowered remnants of pasture and cultivated land. Through these, finding also tulips and primulas and cowslips, we drove to Bourg Madame and the frontier.

The Carol Valley opens out into the Cerdagne, a wide fertile stretch affording one of the few easy passages between France and Spain. By the treaty of 1669 France pushed her boundary down south of the watershed demanding the cession of all the villages north of the present frontier line. The treaty being signed the town of Llivia to the north of this line said that as it was not a village the treaty did not concern it and that it

would remain Spanish; and to this day it remains a Spanish oasis in French territory joined by a neutral road which we pass on the left. Llivia began to live dangerously a very long time ago; Santiago, who never really came to Spain at all, here first preached to the Jews; in the eighth century the Moors burned its cathedral. Nothing at all happens there now. I myself though I have passed this way a dozen times have never turned aside to see Llivia, and I have copied this information out of a guide book in case the reader being a different kind of person from myself should be interested.

The Cerdagne itself must be one of the most beautiful valleys in the world. It is set between high mountains and was once carved out by a vast glacier. Hence its shape is a gentle U instead of a savage water fashioned V. It has many villages and much yellow corn. Nothing could be prettier than the chess board of green and gold, of hay and half ripe crops in June. Here you will see for the first time the Catalan scarlet cap of liberty waving like an overgrown poppy as some peasant sways in a field with his sickle or his scythe. The barretina, as it is called, is familiar to us upon the head of the French symbol of liberty, having got there in the Revolution when bands of peasant rebels joined the fight

for freedom. To this day the little French Catalan villages on the northern side of the Pyrenees show signs of their eighteenth century enthusiasm, for all the churches bear, scrawled up in red paint, the words Liberté, Egalité, Fraternité. But the barretina is now only worn on the Spanish side. You wear a scarlet one until you become old or a widower and then you wear a purple one. Round your waist you wear a green, scarlet or blue sash and on your feet canvass shoes with rope soles. The mountain shepherd will have on a blue black blouse. Blue shirts and corduroy are very common.

If it is at all possible you should see a sunset from Puigcerdà. The name means peak or head or protuberance of the Cerdagne - the word 'puig' when scrawled up in the temple of the goddess Cloacina is of course a survival of phallic worship - and the town stands up just enough to command the great valley southwards, so that from the terrace whence the motor buses start you can watch the fields glowing in the lengthening light and the early evening colour on the snow. But try to change your money elsewhere since the banks are thieves and the hotels, like loose ladies in the Book of Proverbs, are out to snare the traveller. Enjoy Puigcerdà while you may, it is a frontier town, which you will despise when you have seen the better

things beyond. Learn to call it "poochairdá" with a strong accent on the last syllable, and then you will have learned to speak Catalan, a rare accomplishment for an Englishman or an American.

I doubt if anyone can see the Cerdagne for the first time without wishing to live there. Annual paradise of sun and snow inhabited by an innocent race of peasants. A place to which one may retire to feed on vegetables and beauty, listening to the rustic pipe and drinking wine, forgetting the human errors called London and New York. How do these happy folk live? I happen to know.

Near Puigcerdà there is a farm, the largest in the Cerdagne, belonging to a wealthy capitalist from Barcelona, whose hobby it is. He thought that it might prove an example to the neighbourhood; but the neighbourhood is not impressed. The peasants see new barns put up to hold the larger crops which come of fertilised soil, but they do not use one pound of artificial manure. They are not picturesque enough to regard such things as magic, but they do not care to move with the times. Most of the farms are held on the basis of the owner receiving one third of the crops. The farmers are illiterate and keep no accounts so that year by year they continue to practice

specific operations that bring in a loss, but they never find it out.

The peasant who is not tenant farmer hires himself out for the summer and leaves his wife and children in the village. At this big farm I saw them sleeping in the hay boxes in the stable and cattle stalls. They eat five square meals a day at five, eight, mid-day, five and nine. At five they have soup, bacon, bread and wine. At eight they have soup, meat, bread and wine. At mid-day a rice dish, vegetables, meat, bread and wine. At five in the afternoon soup, potatoes, bread and wine and at nine in the evening soup, meat, bread and wine. Besides this they will always carry a bota, or leather wine bottle, over their back to drink between their eats. They also drink between their drinks.

Their meat will include such things as roast fowl and when they are not working or eating they will be sleeping. They are illiterate and nomadic and their chief vices are a certain amount of drinking, a great deal of cardplaying and sexual laxity, no sign of originality in these. When the summer is over they cross over into France for the vintage and then they go back to their villages. In winter there is very little to do except to keep out of the

wind and snow and to go in for the great Christmas lottery.

Spain is the one country that has been wise enough to perfect a system of voluntary income tax whereby people positively enjoy paying their share. The foreign visitor meets it at every turn and, sitting in an outdoor café in Barcelona or Madrid, he may be excused if he believes that the Spanish live almost entirely by selling one another lottery tickets. The State lotteries take place at very short intervals and the government rake off is an important budget item. Especially everybody goes in for the Christmas lottery; the first prize is some millions of pesetas. If the last digit in your ticket number is the same as the last digit in the winning number you get your money back. Between these extremes are many other prizes. The tickets are quite expensive and in a small village everybody will buy a hundredth or even a thousandth of the same ticket. It happens therefore from time to time that every family in some little town wins a few thousand pesetas, invariably it has all gone within a year. Some Spanish short-story writer should describe for us such an event.

Lottery tickets are part of the equipment of the Spanish beggar. Often you will see late at night in

a windswept corner a woman with her baby pitifully proffering a lottery ticket to the passersby. Many of these tickets turn out to be obsolete, but they are meant for display rather than for merchandising as with the London beggar's last box of matches. I do not know whether it is self respect that is saved, or whether local prohibitions against begging are thus circumvented. For in most parts of Spain "prohibido mendicidad" stares at you from the town walls. Usually this is taken in the same spirit as "prohibido alcohol" in America, but sometimes the nuisance is controlled. When I lived by the Mediterranean in a Catalan town begging took place by police permission from house to house on Saturday mornings from eight until nine. The mendicant caravan would arrive, old men and women, deformed and maimed, and ragged children. You gave each five centimos, if you ran out of that coin and had only ten centimos you asked for change and got it as a matter of course. It ran as smoothly as an American community chest.

From Puigcerdà there run two Spanish roads, the southern one down the Cerdagne which we are about to take. The other to the left over the Col de Tosas into the heart of Catalunya. It leads you to a succession of secluded valleys once free feudal counties and still a world to themselves. Here you will find local dances,

processions, customs; a market town which draws all the mountain side on Sundays; an isolated tract hidden in the hills. You have but to imagine the road, which winds up to the pass and down into the next valley, spirited away, and each is a medieval castle with the drawbridge up.

Thus a few miles over this pass is the village of Campdevancl, a camp of the Vandal invaders centuries ago. There on the day of the festa major you will see a dance that cannot be found anywhere else in the wide world, not even in the next valley. Into the village square crowd all the populace from miles around and in the centre stand the village orchestra in an empty space. Presently to a curious doleful tune a man dressed like a feudal lord of the late middle ages, carrying an ancient Catalan blown glass receptacle, decorated with flowers and ribbons, trots round the edges of the watching crowd. On one side there wait six couples dressed also in medieval clothes. The seigneur seizes the hand of the first girl and dances round with her to the same doleful tune, then sprinkling her with water from his receptacle, he twists her round violently and abandons her to her lawful partner. The couple then walk round the square together while the seigneur ritualistically deflowers the second maiden. At last all six have submitted to him and he retires exhausted from

the field of Venus; immediately a cheerier tune sets up; the couples join hands and dance merrily in a ring; with a final effort of exaltation the men hurl the girls upwards towards the sky and hold them suspended; the crowd cheers and the festa continues. You must certainly visit Campdevanol one September. But now we must hurry along the southern road towards Seo d'Urgell and thence on to buy our Andorran rug.

Until Bellver the road lies in a wide valley and every now and then we catch sight of the little river Segre, all that is left of the mighty forces which carved out this Cerdagne. Bellver, Beautiful View, is an ancient village built also on a puig, steep above the river-bed. It must indeed have offered a beautiful view of advancing marauders, those pillage loving land pirates whom we think of as knights of chivalry. Now all is peaceful and you can look down on the green fields powdered with dandelion clocks or narcissus, you wonder which. Now the valley begins to tighten. High above your head hang little villages, wasps' nests, swallows' nests, eagles' eaves, what you will, nicely situated beyond the grasp of feudal passersby, who were always on the lookout to replenish their cooking pots or even to pick up a stray bedfellow. To-day the inhabitants

look down on motor buses and trucks, but seem content to stay where they are. On the left the rose pink impenetrable Sierra del Cadí rise even higher than these habitable hills.

You feel that here and there the crags have arranged themselves with slightly greater care than usual, so that they have grown into human habitations. Farmsteads and villages cling to the almost perpendicular cliffs, while beneath them the indefatigable labour of generations has terraced the hillside into innumerable garden plots, fertile one year in five, and lying fallow in all the other years. Nothing gives so vivid an impression of what the work of past generations means to our own as these stairways from the valleys to the mountain snows, by means of which the Catalan peasants squeeze bread and wine from stones.

And so we came to Seo d'Urgell with its eleventh century cathedral, severe and sincere, dating from a time before the Goths, leaving their sacred groves, turned stone into forest forms and built temples whose pillars and roofs and buttresses look like unfolding fern fronds and budding twigs on trees. Once I sat down in this stern cathedral and listened to the simple organ, whispering and moaning

and rustling like the wind, but it was not the wind through trees so much as the wind along rocky chambers within dark caves. This cathedral does not belong to the flaming youth of our civilization but to its serious wide-eyed childhood. The cold silence within is as hard, as uncompromising, as confident as the sunlight on the outside walls.

Seo d'Urgell has changed in the last twelve years. Then it seemed to me the loveliest city I had ever seen. Its only hotel had a fine dung heap beneath every window, clean but pungent; now everything has been arranged. The second time I visited it a little buttons - *botones*, as they call them in Spain - ran out to meet me and to assure me that they spoke French at his hotel and asked me if I would not like, there and then, a lobster mayonnaise, which so offended me that I left immediately without even revisiting the cathedral. But this time we liked the buttons and went with him to his excellent hotel, where the waiter had been to Brighton to perfect his art and subscribed to the London Daily Express; and also we went to the cathedral, so that we made the best of both worlds.

Seo d'Urgell has a great priestly seminary,

a priest factory as the man in the canvas shoe shop called it irreverently, and also it is a garrison town. Every evening the inhabitants, the soldiers and the priestlings stroll out along a straight road which leads towards some low hills, each crowned with a decaying ruin; one is pink, the other two are amber. The left hand hill has a village papered to its side, called Castellcuitat. Between these and Urgell lies the river, running very fast here over the stones, so that it is white and broken. Years ago this road lay through the fields with willow trees on either side. In every willow tree was a nightingale in full song. On the road passed priests in black gowns, recruits in khaki uniforms, girls in plum coloured dresses with paper fans. The recruits and the girls laughed a great deal, the priestlings were so silent that they seemed to glide above the ground. One night I counted twenty-six nightingales and a very sweet scent floated everywhere from across the fields. But now many willow trees have been cut down and two big cooperative milk distribution centres have been built and a great garage. Only two nightingales were singing.

The waiter told me that if there was dancing at Castellcuitat all the young men from the Seo would go there and if there was dancing at the Seo the boys came in from

Castellóvitat, but that all were shy of dancing in their own village. Later I will describe the way in which these people dance when they give up the Catalan Sardana for the foxtrot and the pasodoble.

But we had come to Seo d'Urgell chiefly because it is the gateway to Andorra and we had to go to Andorra in order to buy an Andorra rug. So now we will leave the Seo and go to Andorra. The theory is, of course, that this little republic is a foreign country. You are supposed to visit the police in the Seo to get your passport stamped before you make the journey. Also you are stopped on the road and examined for contraband. I do not think Andorra belongs to the League of Nations. I believe that its president sent a fraternal greeting to the president of the United States whose name was Wilson, congratulating him on his neutral stand in the Great War and guaranteeing that Andorra too would remain neutral to the end, which it did, such is the strength of weakness.

The idea of Andorra, a medieval freak, independent between Spain and France, doing feudal allegiance to the Prince Bishop of Urgell, is romantic. Nearly everyone who has been there and has enough ability to take a correspondence course in short story writing under Columbia Uni-

versity has written a book about it, loudly underlying the romantic motif. The reality is just one more Pyrenean valley, not so beautiful as some, and fast being spoiled by several sorts of exploitation.

The road lies by the side of the River Valira and passes through one of those brief narrow gorges behind which nearly all Pyrenean valleys hide. The mountains rise to seven thousand feet and there is but room for road and river in the gap. Here and there very ancient bridges, like grey cats with arched backs, surmount the stream with traces on either side of the old road of preautomobile days. For fifteen miles you look down on waving fields of sweet scented narcissus, which give place higher up to daffodils. You mount incessantly and by the time you get to Andorra the Old you have climbed to three thousand five hundred feet, while Canillo is well over five thousand and Solder, home of the witch innkeeper is a thousand feet higher still. The republic is not a valley but a group of converging valleys each with its scattered farms, its shepherd shelters, its village nucleus. There are mountains covered with fir trees and pines, others with green pasture, but the most striking are grey and dull brown and swamped in moving scree.

The villages are sombre: made of a blackened

stone with balconies and windows of still blacker wood, few panes of glass, no ornament, no decoration, scarcely any whitewash even; and in the rough cobbled streets women in black, black kerchiefs on their heads, black woollen capes about their shoulders, long black full dresses, black carvass shoes, carrying their pots to the well or driving a black goat home to bed. Hundreds of chickens, like singed pine branches and featherless as to their rumps, scratch at the debris swept from doors and thrown from upper windows. Here and there a church stands up, a church of the most primitive type of architecture, built of stones without mortar, with round towers and holes for windows. In some of these churches there are or were remarkable romanic wall frescoes of the eleventh century. Their remains have been taken to Barcelona for better protection.

The population is under five thousand, the republic roughly fifteen miles by sixteen in its widest parts and a little over two hundred square miles in extent. Nine tenths of all the land is held in common ownership by the villagers and one tenth belongs to individual proprietors.

Anyone in Andorra can have a house, since as a villager he is entitled to his share of the wood which is owned in common, while there is more building stone than

blades of grass. Hardly anyone rents his home, therefore, and when, as happens rarely, a house is sold it fetches very little money. A quite large house in the village of Encamp with two stories was valued at a little over two hundred dollars. There are no beggars since everybody has a few animals and a parcel of land as well as his share of the communal goods. But on the other hand the standard of living is very low indeed, the necessities of life are reduced to a minimum. There is scarcely a single peasant industry except the rug factory to which we are bound. Thus Andorra is a country where insecurity and plenty are alike unknown.

In the fields work the labourers, their wages are thirty-five cents a day and four square meat meals "vin compris". They work from six until eight in the morning, then they take half an hour for breakfast. At ten they take half an hour off for brunch; at twelve two hours off for lunch. From two until four they work once more, then half an hour for 'merienda' and the day is finally over at six fifteen when they retire to their employers' house for supper.

Many Andorrans speak three languages, their native Catalan, Castillian and French. They go to primary schools controlled by the village councils, where they are

taught in Catalan but learn grammar out of a Castillian grammar book! The master has a salary of a hundred dollars a year.

I think that it is interesting to compare the Budget of the Republic of Andorra with that of our own nations and so I give the figures for 1917:

Interest on rural loans raised for building roads	240.00
Interest on 320 dollars lent by the Commune of Andorra la Viella	16.00
Work for repairing road from La Seu de Urgell to Andorra.	200.00
Interest on village loans for road building not yet used.	46.00
Telephone service	116.00
Cost of holding parliament	200.00
Parliamentary secretary's salary	36.00
Alguacil	16.00
Postman's salary	16.00
Allowance for state druggist	32.00
2 Sindics' salaries	13.00
Salaries of 24 members of parliament	20.00
Salaries of 2 members charged with giving	

health certificates	2.40
Salary of six post office masters	4.80
Unforeseen expenses	8.00
	<hr/>
	966.20

One sees from these figures that as with larger nations debt charges eat up a considerable portion of the budget. On the other hand there is no expenditure on an army or a navy, or even a police force. Education is taken care of by the local village governments, but health appears upon the bill. The telephone is state owned and if we turn to the opposite side of the budget figures we find that the proceeds were eighty-four dollars, so that the state telephone system is ran at a loss of thirty-two dollars a year. This may be partly due to the fact that though a two cents' call is supposed to be limited to five minutes nobody stops you if you talk all the morning. The postal services are not costly, but then they bring in nothing at all. In 1917 postage was free within the Valleys, while the French or Spanish stamps were used for foreign correspondence. If you put on a French stamp the postman took your letter up the valley past Solden and over the huge mountains to Hospitalet on foot; a Spanish stamp meant that the motor bus drove your letter on the road down to Seo d'Urgell. How

does Andorra raise the money for these expenses? Taxes from agriculture, commerce and industry brought in for 1917 a little over a thousand dollars; the telephones, as we have seen, brought in eighty-four dollars more; instead of a funded debt Andorra has a thousand pesetas in the bank bringing in two dollars forty cents in interest; and finally the government acts as a banker and lends out money at five per cent thus getting one hundred and seventy-five dollars for its budget out of interest. In all the 1917 budget showed a credit balance of about two hundred dollars.

But, you will say, how does Andorra do without a police force? An army is perhaps unnecessary and a navy is out of the question, but what happens if a crime is committed? Now that is one of the really interesting points about Andorra: to this day the medieval unit of the foch or hearth is the basis of society and the head of the house not the individual, is the unit of government. You do not think in terms of the village Encamp having so many inhabitants; Encamp has so many hearths. Every head of a house has among other duties to leave whatever he is doing on the bidding of the proper officials and chase after any malefactor that may disturb the peace of the neighbourhood. To be prepared for this duty he must always possess one pound of

gunpowder, twenty-four balls, a case of pistols, and either three flint locks or twenty-four modern cartridges. This is the system called in Latin a posse comitatus.

Once the prisoner has been caught he can be put temporarily into a little gaol in Andorra the Old, but usually he is sent with all haste over to France to a more secure prison. There are local magistrates appointed by France and the Prince Bishop of Urgell, but the final appeal lies to courts outside Andorra. You can appeal either to the judges in French Perpignan or the bishopric of Urgell and you must be very careful which you choose. For the courts at Perpignan will judge you according to Catalan Law and those at Urgell according to Roman Law, so that you choose the type of law which lets your particular crime down more lightly. Serious crime is however exceedingly rare and the last murder took place over fifty years ago. In former times there was capital punishment in Andorra by slow motion guillotine. You can see the lethal instrument to this day, rather rusty, but still quite formidable. You put your neck on the block and the knife, made to descend by slowly screwing it down upon you. Petty theft was punished by making the thief sit in the church porch from ten until twelve for three successive Sundays surrounded by the things he had stolen. It is also curious that the official in charge

of such things as weights and measures is called mostafa showing that even in this secluded spot Arabic ways and words have penetrated. Such then is Andorra, a little valley so poor that nobody has wanted to absorb it, a union of half a dozen parishes ruled by the married heads of families; a picture of our ancestral past. If you go there you can see the council house, the twenty-four stalls for the horses or mules of the twenty-four members, the big kitchen where their food is prepared. But otherwise you will not find Andorra, on the surface, different from any other Catalan valley save that it is poorer than most.

And now all that is likely to be changed. Andorra is in the hands of the exploiters. A powerful Barcelona capitalist has bought the rights to the almost inexhaustible water power of the valleys in exchange for building the roads which would be necessary at any rate for its use. His workmen are digging everywhere and the Andorran peasant has come down from the hillsides to make better money as a labourer than he could make as a shepherd.

Someone has taught the council of twenty-four how to levy taxes from every schoolboy in the world by issuing Andorran stamps, pretty little engravings of churches and architectural features. Another group has for long

used persuasive arguments to have a great gambling casino established there, in order that Andorra may become a second Monte Carlo. A large pink hotel has reared itself upon a stark hillside and bespatters the approaches for miles around with its beckoning billboards. The heads of houses with their pound of gunpowder see their sons exchanging their immemorial labours for that of road making, stamplicking, washing automobiles and lackeying around at hotels. Soon there may be openings for croupiers. You can get a tyre revulcanized in Andorra now, yet only a few years ago I saw in an old cow-shed an automobile bearing on its number plate "Andorra 1".

All this will probably destroy the picturesque and ancient profession of tobacco smuggling which was formerly a flourishing concern and I doubt of it will long be possible to go such an expedition as I went twelve years ago over the snow peaks into France with a dozen healthy contrabandistas each laden with his pack of bad black tobacco.

I saw them first threading a daffodil valley along a small stream below Solden; the scent of flowers floated like an aura about them.

"Are you smugglers?" I asked.

"Yes, we are smugglers," they replied.

"Are you going smuggling?"

"Yes, we are going smuggling."

"May I come with you?"

"Yes, indeed, we shall be delighted, and we start at three o'clock to-morrow morning."

They wore brown corduroy coats and trousers and blue cotton shirts; sashes round their waists. On their feet were the canvas shoes of the country, shaped like a Roman sandal with black tape over the toes and the instep bare, probably the same shape as those worn in the days of Roman legionaries. For Spain to-day is still Roman in its manners, and far more so than Italy. During the last few years there has been an innovation; the shoes are still of the same shape, but their soles instead of being made of rope are often cut from old automobile tyres, a strange juncture of old and new, when worn by Cincinnatus at the plough.

But what revealed these peasants as smugglers was not so much their clothes as their equipment. On their backs were oblong packages of sackcloth containing the goods; strapped to the back of these, a round of cut loaf of bread two feet in diameter. On one side a colossal blue umbrella, nearly as big as the sort of thing that shades bathing

beauties at Palm Beach. On the other side a leather wine bota and an extra pair of shoes. In one hand they carried staves eight feet high and over their shoulders magnificent woollen plaid rags. Thus they were equipped for all weathers and if their calling demanded a night upon the bare mountain they had food and shelter in readiness.

Four o'clock next morning saw us well on our way; for an hour we waded knee deep in daffodils and narcissus; for another hour we pulled ourselves up by rhododendron bushes just showing pink buds amid the oily dark green scrubby leaves. Then we reached the snow amid a very thin mountain mist. At one place there was a hole in the snow and we seemed to be on a bridge eight feet deep with black water racing underneath. After this we came to a flat place with a little green frozen lake and a bare rock by its side and all round black fingers of rock clutching at the sky. A thousand feet below lay a white blanket stretching for miles, beneath which lay France. I watched the blanket, expecting at any moment to see the curly headed peaks of half grown mountains poking through, restlessly tossing aside this envelopping wool and revealing a bare rocky acre or perhaps even a green field in a valley below.

We sat down on the rock and ate our breakfast fast, very tough sausage, bread and leathery wine. Then my friends walked to the edge, sat down on their bottoms and piloting themselves, like punts, with the long poles, slid downwards into the blanket and out of sight towards France. That was twelve years ago and I doubt that smuggling is still worthwhile to-day. The smugglers will be staying at home mending punctures or selling gasoline.

We had however on this occasion come to Andorra to buy a rug. So much seemed changed that I almost feared to find the factory spirited away. Gone was the little inn where hot baths could be had direct from the hot sulphur springs just outside, but up the little winding path behind we found the same old wooden shanty, with the same old man standing amid his looms and willing to sell us the finest rug in the world for rather less than three dollars.

And so with our Andorran rug we drove back to Seo d'Urgell through the fifteen miles of narcissus, veritable meadows of asphodel where the blest can well we imagined wandering after death feeding on the sweet scent and drinking overflowing bowls of sunlight and gentle winds. The dwellers amid these streams and mountains hundreds of years ago gained from their overlords, the Prince Bishop

of Urgell and the Count of Foix in France various privileges and exemptions, all of which were written down by a monkish scribe whose Latin failed when he came to mention turnips and cabbages so that he had to fall back on Catalan and write of "naps i cols". And throughout the generations since the mountaineers defended their independence, not by force of arms but by the stronger force of poverty, which made them worthless to their neighbours who therefore left them in peace.

Now they have sold their independence to the Barcelona capitalist and are becoming as other men are. Their parliament and their harmless customs will doubtless be allowed to remain, having a certain value for the tourist industry, and it will take a long time to root up all those acres of narcissus; but Andorra has been absorbed. Andorra will be civilized, soon they will need police. As we passed through the Spanish customs once more with our rug hidden beneath our coats we felt we had got away just in time.

1.2: Journal of a Spanish Journey
(July - August, 1928)

PROLOGUEA Hermitage with a View

In the north of Spain a Hermitage does not by any means necessarily contain a Hermit, austere and living alone. Usually it is a little chapel set on a very high hill and equipped with a restaurant selling minerals and light refreshments. You combine your picnic with a few devotions, and Holy Mother Church sees to it that however large an expanse of the world you may look upon, your back shall be placed to the wall of a sacred building.

Thus there is a winding and precipitous road leading out of the main road from Gerona to San Feliu de Guixols to the Hermitage of the Angels, or of Our Lady of the Angels. Since it was a good test for the climbing abilities of the overhauled car we drove for the fourth or fifth time up the eleven kilometres of mountain track and looked out upon the plain of Ampurdan, the blue gulf of Rosas and the Pyrenees beyond.

But it was not merely to test the car that we went in this direction this afternoon: it was also with an eye upon the value of that view as an introduction to this journal of contacts with Spanish peasant life and problems. For that view extends over an area in which this life and those problems may be said to have begun. The studious traveller who would know northern Spain more deeply than the ordinary holiday maker would do well to take the train from the frontier at Port Bou to Gerona, Europe's most neglected beautiful city, and thence on foot or by car ascend to this hermitage of the Angels, and look down upon the villages and townships of the plain spread at his feet. The priest or the girls who will serve him coffee can point out to him one by one a series of historic places, whose story it shall be our first task to indicate.

Let him first follow the long line of the Pyrenees from the point where they meet the sea north of the gulf of Rosas: a barrier in many ways to Europe and the final defence against Africa whenever a high tide of its civilisation has carried the waves beyond their natural limit. One low gap is visible, the Col de Perthus, the door upon which every great invader before and after Hannibal had to knock, a door the presence of which explains why the

Pyrenees have never been the solid and impassable barrier which their austerity and massiveness at first leads us to expect.

Culture indeed has usually been straddled across the ridges rather than confined to one or other side; Catalan, a language as different from French and Spanish as Italian is from both, is spoken in Rousillon equally as in Ampurdan, in Perpignan and Gerona, in Barcelona and Toulouse. The Saracens swept over the Pyrenees as easily as they did down the gap of Carcassonne; the French have held the province of Gerona very often and Spain has ruled Rousillon time and again. Perpignan has been Spanish as well as Catalan, and Figueras, a busy peasant market town with a garrison and a prison, visible a little to the right of the line joining the Col de Perthus to the observer, has always been, it is said, a Spanish town in peace and a French town in war.

But it is not the varying fortunes of two modern nations which lends most historic intensity to this view; nor is it indeed the far older vestiges of Greek colonies, to be seen on the shore of the long sweeping gulf immediately to the left of a range of hills ending in three rocky islets and crowned by the twelfth century castle of Torro-

ella de Montgri; it is the living remains of several centuries during which the basis of rural life in one of its most typical forms was being worked out, the fact that very little has changed since a time when feudal customs were being modified by the slow childhood of the towns, so that we can see the houses and streets, the market place and castles, council houses and churches, where modern Europe was born from the wreck of a Roman Empire. Looking down to this plain we can make out half a dozen small places whose municipal history is as interesting and as important in the evolution of law and life, as that of London or Paris or Rome. There is Perelada, there is Castellon de Ampurias, La Bisbal, Palamos, Palafrugell, and, besides, the great Benedictine establishment of St. Pere de Roda just invisible on the farthest hills, and a hundred hamlets and agglomerations of houses, where feudalism has left its bones and later ages have neither ground them to powder, nor yet buried them beneath buildings and landmarks with other meanings. Indeed we are not merely enjoying a very fine view, we are watching a microcosmography, an epitome of European history unobscured by the chances and changes which in regions where time has never stood still make the landscape as meaningless and blotted page, instead of a fascinating history book.

For several thousand years generations and succeeding races have cultivated these patches of colour, which to-day are intensively cropped fields. The earlier inhabitants have left their neolithic knives in the caves of Torroella de Montgri. Later Iberians have been found buried in round rock chambers at San Feliu de Guixols, and their potsherds are mingled at Ampurias with those of the Greek colonists from Phocis. To picture these, needs more imagination than real social history should require, although many people seem to enjoy reconstructing whole civilisations from a couple of dolmens, a barrow and a handful of shells. Later times have left sufficient signs of their life to make them interesting without an effort.

Next came the Greeks, then the Romans, and Goths and Visigoths and German hordes: generation after generation of farmers must have seen their crops burned and their beasts driven off by marauders and gentlemen adventurers; generations of foreigners must have paid for their plunder by fragmentary gifts, now of law, now of craftsmanship, now of religion. The view from the hermitage remained we may suppose more or less constant throughout: gradually there would be more fields and less forest, since more woodcutters than tree planters are to be found in every generation of mankind.

And finally there came the Moors, the great fertilizing element to which Europe owes more than to any extra-European civilisation, the Saracens who came to slay and remained to cultivate, to irrigate, to make wilderness blossom as the rose. Moors and Berbers mingling with the Iberian remnants.

JOURNAL OF JOURNEY THROUGH SPAINFirst Day July 10th 1928

Left San Feliu 7 a.m. Breakfasted at Gerona. Went to Olot by San Feliu de Pallerols (see letter). Crossed Col de Coubet and saw new Vallfargona road three quarters finished.

Arrived at Ripoll at the moment of the Saint Christopher motor festa and got into procession, were blessed by priest swinging censer from Balcony of council house and were given a mascot.

Visited Casanovas at Hispano Suiza works, talked with sisters, one an artist, the other a student of Greek at Barcelona University. Casanova gave us letter of introduction to friend running model farm at Puigcerdà.

Went on in afternoon and met bicycle race before Ribaz. At Ribaz bought food and went on up Col de Tosas. At top saw rain and storms ahead and decided not to camp. Saw harvest of Cerdagne stretched at our feet. Noticed many more sheaves of corn to the acre than in the Ampurdan

Got on to bad road and passed four reapers reaping with sickle. Got caught in shower, arrived wet at Inn at Bellver where we stayed five years ago. Had very good supper of vegetables, bacon and brains at nine.

First Day

Started from San Feliu at 7.07a.m.

Breakfasted at Gerona 8a.m.

Gaseosa at Olot 9 a.m.

Reached Ripoll 11 a.m. at the moment of the St. Christopher procession in which we found ourselves taking part.

Had lunch with Casanova and family.

Left at 4.30 p.m. reached Ribas as a bicycle race to Ripoll and back was setting out, made some purchases and continued to the Col de Tosas where it threatened rain so we decided to go on to Bellver for the night. Near Alp a bad storm wetted us through and we only reached Bellver at 8.45 p.m.

206 km in the day 6705

10l of petrol at Gerona, 10l of petrol at Ribas.

Hotel supper night breakfast 12p and 2p tip.

Second Day

Left at 9.30 to go to Mas Florensa near Puigcerdà. Drove into beautiful farmyard (see photographs) and found typical young modern Catalan the agent of rich owner. Went into his office asked questions about peasants of Cerdagne.

Chief points.

Most farms pay money rent to absentee owners in Barcelona only two or three farm their own farms.

Mas Florensa 250 acres pay 1200 pesetas in taxes a year.

Labourers are paid 22 to 25 duros a month plus board and lodging. Lodging straw in a manger in stable where cows live in winter. Food cooked by French peasant included meat four times a day and sometimes roast chicken. Five meals a day at 5, 8, 12, 4 and 8. Peasants work very hard in summer as everything is covered with snow in winter.

Cattle and mules chief product. Yield of hay from one field increased from 30 to 200 by artificial manures and irrigation.

Peasants chief vices, drink, (slight) cards and women. Harvesters get 15 pesetas a day, in Urgell up to 22 pesetas in rush times in most primitive villages 3 pesetas a day plus food.

Went on towards Seo d'Urgell ate under a tree. Went to cafe at Seo, were molested by hotel boys telling us we were going to Andorra or the Val d'Aran. Went on through gorges to a beautiful village of Organa (see photographs). Most satisfying line in streets that I have ever seen. Found camping place by side of Segre.

Left Bellver at 9.30 a.m. and spent morning talking to S. Roca at Mas Florensa near Puigcerdà.

Left Puigcerdà at 12.30 and returned on the Bellver road and on to Seo d'Urgell.

Sierra del Cadi and hill villages.

Ate our lunch by the roadside.

At Seo made purchases and had coffee: the place already being spoilt by tourism; wretched little boys badgering us to have lobster and see the cathedral. General unpleasantness of the town in spite of its beauty. Bus to Encamp in main street.

Left Seo by our first new road: past Castellciutat to the gorges of Organa. Organa an exquisite village of 1200 complete contrast to Seo in the courtesy of its people. Photographs.

Continued south searching for convenient camping ground. Passed superb rock-imitating village of Coll de Nargo and Oliana.

Finally encamped at this spot by the Segre: had supper & washed clothes etc.

Days distance 133 km 6911-7044

10l of petrol at Seo d'Urgell.

Camping ground proved excellent though did not sleep too well.

S. Roca and Mas FlorensaSecond Day

Mas Florensa is the largest farm in the Cerdagne and although it pays well is in a sense the hobby of a rich man, a capitalist in Barcelona. Roca is his manager. Most of the farms are held on a basis of a payment of one third to the owner, some on a direct money basis.

According to Roca agriculture even in Catalonia and even in the Cerdagne, the richest part agriculturally, cannot compete with industry. The return on the money is usually 4 or 5%, whereas a bank pays 4% on current accounts. His four brothers in industry have cars he has none. He has one friend in the whole district. He will find it difficult to get a wife as peasant women are uneducated and town ones will not live in the country. The effect of improved means of transport is to depopulate the country more and more, since the peasant, content when he never saw anything but his own village becomes discontented directly he sees people from other parts. All this generation is leaving the fields although town workers conditions are incomparably worse off than country workers.

The life of the peasant is fairly secure and he

is exceedingly well fed. At Mas Florensa there are in summer about twenty labourers. These sleep on the premises, leaving their families, if married in the villages. Their sleeping accomodation is precisely the same as that of the animals. Indeed they sleep in the hay boxes. They have five square meals a day. at 5 a.m., 8 a.m., 12 p.m., 5 p.m. and 8 p.m.

5 a.m. Soup, bacon, bread and wine.

8 a.m. Soup, meat, bread, wine.

12 p.m. Rice dish, vegetables, meat, bread, wine.

5 p.m. Soup, potatoes, bread, wine.

8 p.m. Soup, meat, bread, wine.

Meat includes such things as roast fowl. His bill for meat bought for farm consumption during July was 550 pesetas and during August 700 pesetas.

These labourers work all day and eat and sleep, they are illiterate and nomadic. Their chief vices are a certain amount of drinking, a great deal of card playing, and sexual laxity. They stay through the summer, go to France for the vintage, go home to the villages very often in winter.

In summer they get from 24 to 26 duros a month in winter about 16.

Even in the Cerdagne where farming is a going concern and rural life highly satisfactory, methods are completely antiquated. No artificial manure is used. By using phosphates Roca increased his hay three or four fold, the barn space had to be largely increased. The modern methods are not being followed very closely by neighbours, who are content to say that Mas F. is very rich and so can afford to play about with expensive things.

The farmers are most of them illiterate and very few keep accounts. Roca knows many cases where it is quite obvious that a particular operation is being run at a loss without the farmer knowing it, simply for this reason.

The Cerdagne itself is self supporting; it exports, to Barcelona chiefly, 2 million pesetas of live stock annually and a large quantity of potatoes. Its chief imports are wine, indian corn, and manufactured goods.

Owing to the cold winter only one crop can be raised, unlike other parts of Catalunya where two and often three are raised in the year. Bellver is the site of the chief annual live stock market.

All farming is carried on by irrigation, the rain fall is deficient but river water abundant.

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Third Day Notes

After Mollerusa one can literally see the desert blossoming like a rose. The plain on each side of the road is chequered with field after field of fruit trees, corn and vegetables nearer to some California farming than anything I have seen in Spain.

The peasants we stopped to photograph welcomed us. I think for one thing they were glad of an excuse to rest for a few moments and they had a touching faith in us when we said we would send them their photographs. Two families quite pressed us to let them pay in advance for them.

The ruins by Alferri were so grotesque that they looked more like queer shaped rocks than remains of a man made building. Ruins in Spain take queer forms, I remember one round isolated tower at Hostalrich, which as you pass it in the railway looks exactly like a huge broken vase.

Third Day

Woke up 5.15 a.m. on a very fine morning. A woman had just arrived to cross by the ferry. I went down and asked the ferryman if I could get 'llet', the other side, he said "Yes, perhaps" and advised me to come over and see. On the other side it turned out that he thought I had said 'maranchas de llet' i.e. sucking pigs, and that there was no milk. He thought however that I might get some milk at a farm two hours away. I ferried back. Successful breakfast and wrote these notes while Connie bathed.

Left shortly before 9 a.m. beautiful road to Pons. At Tiurana stopped to take photos of primitive thrashing implements and talked to farmer: shocked to find a farmer say that the year was good. He offered to pay for a photo. Most of his ground irrigated, "Round about here they use all the old ways". Later we saw a steam thrasher.

Especially near Pons an ugly place where we had good coffee, we noticed magnificent vineyard walls, almost as if they must have come from Roman buildings: every stone well squared, bearing the mason's marks, up to 18 x 12 ins.

A terribly dry country follows, with olive groves but for the most part, bare pinkish rock. Where the canal of Urgell irrigates brilliant green hollows, and along the

road fine poplars and birches whence cicadas like policemen's rattles. Higher up the terraces of the Segre beautifully cultivated.

Reached S. Sala's farm at 11 a.m.

Third DayS. Sala

In the district of the canal of Urgell there are half a dozen or so of large farms up to 2000 acres but the majority of farms are small averaging 75 acres. The former are hobbies of rich Barcelona industrialists, bought by them, the latter inherited. Most farms pay a money rent to the owner, some pay a third part of the produce. In that case the owner pays the cost of seeds and artificial manure - there is little or no animal manure owing to lack of animals - and pays the wages of an overseer at sowing time and harvest time. The farms pay a ninth of the fruits to the canal company (fruits e.g.)

Points (1) The proximity of poor villages and rich villages. (2) The steady depopulation of the dry cultivation villages. (3) The increased or maintained population of the irrigation villages. (4) A tradition of emigration encouraged by the return of successful emigrants. (5) Disagreed that the peasants were on the whole less vicious than the town workers, the latter more refined in their vices. Unlike the cases seen in the Cerdagne, none of the workers in Urgell live or eat at the fincas, a

few only have tied cottages, most live in Balaguer and the villages and quite often own their cottages. The average daily wage is 6 pesetas for a 6 day week. On the whole the labourers are very well fed in the irrigated districts.

He definitely attributed backwardness of cultivation to lack of technical education. Only about 10 - 12 agricultural pupils from Catalunya in a year.

Following S. Sala's advice we left Balaguer at 2.30 and did a round of the irrigated belt of the Canal of Urgell. Bellcaire, Linola, Mollerusa, thence to Lerida and on to Alguaire, Almenar, Alferras, Algerri and so back to Balaguer. 7044 - 7214 = 170 km. 10l petrol Balaguer.

These villages are deceptive in the blazing sun, utterly drying the soil and vegetation, they look exceedingly barren and poor, especially the first three. However, owing to the Canal they are flourishing, that is the inhabitants have a sufficient diet and meat every day. The difference between means and poverty in such a district is largely a matter of quantity and type of food. There are no signs of the inhabitants being anything but well fed animals, there are no walls like those at Pons testifying to a need to use leisure productively, this is because any

leisure is now spent in Balaguer or Lerida at cafes, listening to Zarzuelas or jazz, or at the cinema.

Took some photos of thrashing, the boys were singing snatches as they worked. Every sort of primitive implement was being used, notably a round log of wood with iron teeth set in it and a tapering round stone implement which naturally described a circle as it rolled.

Lerida has a fine park at its entrance and a grand boulevard and the town full of cafes. The old cathedral in the centre on a barren flat hill of brownish yellow earth.

The village on the far side of Lerida, all four with Arabic names are peculiarly interesting. In most cases the buildings are brown low flat mud huts with an interior compound and threshing floor in front. Almener is an excellent example, nothing could be more picturesque, the whole village was winnowing and the air darkened with chaff. At each thrashing floor the whole family worked side by side. Very handsome, healthy peasantry, friendly when spoken to. The Canal de Pinana is used for irrigation. It is probably in part Moorish and is, as a whole, very old. (Mentioned in Ford). The whole aspect of Almener must be like an Arizona pueblo. Straight lines instead of curves, everything red brown or straw coloured. The straw stacks

when completed covered with mud. One storied buildings for the most part. At Almenar the road passes through these detached mud farms and to the left on a bare hill, stands the more concentrated part of the village with, as usual, the church at the top. This latter is built of an ugly dull brown sandstone which does not make attractive buildings. The activity of so many human beings rather seems to increase the general aridity of the scene.

From Almenar the road leads on to Alfarras which we had previously seen on our first excursion to Aragon. Much the same scene here as at the last two villages. We turn to the right and cross the Noguera Ribarozanca. To the left, nearly all the way to Balaguer are extraordinary barren conical hills, rising one after the other like a series of aeroplane hangars. On one of them, slightly different in shape to the others, is a ruined castle looking the more bleak from its position on utterly sterile rocks. No tree of any sort grows on these hills and only a very sparse scattering of plants, between which many square feet of smooth grey rock show up. Algerri was winnowing to the last child and in places the road was several inches thick with chaff. From the distance there was visible however one sign of culture, or leisure used for its own sake, a

kite was flying magnificently in the strong wind which seems to blow down from the mountains every evening, full of promises of rain which are never fulfilled. On a nearer view the kite flyer proved to be the local Guardia Civil: everyone else continued to winnow. Every fifty yards from Lerida back to Balaguer we passed a mule heavily laden with the harvest. It was very noticeable that the peasants, though otherwise strong, all seemed to have eye complaints, the result presumably of the glare.

In the neighbourhood of Algerri the secano begins but according to S. Sala the soil is so rich that the villages are still quite wealthy. (Must look up and compare pop. statistics of Algerri and Almenar and Bellcaire, the first secano, the second ancient riego, and the third comparatively recent riego). The chief sign of secano is always the large proportion of olives which with almonds and some other fruit trees can be cultivated without irrigation.

We arrived back in Balaguer about 7 p.m. and owing to the threatening storm decided to stop at the hotel. There was a bathroom in which there was a bed occupied at night by a musician. The water smelt but the bath was good. So also was the primus-made tea. The night was however un-

bearably hot and the noise in the square outside though cheerful, was excessive. The cost for supper, night and breakfast was 16 pesetas for the two.

On this journey the road from Mollerusa to Lerida is part of the main road to Barcelona and Saragosa. Ford describes it as unutterably dreary. That was before the days of the canal, for now the country being flat, it is possible to look for several square miles at rows of well planted trees and green fields of hay interspersed with yellow wheat. The general effect is not unlike southern California and one is led to wonder why the population is so far more poor.

Fourth Day

7214 - 7357 143 km. 101 litres petrol Balaguer.

This morning we set out from the hotel at about 7 a.m. and went to meet S. Sala at his finca. We were to go on an expedition the object of which was to show us the poor villages by the side of the richer ones of the canal zone. We started up the road to Tremp past the fragmentary remains, like stranded pillars of eroded mud, of the Moorish walls of Balaguer. The country was dry and uninviting and showed various signs of decreasing population, ruins of houses and terraced vineyards. Presently we reached an exceedingly well cultivated piece of ground along the bottom of a small valley. This belongs to the Monastery of Avellanes which soon appeared above us on the rising road. After this point we found the road less and less interesting though with a good deal of seccano on either side of it and always some green on each side of the river, a mere trickle of water though it was. At a point about half way between Avellanes and Ager we left the road and drove up a rough track to a farm. This was most certainly not a poor farm and indeed the threshing was actually being done by a hand turned machine. The car was left in the shade of

a building and we proceeded on foot. Our first incident was the meeting of an old man of over eighty who was going down with his mule to the market next day at Balaguer. He held quite a long conversation with us and repeatedly said we were going to see a lost country 'terra perdidá'. Our guide told us we should see a difference in the physique of these peasants.

After rather less than an hour's walk we reached a farm where a woman in black greeted us, when asked the way to the poorer houses farther up, she said that all were poor and she could not say which were the poorest. She herself was very handsome, well built and had splendid white teeth. Presently another very strong peasant woman arrived back from the spring with a mule carrying four fine black ewers of water. I took photos, they were almost pathetically anxious to get copies and offered to pay. Our guide again asked leading questions which were amusingly answered. No they were not too isolated, they ate well, never had a doctor or medicine and nobody ever died. The children went to school at Ager several hours away. In the house was a cactus like plant which, suspended from the roof on St. John's day grows and lives all the year round. The life of these women was very noticeably better than that of women in the towns. Their house contained

very little that was manufactured, but there was a large treddle sewing machine, a Singer. On our return we went into the upper room; everything was really clean and there was literally no smell, far less indeed than in an English boarding house. They told us that various of the cottages had been deserted and their owners had gone to the Argentine. We got some good photos at the farm and higher up at the well, by the side of which girls were washing. The overflow irrigated a small field which was green with closely growing vegetables, in violent contrast with the arid valley all round.

We continued to climb, past several houses, in two of which there were living thirteen people. Finally we reached 'the village', a knot of six houses, a chapel and a cemetery. The chapel was served by a priest from a neighbouring village and the cemetery had apparently never been used since its erection. We went to the best house, the most primitive structure imaginable with a mule in a black cellar. The room which was kitchen at one end and dining room at the other was perhaps seven by fifteen feet long. In it and round the door step sat about twelve people talking to us very cheerfully and with the most friendly feeling. All the girls were sewing and except for one very fair haired woman who seemed half witted, every member of

the family was strong and quite handsome. To leading questions about their life they stoutly maintained that their life was better than that of the towns, for although the town folk had meat, by the time potatoes got there they were mouldy and the eggs rotten, whereas they eat them fresh from their own land. They corroborated the fact that some of their neighbours emigrated. It would appear at first sight difficult to see how these very primitive peasants can settle down in America, but they go straight up country into the wilder parts of the Argentine where conditions are not so very different from at home except that the land is good and money more easily procured.

Our guide said that the canal peasants would probably spend less than 1200 pesetas a year on their family reckoning four to the family. These more primitive ones do not spend as much; as one said, they do not grow for commerce but to eat themselves.

The most interesting manufactured article was the Roman sandals made of old motor tyres, these we later saw for sale in shops in Huesca - exactly the same shape as the old rope ones, merely a use of new and excellent material.

The old grandmother at this house explained

that it was the best in the village and that on the festa major it was the village inn, and the centre of amusements. They have band up from Balaguer and dance American dances.

Except for one boy who was wry necked, we did not see anybody in the village who was noticeably unhealthy. It is worth while to compare these people with those about whom medical evidence is given in the Royal Com. in Housing in Scotland report.

The bedroom accomodation must have been small, but we did not penetrate upstairs. These people had absolutely no hygienic or medical knowledge, but they were clean and had infinite sun and no tinned food. Various compounds could be seen on the sides of the valley, these were for animals driven down from the higher mountains in winter when the grass is rather more tender.

We left the village and went down to the second house where we were offered and accepted a mule to take C. down to the car.

Arrived at the farm, where the car was left we found the table laid for the whole family and the day labourers; a huge dish in the centre with a mixture of potatoes, beans and meat. We were pressed to eat or to drink sherbert, but we had to hurry on. The peasant might have

been a Roman farmer, dignity, hospitality, independence. We drove back to Balaguer in the arid heat. G. asleep most of the time.

S. Sala invited and insisted on us stopping to lunch. An excellent meal, almost entirely off the farm. The wine was especially noteworthy as it came off the neighbouring finca and was definitely better than most Spanish bottled wines. A light honey colour, it had an excellent secondary taste of herb-like quality and is sold for .45c a litre, even cheaper than any of our San Feliu wines. The finca is an experiment in scientific viticulture. S. Sala said that very little wine was drunk in the district owing to the sun.

As with S. Roca the whole atmosphere was of a colonist, nothing long established, much excellent and enthusiastic experimentation. He exports plums, prunes, peaches to England for the early markets, these go by train to San Sebastian and thence still by train through France.

Among other matters he mentioned, that some of the poorer peasants up in the mountains, live almost entirely off charcoal burning, and on government owned land this leads to a complete destruction of trees, a great problem throughout the country.

Leaving Connie at Jaca I returned to Huesca to see S. Mur. The journey down was uneventful except for the constant presence of Guardia Civil couples by the side of the road who did not stop me. Close to the Pentano at Triste I tried to give petrol to a man, as usual a Catalan, out of my carburettor but with little success. On reaching S. Mur's finca at Huesca I was told that he was at his office in the Administracion de Hacienda. A policeman got into the car and guided me there. I had a long talk with S. Mur of which the following are the chief points.

The whole of the cultivation round Huesca is irrigated. There are some channels dating back to Moorish times and the Pentano of Arguis dates back to the end of the 17th century. Most of the land is held by small proprietors farming in their own right, but there are many tenant farmers and a few fincas run by a bailiff.

The population is increasing in the irrigated areas and what little emigration there is is to Huesca and no farther. The younger generation who are educated show a disinclination to return to the fields. In order to combat this, S. Mur believes in Cajas Rurales, a sort of agricultural credit scheme. There are a good many co-operative selling societies, which enable farmers to sell their crops

before harvest so as to obtain money for planting etc.

In the secano almonds and olives are the chief crops. At the time of the reconquest the whole place became a despoblado and had to be built up again. Probably it was in the condition in which part of the prov of Zaragoza remains to-day, the driest part of western Europe. (N.B. We crossed this part last March from Caspe). There are schemes on hand for irrigating this land by the construction of a canal, necessitating tunnelling, from the Cinca to the Gallego.

S. Mur gave it as his opinion that the irrigated portions of the district could support more than three times the present population. The rent when paid in kind is usually a fifth part of the produce. For further details consult S. Mur's two books.

After my talk with S. Mur I went to lunch at the Hotel España and returned in two and a half hours to Jaca. This time the Guardia Civil concentrated on the journey from Ayerbe north and I was stopped three times. On the first occasion they politely did not look at papers as they recognised me. At precisely the spot where we had magneto trouble on Sunday I noticed a storm rapidly approaching and had only just time to put up the hood when I was in the mid-

st of it. The rain was so violent that I could scarcely see and the road became a torrent. On Sunday we had noticed an overhanging ledge of rock and had wondered if the stream went over it or round it. To-day within fifteen minutes there was a stream of dark brown water ten yards wide and three feet thick hurling over it. The storm lasted half an hour and cleaned the car well. On both journeys to-day I saw various Aragon dresses. The country from Ayerbe on contains a good deal of secano with wheat being cut for harvesting.

S. Mur gave me a letter to S. Cativiela in Jaca. He proved to be a wealthy merchant from Zaragossa born at Anso and with a great knowledge and enthusiasm for his native village. He sent out all over Jaca to find a book "De lo llano al cumbre" of Mercadal which speaks of the district.

IV

Fourth DayFrom Balaguer to Monzon

After leaving the Sala family we decided not to camp by the river but to go on another stage on our journey and camp in the desert of Aragon. For that purpose we took large supplies of water with us.

The first part of the journey was the same as the day before. We went through the strange village of Al (see Ventura's book) and then turned down towards Almacillas where we had an introduction. We had meant to camp on this road, but thanks to the efficiency of the irrigation there was nothing but irrigated fields full of peasants. It was getting dark and we were in a hurry to find a camp so we turned off towards the desert and found a very bad sandy road leading off the main road towards a desert looking hill. The road was awful, every other moment I thought we might be stuck in the sand, but we got through and left the car off the road and hurriedly got out our sleeping bags and primus. The journey had been trying but the sunset was beautiful, and there was a prospect of a beautiful view of the lights of the various villages coming out one by one over the plain.

I still think a night on the desert of Aragon

would be beautiful but not within a mile of irrigation. Soon we began to be conscious of bites and worse still, the vicious hum of mosquitoes preparing to give us a night of torment. There was no tree within miles to fix the mosquito net to, so we packed up and fled.

The first part of the flight was over the terrible road and once we stuck, but got on again to the high road to Monzon, where we reached the hotel at 10.30p.m. not too late for a full dress supper.

Fifth Day, July 14th

We left Monzon at and followed the main road through Barbastro. On the whole the country was dull, the main, snow covered Pyrenees were hidden in mist and cloud. There was no corn, olives everywhere at one point we crossed a river on a high suspension bridge.

Near Huesca we passed the fine looking monastery of built on the top of a hill. Huesca no longer answers to Ford's description. In his time it had escaped renovation but it has now been renovated in a lump, a more fatal process than gradual and piece meal renovation. The first thing that struck us on entering Huesca was shop after shop full of harvesting implements, wooden pitchforks rakes, scythes, sickles, straw hats, picturesque enough.

The hotel was in a pleasant square next to the prison, it was cool.

In the afternoon we went round the town and saw the famous retablo in the Cathedral, it struck me as a beautiful thing in the worst possible setting, the background seemed to bear no relation to it and it was unlighted. The cathedral as a whole was unimpressive, painted all over inside with sham masonry. There were some fine carved wooden eaves in the town, but Huesca as a whole made no

impression on me though whether it was because I was dull through being ill or it was dull I do not know.

We signed the hotel register and guessed at the dates of our passports which were in the car at the garage. I said in joke "If the Guardia Civil discover that the date on our passports is different we shall be arrested as the people come to bomb the king".

The bedroom was fairly cool though very noisy and we got to sleep about 11.30 an hour or two later I was woken up by a knock on the door, I thought it was some mistake but it was the police, I thought it must be something very urgent to justify waking us up in the middle of the night, but they only wanted to see our passports, they also went and rummaged in our car presumably in search of bombs.

Sixth Day, July 15th

We left Huesca at 9.30 a.m. behind a boy on a bicycle who showed us the way to Señor Ventura's house. There we were welcomed by a large family and I sat in the shade trying to make conversation with his rather stiff wife, till another party of visitor's arrived. He was very cordial, gave me some flowers and asked us to come back again and ask him whatever we wanted to know.

We then started off to Jaca, along a straight road across a plain full of corn, we had not gone many yards before we were stopped, as we expected, by two Guardia Civils, they stepped out from behind trees and signalled us to stop. They looked at our passports and licenses. The King and President of France were to pass through a few days later to open the new international railway, so everyone on the road had to be stopped for fear he might be going to bomb the king. We were stopped three times in 29 kilometres. The last time they only looked at the photograph and were very polite and said "no hay remedio", they took absolutely no notice of me or my passport.

After Ayerbe we passed some wonderful red pillar like rocks and went along the river Gallego to where it is dammed by a huge dam finished in 1914 enlarged in 1921. We

went through a tunnel and came out onto a bridge across the lake. We followed the lake and the river for some kilometres and then left it and went up by a small stream. The road got steeper and steeper and suddenly the engine stopped completely.

It was blazing hot with no shade near the road. I got straight out and walked down the stream to the nearest shade under some fir trees. From there I could see the car and everything that passed. Very soon two motor cyclists came by and stopped. They located the trouble in the magneto and said they would send out someone from the garage at Jaca. From where I sat their voices were very clear and I soon heard one of them exclaim "Mare de Deu" so I knew they were the inevitable Catalans once more.

Next a car came by and stopped and a loud clear voice in English "Are you alright?" It was the people who had arrived after us at Señor Ventura, they were French. They could not do anything and soon went on again. Then came a car down the hill, this time two Spanish officers, they confirmed the diagnosis and said they would telephone from the next village to Jaca to hurry up the garage men. After that I went to sleep and woke up to hear John calling "tea". At the same moment it began to rain and I

ran to the car with our belongings and sat inside to drink the tea made from the stream water on our Primus. At that moment a car actually went by without stopping, but it was driven by a very rough looking peasant who did not look as if he could have helped much. For some time there had been noises like someone trying to start a refractory motor engine but this turned out to be thunder.

When we had finished our tea, an enormous car which looked like a bus came along, containing two men, a boy and an Alsatian, they were the garage people. One man just touched the magneto and the engine started up. They went straight off back and we packed up and followed. We were relieved to find that the stream from which we had made our tea did not go through the village above but straight up into the mountains.

In a very short time we were at Jaca. The first thing we saw was a half made triumphal arch for the coming festivities. We soon discovered that the whole town was in a state of excitement. There was a group of officers at the door of the hotel and inside the waitresses were running about wildly some laughing some cursing.

There was no room in the hotel but we were taken to a brand new house and given a good room there and told

that two Marquesas were going to sleep there.

In spite of their flurry and the fact that it was 5 o'clock they gave us a good meal of omelette, ham, chicken and fruit.

After lunch it was raining hard, we asked our way to the cafe and were answered by a man in white trousers sitting in the door of the garage. John asked him if he was German he said "No, you will never guess what nationality I am, but it is Central European". I at once said Czecho-Slovak which was right. We told him that we knew the Masaryk family and spoke of the I.C.W.A. which he actually knew about, he was spending the summer doing a course of Spanish at Jaca. We then went to the Casino till it stopped raining.

At dinner the main hotel dining room was full and we were put in a small room with a queer collection of people. A priest, a lady's maid, two old women and at our table a taxi driver. Everyone eat with their knives and two very unpleasant men at the next table smoked throughout the meal, the food was however just the same as in the main dining room.

The reaction of the chauffeur to our tales of being woken up in the middle of the night by the police

was different from that of a Catalan who would have said the government was terrible. He could only remark in a puzzled way, surprised at our criticising their methods, "The Queen is English".

After dining we were waylaid by girls selling lottery tickets for a typewriter, we bought one for a peseta and found it was to pay for the King's visit. Adding insult to injury.

In the morning we met a Cheso with two mules in his full costume but he declined to be photographed, again very different from a Catalan peasant.

Eighth Day, July 17th

John went off early to Huesca. I breakfasted alone and then sat in the shade and wrote letters and read Pio Baroja's 'Cesar o Nada' till 11.30 when I went back to Jaca to see the procession of giants and dwarfs.

In the town I saw two Chesos with green dresses pleated from the shoulders and white chemises showing at the shoulder.

The giants were the usual type and there were two very grotesque dwarfs. The fiesta was half hearted compared with a Catalan fiesta, the military band played outside the town hall where alms were given away and did not go round the streets with the giants as at San Feliu de Pallerols.

I spoke with some English people who were studying Spanish at the foreigners Summer School.

At lunch two young Spaniards came and sat at my table and kept stealing furtive glances at me but never said a word to me, they did not say a word to each other either till more than half way through the meal.

John came back armed with various introductions and we visited a very pleasant man who told us about Anso

and gave us a letter to the doctor there. He sent all over the town to try and find a certain book for us.

Ninth Day, July 18th

We were woken at six by hearing a high officer being called to go and meet the king, later we heard the band and the soldiers marching off.

We got off at about 10.30 and followed the Pamplona road to Berdun a village on a hill. There we turned off towards Anso, the road was narrow but very good and went through a fine gorge, then after crossing the river two or three times we came suddenly into view of Anso. A town of well built gable houses, like a German fairy tale town. Not a single building out of place. Below the church was a large new house which I took to be a rich man's summer villa but it did not spoil the general effect.

We circled the town and then went down the Calle Mayor and stopped in a square. Several old men were standing about in their pirate like costume and we asked the priest the way to the inn. The innkeeper was standing next to him so he took us to the inn and we wandered round the town while he sent our card to the doctor. Then we sat in the cafe with the doctor and he told us everything we could think of asking, about Anso.

He said there were no really poor people in Anso, everyone had some property and anyone who liked to work could take a piece of communal land and cultivate it. The mountain pastorage including abundance of wild strawberries, mushrooms, trout and wild goats belonged to the municipality.

The forests were very rich but the village had neither the enterprise nor the capital to exploit them, and a millionaire from Bilbao was doing so.

Population was 1200-1500, maximum had been 1800. In the last two years 200 people boys and girls of 19 - 25 had emigrated, all had done well and some were millionaires.

Few families exceeded six as it was the custom to marry late at thirty or so and it was considered a disgrace to marry as young as twenty-five.

People who emigrated came back with different clothes but their minds unchanged.

Chief disease arteria sclerosis. Infection from outsiders, especially conscripts.

Not a single unalphabet, infant mortality low. Food good. They drink a lot more than an average of a

litre a day of wine.

We had lunch at a long table with a father, mother and child from Saragossa and another man from there.

Lunch consisted of:

Olives and shrimps,

Potatoes, cigrons, bacon, sausage, green beans,

Pigeons, trout,

Stewed Plums.

After lunch we sat in the cafe and watched the pirate like figures going from table to table and playing cards.

They wear a small black Tyrolese hat with long black tassels on the side of the head.

A short black brusa

A wide purple sash

Black or grey knickers with white or blue pants showing Black stockings

Sandals.

After lunch the doctor took us to see the school which was a model building costing 4000 pounds with an educational cinema, we also visited the public library

and then went to see one or two particularly interesting houses.

We were shown round the first by a woman in a Queen Elizabeth ruff and a green baize pleated dress suspended from her shoulders. There were huge settles in the fire place with little tables, in the middle, which let down, and a beautiful painted wooden alcove with designs in red and yellow on a dark background which would have delighted a modern artist.

The second house had banisters of the finest polished wood and the doors were carved and polished like the best drawing room furniture.

Later we took the doctor and the schoolmaster for a drive up into the Pyrenees, we passed various peasants in the pirate costume with their donkeys. It looked extraordinary to see them hoeing in the fields in their gala clothes.

Finally the road got so bad that we had to get out and walk, we passed a very strong castle on the way where the carabineros used to defend themselves against the smugglers. At the end of our walk we came out into a most beautiful glade and went to the Carabineros house for a drink, we drank water and they gave us a huge dish of wild

strawberries and entertained us most politely.

At supper mine host sat at the end of the table and in the middle of the meal a lamb arrived and ran about the room, this turned out to be tomorrow's dinner.

In the evening the cafe was again full of the men in pirate like dress. Fifty years ago they were great contrabandistas and there used to be great fight between them and the carabineros.

Tenth Day

We left Anso before the excellent doctor was up: when we called on him there was also a magnificent peasant from the valley of Roncal waiting for him.

We went down the valley until the opening of the foz where we bathed, wrote and ate, until about 2 p.m., then we continued our journey. For the first 32 kms our road lay along the side of the river Aragon past Esco, Tiermes, Yesa, between which last two is the frontier line of Aragon and Navarre. It was very hot and chiefly cultivated with corn. Esco was a typical hill top village, why are these villages always on the top of hills - fortification - coolness, water, barren ground, a beacon to travelers (a city set on a hill cannot be hid). All this district was noticeable for the contrast between the cultivated lower land and the barren soil above where no water comes.

At Yeso the river bends south while the road goes north: we left the main Pamplona road at Monreal and turned to the left through a very fertile country of large fields and agricultural . All this section through Idecin and Monreal looked wealthy and con-

trasted with the country round Huesca. Our cross route joined the Pamplona Estella route at Puente la Reina and from now on we noted magnificent buildings by the wayside, built of fine large brown stone and with many sculptured coats of arms over the doorways and gates, also many chapels and shrines. Puente la Reina has many large buildings. The reason for this is that we are now on one of the main routes to Santiago and the road has been plastered with rest houses, hospitals, chapels for pilgrims by the pious wealthy. Especially worth notice are Ciranges and Estella.

Just before Puente la Reina I discovered that my back wheel had worked loose and broken a pivot. This was at Eneriz, we drew into the shade and did the necessary repairs amid a crowd of children. Estella unfortunately we did not examine under the impression that we should return next day. It has several beautiful buildings, notably a ruined church with a fine sculptured doorway. We stopped here at a cafe and talked to the owner who had been in New York but spoke precious little English. We then followed a road north into the Sierra to find a camping ground. The country very quickly changed: instead of the hot wheat bearing plain we came upon a valley with

a cool river and constantly increasing woodlands and small villages everywhere. They were constructing an aqueduct at several points. The trees higher up were very fine and were evidently exploited commercially, as we passed several small lumber camps, very large oaks and beeches.

The road lead on to a vast limestone amphitheatre up which we laceded amid excellent forests. On the top of the edge of the escarpment of a fine flat table land we encamped under very large beeches. After supper we went to bed but hardly to sleep. Contrary to custom I did doze off almost at once only to be awoken by a squirrel running over my shoulder. I then lay awake for hours watching the wheel of stars beyond the trees. In the early morning a couple of peasants passed by wishing us good day and we set out on another day's journey which was to prove our longest.

Eleventh Day

We left our mountain camp at 8 a.m., and started off over a grass upland grazed by sheep. We soon passed two young monks and a fine 18th century monastery. After that we went through woods of large beech trees and suddenly found ourselves looking down a very steep hill into a valley with the road going down it in great descents.

We had meant to keep up on the mountains to Vittoria but we had missed a turning. We went down the road which in places had been nearly washed away, we passed a peasant woman leading a solid wheeled Basque ox-cart. Later we passed a roadmender, we asked him the name of the town below and he answered with an incredible word which however we eventually found on the map spelt Olazagutia. I found him very easy to understand and remarked on what beautiful clear Spanish he spoke, when I realised that he was a Basque and speaking a foreign language like ourselves.

At Olazagutia we saw our first Pelota court, it was a cement factory town, but looked bright and clean with very well built houses.

We went along the main San Sebastian Madrid road as fast as we could, as it was unpleasant to find oneself on a road plastered with advertisements of the best hotels in Madrid and Seville. It was a straight road and it seemed very strange to be going at 40 miles an hour after meandering over mountain roads at 15 miles an hour for so long. I felt we might as well be in a train and was very glad when we reached Vittoria.

Vittoria for us consisted of three barracks and a petrol pump. Each barrack had a different uniform, the first stiff "cardboard" hats like English Tommies, the second khaki tam o shanters and the third cotton boy scout hats.

After Vittoria we began immediately to climb up into the mountains again, at the top we came to a spring with a horse trough and we stopped to wash up the breakfast things. A little later we came to a village Penacerrada where we got petrol at 53 centims the litre, it having been 61 in Navarre.

After Penacerrada the gradient became terrific and we had to go into bottom gear for the first time, when we arrived at the top we had an immense view of a sunscorched plain stretching from beyond Miranda on one side to be-

yond Logrono on the other with the Sierra de la Demanda behind, there was a heat mist obscuring the distance and in the foreground the ubiquitous Ebro.

The gradient down was also terrific we met no vehicle from Vittoria to the plain near Logrono, if our magneto had chosen to go wrong there instead of on a main International road we should have had a very long stay.

From a few miles out of Vittoria to just before Pencerrada we had been going through an island of Old Castile, now we again got into a Basque province and came to a grim looking town called La Guardia.

It was one immense fortress with a few narrow streets compressed inside. We got out to examine the town and found it dirty and full of flies, when we got back our car was swarming with children. To this place a British Astronomical expedition came to see an eclipse in 186 .

We drove on for about a quarter of an hour and then stopped short with our first puncture, a huge mule shoe nail, a shepherd boy came to watch us and was much interested. The wheel was changed very quickly and soon after we passed a bend of the Ebro and arrived in

Logrono.

Logrono was extremely hot, the approach to it over the bridge was beautiful, but the new part of the town was very dull.

We left the car at the garage to have the puncture mended, the wheel hub put on and the back light put in action. Then we went off to lunch at the Gran Hotel Comercio. It had a lift and a bathroom but was neither modern nor old fashioned. The food was dreary and except for a dish of meat stewed with snails was much like English boarding house food. There was no electric fan which even the Monzon hotel had had, and it was stifling.

After lunch we had coffee in general Espartero's square and went back to the garage, they refused to name a price for the repairs and said whatever you think and there will be no charge for garaging if you buy petrol. We bought petrol and gave them 3.50, 2/6 for the puncture, light and hub, he seemed well satisfied.

We got letters at Logrono and we decided to go straight on to Ona that night.

The road from Logrono began through a very hot plain, everywhere there was the harvest just cut. In every

village there was at least one house which had arms carved in stone on the front, and one in Genicero had a notice about Cervantes on it, which I assume said he had lived there at some time.

The country was not remarkable in any way, we passed through Pancorbo but left the gorges on the right. All this country would be more beautiful in spring and autumn when the mountains would show up instead of being hidden in a haze, there were many finely outlined villages and towns to be seen but the heat and haze detracted from one's appreciation of them.

At San Martin we started along the road to Ona but it was one of the worst of the many types of bad road in Spain, namely an atrocious surface covered with 4 inches of dust which did not save one from the bumps but made it impossible to avoid them and added the sensation of being choked to that of having one's spine jarred. We had not got far before we saw a mule on the ditch with his cart overturned, this must be a common event as a few days later, outside Sahagun we saw the same thing, the horses shied, upset the cart and with it a fat peasant woman and all her Santiago day shopping.

After passing the beditched cart we had enough of that road and turned back on to the main road via Bri-viesca, this was equally bad as far as bumps were concerned but was comparatively free of dust.

Towards evening we arrived in Ona but we had hardly left it to find our friends, a few kilometres beyond, when a huge nail entered our tyre, the second punchado. We changed the wheel quickly and arrived at the Maurice's about 7 o'clock.

They told us interesting tales of the feuds between Portuguese and Galician workmen on the railway, and between rival gypsy troops, it all sounded very foreign to the peaceful Spain we had been passing through.

Later we were to find that everywhere, railways, mines or factories had destroyed Spanish courtesy and that while the Galician peasant delighted one's soul with his smiles and greetings, the mining villages greeted us with literal stones and in one case a shovel full of filthy mud, this from a factory village.

Apparently the Portuguese did the blasting for the railway and the Galicians scaled the cliffs. The Galicians constantly accused the Portuguese of dropping bits

of rock among them on purpose and the Portuguese denied it. Finally one day after a fiesta when everyone had had too much wine, a shower of stones did fall among the Galicians who immediately took out their knives and went for the Portuguese, whereupon the Portuguese above cut the ropes of the Galicians who were working on the face of the cliff and they fell below. Two Guardia Civil dealt with the situation and all offenders got four months for attempted murder.

Twelfth Day, July 21st

We left Ona at 12.30 seen off by the Maurice's. The Scotch inspector, Rickle, and the Cambridge undergraduate Hammond. The Spanish "butler" and the Red Cross man.

We were short of petrol so went out of our way to the nearest village to find it, but when we got there we found the pump was empty. Another car there said they were coming along behind us and would let us have some if we stuck, so we went on through a blazing sun to Medina. There we got the petrol and went on to Villacargo where we bought bread for lunch.

After Villacargo the road went up a mountain valley through various villages, the last of which was built over a huge natural bridge on the edge of a cliff called Puente Dei.

After this village we found a shady place by the side of the river and there cooked our lunch of tea, trout and cheese and an excellent loaf of bread with the makers' trade mark of a Spanish castle stamped in the middle.

The stream was much like an English one, a par-

adise, with red, green and blue dragon flies, large numbers of trout and other fish, and every kind of water animal, water rat, crabs etc. The stream was like England but directly we got out of the shade, the sun was terrific and for the first time I had to cover my arms.

The villages were composed of high, well built houses and on the main road we passed a typical Spanish posada with a wooden balcony on the top floor.

Then we went across a flat plain with horses grazing on it, which looked very like an Irish bog. After that the hills were rounded like our downs and seemed hardly worthy of the name of mountains. We stopped on the top and looked down a winding valley, everything was hidden in a thick heat mist, from the top I expected the valley to be bare and treeless.

We decided to go on to the sea and went on down a very steep gradient, and although it was the main Madrid Santander road and in the "temporada", round every other corner we came upon huge road mending operations with steam rollers, piles of sand and every other kind of obstruction.

The gradient was terrific and at first we were

fully occupied with that. Soon however, we noticed that the valley was green and full of trees, then that the villages were quite un-Spanish. The houses were all whitewashed and we often passed one much like a Georgian English hotel. Several houses had notices of cyder to sell, finally we stopped and had a penny glass each. With the taste of cyder in my mouth the country grew less and less like Spain; I was extremely tired from a journey of 160 miles over bad roads the day before, and I began to feel I had got right off the map, the country grew more and more like England, we passed a piece of Sussex near Arundel, a piece of Kent, a piece of Devonshire. We went through Torrellevega and wound round hills till suddenly we saw the Atlantic a copper patch of light made by the low sun, with a chapel silhouetted against it. We went down to a beach, I got out of the car and was horrified to see the whole beach hopping about. I was so tired that I thought it was in my own head at first, but later I discovered it was masses and masses of sand hoppers.

We were trying to find a village on the sea so we went on. It seemed to me incredible that the people in any of the villages that we passed should talk Spanish, English, French or Dutch would have been possible, but

Spanish was absurd. The huge ox carts laden with hay also looked incongruous, but they fitted better with the landscape than the Spanish language. I felt like I had sometimes felt in America that England no longer existed, that I was in a new world.

We stopped at one place Canillas where the Atlantic Hight landed, but it was not very attractive, so after examining the hotel we moved on.

We noticed that everything was beginning to feel sticky with the salt water, a thing one never notices on the Mediterranean.

Finally we crossed a long bridge and arrived at San Vicente de La Barquera, where we stopped at a big hotel which smelt like an English seaside lodging house but only charged the usual 12 pesetas a day.

We were able to agree heartily with the Estremaduran at One who had said that the Basque country was not Spain. The only thing to remind one of Spain was the mountains behind covered with a burning mist which indicated the blazing, dusty Spain behind them. The power of climate in determining the Character of a place and people is nowhere better exemplified.

Thirteenth and Fourteenth Day

We spent the next day at San Vicente in resting and writing. In the afternoon we bathed. We went down to the beach and undressed by a rock, there were people from the hotel a little way up the beach but with Spaniards as with mosquitoes one is quite safe a hundred yards away, as one knows they will never move an unnecessary yard.

The next morning we also went to bathe. Herds of cows were driven along the beach every now and then by sturdy bare legged boys in straw hats, one young bullock took a fancy to our clothes and went off with John's vest in his mouth, I should have liked to have seen what he did with it but John insisted on me rescuing it. He evidently mistook it for cotton seed cake.

In the afternoon we went a longish walk inland through water meadows and apple trees. I ate an apple and it tasted like an English apple instead of the usual cotton wool which Spaniards think is the best an apple can do.

San Vicente de La Barquera is a very beautiful place on an inlet with two bridges. One built in Isabel's time. The sea front looks more like a piece of Dieppe than

Spain and the whole effect is more English than Spanish.

Fifteenth Day, July 24th

Hearing that an important feria was held on St. James' day July 25th at this town, we turned on our tracks somewhat yesterday and arrived at about 7 p.m. Our way was somewhat of an exploration as it lay directly through the zone of which we possess no map, but having discovered a road behind San Vicente which went to Palencia we took it, assuming that it would have a turning sooner or later to Reinosa.

The road led up into the mountains through miles of valleys where nothing was cultivated but hay and maize. The villages were straggling and shapeless, the cottages small and mean, looking however rather well with their terra cotta roofs and wooden balconies, the poor relations of those we had seen on the way down to Torrelavega. The churches were mean also, minute whitewashed structures, with brick red campanilas.

The road was deserted; we actually met one car in the first 100 kilometres and there were very few carts. These were of wood with semi-solid wheels. The only visible people were scything hay. As we got higher the road passed

through a gorge of very dilapidated looking sedementary rocks pushed and bent into every kind of curve; also masses of pudding stone of very large ingredients. After the gorge the ascent continued for miles with some villages and pastures and a few woods. Under a beechwood we ate our food in sight of the Picos de Europa, very fine mountains still streaked with snow. A very deep valley lay at our feet with a road winding down, but we were glad to find later that our path went further up still. It crossed another and the main pass and came out in a rocky plateau with fine grazing grounds where we were surprised to see storks walking about and apparently superintending the hay-making.

All this time the only indication of our direction on signpost and milestone had been Cervera and at last without descending much, we reached a very old town, of about 2000 inhabitants. Nothing could be more typical of one sort of old Castilian town: every house, shop, inn, workshop bore on its fine stone walls above the portals a sculptured coat of arms dating from the day when a large proportion of the townsfolk were nobility. The nobles have gone, their palaces are changed to meaner but more useful dwellings and nothing but an air of indescribable decay remains.

We stopped at a shop for cyder, the drink of all this province, an excellent one, served in penny glasses. As he handed me the change the shopman pointed to my back tyre out of which stood three inches of iron wire. We changed the wheel amid a crowd of friends and went on our road, 54 kms to Reinosa. All along the road, as for the previous 15 kms we saw signs of coal. I doubt if there is much commercial exploitation but patches of gritty dust in back yards show that the inhabitants at least derive some small benefit from scratching beneath the surface of their hillsides.

The most interesting place we passed was Aguilar (to be described later). As we got nearer Reinosa signs of tomorrow's feria became commoner. Peasants in smocks with long wands in their hands driving ox-waggons: behind the waggons chained by the head and horns, the bull, inside the cart the calf, and two draft bullocks pulling it, their heads covered with a rough skin. At the sound of the motor horn, the wand would be placed against the bullock's horn and the cart would at once be drawn to the side of the road. Ten miles from Reinosa we passed an ice-cream cart drawn by a donkey; we saw it arrive later in the evening.

Reinosa was an unpleasant surprise at first

sight: railway sidings, villas, modern buildings and one or two large factories but when all these were passed we came to the older streets. Some fine old buildings, often obscured by the new paint and glass of the balconies which covers the whole front above the ground floor. A sign of colder climate, these glazed balconies.

The hotel (9 pesetas each, supper, bed and breakfast) proved excellent but could not provide a meal until 9.15 p.m. officially, which turned out to be nearly 10 p.m. actually. We spent our waiting time putting the car away in a garage run by a German, mending a watch, drinking vermouth and eating olives and anchovies. At the cafe we watched the passers-by and found that of 100 women, 56 were dark and 44 fair. Of the dark, by no means all were true black haired Mediterraneans and more than one of them had at least a tinge of auburn.

Reinosa was amusing to watch: a boy on a donkey with two large wicker armchairs; the hotel lavatory had over the door "Aqui esta", "Here it is". The children at supper noisier than any yet seen, one child of four amused himself by sticking toothpicks into his roll of bread thus transforming it into a cow; the largest proportion of "comidas y bebidas" shops ever seen: every other

house a fonda some of them strange mongrels as "sasteria-
posada" hundreds of tailors and barbers shops; in fact
Reinosa is the centre for all the country side for miles
around to come and sell, buy, drink, get clothes and re-
move beards.

Supper - beans, omelette, fish, meat, cheese,
biscuits, jam, fruit, bread, wine - was excellent when it
came. At the next table was an Englishman from Sheffield,
engaged with three others at the local gun factory, in
which is Vicker's money.

Sixteenth DayReinosa

After breakfast in bed we looked out of the window to see a steady flow of cattle passing by. We followed the stream to a broad downside where the earlier arrivals were standing, goring, roaring, blinking. Very fine looking animals, their owners all in berets and here and there a patient, indifferent group of donkeys. After taking some photos we retired to this cafe where I have written these notes and for two hours we have watched an endless stream of perfectly behaved cattle pass. Many of the carts are painted with bright colours and patterns and some have canvas covers also painted, with rush linings. Some carts are quite primitive, almost solid wheels and perfectly crude wooden sides. The peasantry are notably unpicturesque; dark blue smocks, berets, women with black handkerchiefs, various forms of canvas shoes. Occasionally the crowd is varied by church goers with prayer books and black mantillas. The priests here are Goyesque. Occasionally donkeys have bright cloths like our own, and the carts are decorated, but otherwise there is amazingly little co-

lour. Reinoso, moreover seems to be a town of widows, half the shops belong to "Widow of So and So" and the street in which we sit is called 'Viuda de Casafont'.

Having consumed one large bottle of champagne cyder, evidently to the waiter's surprise - it cost 2.50 pesetas - we went off to see the fair once more. The stream which had passed us so constantly had swollen to very large proportions and I photographed the mass. Thence to the garage and the hotel; we got off by 1.30 and raced a train to Aguilar. The railway here in winter is obviously snowed under and the erection of old sleepers as drift catchers reminded one of crossing the Rockies.

We halted at Aguilar to look through the town which is really superb. Long streets of arcaded houses, very many of them with coats of arms. Aguilar should be visited.

From Aguilar we took the main Madrid road over a yellow brown cultivated plain with here and there juts of rock rising above the level, and occasionally small streams. A few kilometres on there was visible from the left a curious shrine built into a cave in the rock. The whole of this district looks promising for Archaeology. Shortly after the village we halted for lunch under some willows

by the side of the road amid a typical Spanish landscape of bare rock and brown grass alternating with the red roofs of a village just appearing behind one bare ledge which had recently been used as a threshing floor. On one bare hill about thirty beehives made of old hollow trunks roofed with red tiles. We have not seen a cloud, save on the Ficos de Europa on the horizon, since we left the Pyrenees.

We continued on our road after lunch through steppe country relieved by low rocky hills and the greener fields of a river (Ebro?). At one place a large textile factory took the water for its canal. Finally we reached Herrera, a typical brown town and very dusty. We stopped to see if we could find out a way off the Palencia road towards Leon and at the same moment an inhabitant approached with, as far as we could gather, a general curse against all motorists on his lips. Apparently an hour and a half ago a car had gone too fast over the bridge and killed someone. Finally he pointed out the road, which we had missed via Saldana to Leon, C. thought he was misleading us purposefully, but this did not prove the case. We struck off on what was virtually a dirt track across the plains which stretched like a saucer or set of saucers for

ever. On the saucer edge were long stretches of dwarf oaks, which either the charcoal burners or the wind would not permit to grow more than a couple of feet or so high. Save for the Cantabrians on the northern edge the landscape was absolutely featureless and Saldana in the midst was also featureless; a long street with many wooden and stone arcades, much after the style of Aguilar, but far less interesting. It being St. James' Day the population showed signs of festivities and when we had got through a village and found a more isolated 'comidas y bebidas' we found a large group of men playing a species of nine pins, with enormous rough wooden balls in which holes had been cut for a hand hold. A friendly man served us our lemonade and asked us if we had been through Herrera as they had just received a telegram stating that an accident had taken place, with one man killed and four seriously injured, and calling for the judge to go out posthaste. After Saldana, the invariable and endless plain and in the midst of it, buried, dead, extraordinarily dead, the formerly important Sahagun. Two or three old Romanic churches and streets of adobe houses, the people sitting in front of their homes, an execrable dusty road; we filled up with petrol, and passed through a really magnificent gateway across the road, a last vestige of some non-existent convent.

The road went on as ever across the meseta, save for the adobe villages, we had not seen any sign of life or habitation for many miles, except an occasional and usually half ruined mud compound surrounded by barren and open fields. Only one curious monument had broken the monotony just outside Saldana was a very ancient cross surrounded by three plain stone columns, a fourth lay broken at the foot and all showed marks of some connecting chain or bar which must have once enclosed the cross. All stood on a little mound five yards in circumference by the roadside on the edge of an irrigated field which seemed to produce nothing but innumerable frogs.

Sahagun is a superb example of a ruined economic order: its greatness was probably born of the Americas, four centuries ago, and when American gold ceased to flow in, it withered like any other parasite deprived of its host. We left Sahagun hoping to cover 90 kms to Leon in the two hours before nightfall. Shortly after the town we passed two mules and a cart in a ditch; the woman who owned and drove it was accusing a passing gypsy on a donkey of having caused the accident (she was particularly annoyed as all her shopping, including a keg of parrafin, had been spilt in the ditch) in some way or other, and as the latter flour-

ishing a small but sharp sickle appealed to us with many gesticulations, we hurried on. But not for many kilometres, soon as we went down a slope to a rudimentary river bed it became clear that a tyre was flat: examination proved that two tyres were flat. I mended a puncture in one, as usual caused by a mule nail, only to find that the valve also leaked violently. Nothing could be done but blow up the other tyre and hope for the best. We passed a few mud villages in the gloom and at last reached a main road from Valencia to Gijon, and continuing in the dark, with two stops for pumping, reached Leon at 11 p.m., having slowly pushed our way through a crowd of dancers, we finally made the Hotel Paris and after an excellent supper went to bed.

While we were by the roadside mending punctures several peasants passed, bidding us good evening and expressing interest in our situation. They seemed rather a poor lot, and not so well dressed as those we had seen earlier in the day, riding on donkeys, mules and horses, with beautiful saddle bags. As we approached Leon we noted an alarming number of mastiffs, and it was amusing to read the author of "Por Tierras de Leon" on the subject later.

Seventeenth DayLeon

The events of the previous evening somewhat destroyed my night's sleep from overtiredness and the day very early began to prove that it could be hot in Leon. It has been and still is (7.15 p.m.) 86 all day. A succession of drinks has helped a good deal.

Early I found a bookshop and bought an excellent summary of the human geography of the province, later we found two other good books.

Of course the chief business of the day has been to see the cathedral: the first piece of sightseeing we have done as yet, and quite unavoidable. From the virile, almost clumsily powerful Gerona Cathedral to the girlish Leon Cathedral seems more than a few hundred miles across country. Beyond the general structure, the two really superb features are the stained glass and the paintings in the cloisters: than these nothing could be better. A very logical and consecutive piece of work and not spoiled by foolish whitewash or imitation plaster masonry. The cloisters are however not improved by the "weak Renaissance" additions.

Leon as a place is cheerful, new, happy: quite unlike anything which Ford says of it. The Hotel is excellent.

Eighteenth DayTo Benavente

We started off in the morning to fetch our letters from Benavente. The road lay right over the meseta. We had hardly got out of Leon before there was a terrific explosion and we found an 18 inch burst in the back tyre, it was nearly knocked off the wheel but did not swerve much, we changed the wheel and proceeded. We soon saw groups of the underground store huts typical of the meseta, presumably due to the facts (1) that they keep things cool (2) that thanks to the shortage of building material it is cheaper to burrow a barn in the mud than to import wood to build it with. All the houses are of mud and the churches very insignificant. Another typical feature is herds of turkeys.

Benavente turned out to be a God forsaken place with all the disadvantages of antiquity and none of the advantages. It was hardly picturesque but the streets were so abominably cobbled that it was murder to the car to take it along them. However we got our letters and I found an excellent cucumber and bread and water for our lunch.

We decided to go back a different way. We crossed a large river bordered by poplars which we rejected as a lunch place the road being high above it. Soon however we discovered that trees were few and far between, we got out onto the meseta where not a tree was to be seen, nothing but parched corn fields. A wind began to blow up and finally we had to content ourselves with the shade of a poplar avenue at the beginning of a small town. We made our meal under great difficulties. The primus could only be got to boil by the erection of elaborate wind-screens from the car. The dust blew into everything. Nevertheless we sat in the dusty ditch and had a pleasant meal.

We went on through the village and were landed with a puncture a few yards outside it. There was absolutely no shade and a lot of wind blowing dust but there was nothing for it but to mend the puncture and put in the new inner tube instead of the burst one. First of all the new tube did not fit, then the valve misbehaved, after an hour or two a car passed and gave us another valve and we eventually got going, but the tyre went down slowly and we had to stop to pump up.

After some kilometres of pure meseta we came to a village where we went to get drinks. The posada was truly

primitive, kept by an old peasant women with swarms of small children (see conversations). We found that in that district they married latish from 25 to 30.

After that we passed a really beautiful mud village. The first I had seen that seemed to have any shape or character, it stood up from the plain a well grouped mixture of houses and churches.

At last we got to a bigger town Valencia de Don Juan with an extraordinary castle with minute little towers.

Hostess: Have you any children?

John: Yes, two boys of nine and eight.

Hostess: You must have a lot dead.

John: Yes, we are young to have children that age.

Nineteenth Day, July 28th

In the afternoon we went off to _____ in search of some prehistoric caves. The sky was stormy so we were able to observe the meseta under more interesting conditions than the day before.

We asked the way to the caves and were directed along a bumping cart track across some fields. We soon passed two peasant boys on a donkey, they gave us further directions and were very friendly. He was a good example of the fundamental difference between the Spanish peasant and the English agricultural labourer, he was young, healthy, handsome, happy and spoke to us openly and freely, one never in Spain, except in the swagger hotels meets the servility one meets in the country in England. A Hampshire labourer would have touched his cap and said 'yes, Sir' at every other word, or perhaps to an obvious foreigner he would have stared and been less polite. The Spanish peasant does not notice one as a foreigner, a stranger from another province or a big city is sufficiently strange to him, not till one has been speaking for some time does he notice something strange and ask you where you come from.

Even the Galician peasant with all his poverty is never servile, he is seen leading his oxen in rags which the shabbiest of tramps would be ashamed to be seen in, in England, but he is quite unconscious of them, they are so universal. The contrast between the sleek, tidy, well fed oxen and the ragged underfed sometimes crippled peasants is terrific.

In spite of their rags and dirt one never makes the mistake of thinking peasants are gypsies. The gypsies seem to exult in their rags and dirt, while the peasant is mutely unconscious of his. They have a different walk. The gypsy walks as if he could never be tired, his whole attitude seems to say, I am free, I wear what rags I like, I am as dirty as I like, I go where I like. The peasant plods on with a purpose, he is only ragged because he needs the money for something else. He is always on his way to somewhere, to and from his work, to and from the market.

Aubrey Bell might have gone one further in his list of Galician things which change every few miles the scenery, weights and measures etc. The clothes of the peasant change every few inches, patches of yellow corduroy, black cloth, grey velvet, in fact his trousers are a patchwork of different kinds of stuff just as his hills are a

patchwork of different people's fields.

The Catalan peasant in brand new corduroys walking his beautiful swinging walk by the side of oxen or mule is a very different sight.

The caves were a wash out, we scrambled about at great risk but found nothing. Below us the peasants we had met were busy reaping with sickles in spite of the fact that the plain was quite flat and eminently suited for machinery. The divisions of property were so small that they could not afford them. But one shuddered to think what would happen to that nice boy peasant, if, in the interests of progress someone bought up many peasant farms and employed the peasants to work machinery, one could be sure that, although the land would produce more wealth, all of it would go into the pockets of the new farmer and dealers and the peasants, even if they were not financially worse off would certainly be no better off and would lose their independence, happiness and courteous manners.

The use of machinery on that plain might mean more motor cars in Madrid, conceivably it might by taxation, produce more roads or even schools but the peasants themselves would have nothing to gain, unless, by a miracle they clubbed together to share reaping machines. The steam thrash-

ing machine which can go from farm to farm is seen in some parts.

But in any case the position of these charming peasants is precarious, if the rapidly increasing towns get the upper hand in Spain, the Spanish equivalent of our corn laws will be repealed and the peasant will have no chance of competing against American corn. Here anyhow protection seems justified, quantitatively it is no doubt as bad as anywhere else but qualitatively it preserves the happy independent peasant instead of flooding the country with wage slaves.

Twentieth Day, July 29th

On Sunday morning we went to a service in the Cathedral. The windows are so astoundingly beautiful that I could have sat the whole morning there. Two choir boys did strange antics with two green vestments which they unfolded and gave to the priests to kiss and then carried down to the choir and back again where they folded them up and put them on a shelf. The pictures in the cloisters are a never ending source of interest, every face in the crowd is full of expression.

We started off in the afternoon across the meseta up to the highest pass in the Cantabrians filled with the hope of primitive mountain scenery. It was cloudy so the meseta was not as hot as usual.

Directly we began to be wound up into the mountains we noticed a sinister blackness in the stream. Then we began to cross level crossings, at the third of which the children of the crossing keeper were sent out to beg from us, this was so contrary to usual Spanish custom that we were not surprised when round the next corner we came to a coal mining village. The inhabitants were anything

but mountain peasants and were most unattractive. In the second village we passed through we were greeted by a stone from a boy, which actually hit the car.

It was all very different from what we had expected and was not improved by the facts that the mountains were bald and dull and the road in a state of complete reconstruction. At the end of another village we had a puncture and stopped just outside the village to mend it. Two girls and a man soon came up and asked us for a lift (see conversation).

In one or two villages there were several girls wearing shawls embroidered with huge flowers in bright wools. In the higher villages were summer visitors. As a Spaniard's only idea of a summer holiday place is somewhere where he can sit and be cool, it probably did not worry them to spend their holiday in a mining village full of most unpleasant inhabitants, in a place where the only possible occupation is mountain walks, a pleasure which very few Spaniards indulge in, in the summer. But it is the same all over Spain, you can plant a summer visitor's hotel anywhere, provided it is cool and reasonably accessible by train. There is one in a valley in the Pyrenees some miles from any town where the mountains are so precipitous that

only the most energetic climber could take any sort of walk and here every summer families come to eat and sit and keep cool. I have watched one lady summer visitor sitting all day in a garden doing absolutely nothing by the hour, her only occupations were eating and occasionally talking.

Of course among certain classes things are beginning to change. At Corunna we saw a crew of smart girls learning to scull.

At last, at the top of the pass we began to see what we had come for, the descent down the other side was exciting enough. Very steep mountains tipped with grey clouds and a terrifying looking road descending into the depths. We went down it as far as the village of Pajares. On the way up again the engine failed, but it turned out to be only that the sparking plugs wanted cleaning.

We found a different way back which avoided the mining villages. By the time we turned the clouds had blown away and the mountains along the other road were more interesting. We went through a village which was purely peasant and then down a valley towards the meseta.

I could see ahead a huge bare grey cliff with

little more than a crack in it and we soon found ourselves in the most amazing gorge. The road was cut out of the rock by the side of the stream and there were sheer grey cliffs on each side without a vestige of vegetation. It turned out to be a famous spot and the Sunday afternoon expedition for the people of Leon. After we came out of it we again came to mining villages and then went across the meseta in the tracks of a river well edged with Polar trees.

Girl: Ah, you are waiting for us.

John: Yes. It's a nail.

Girl: There'll just be room for us three.

John: Three punctures to-day.

Girl: How far are you going?

John: A puncture I tell you.

Twenty-first DayLeon to Piedrafita, July 30th

We left Leon in reasonably good time intending to buy our food at Astorga and eat it on route. A good road through the meseta with the now familiar stretches of cut corn on every side, and occasionally a few trees and greener fields by the sides of rivers. Everywhere we saw groups of underground store houses, dug out of the soil for coolness and each one shut with a wooden locked door. These are used chiefly for storing wine and most of them had the names of their proprietors roughly painted on the lintel. The villages were as usual of mud, adobe and unbaked bricks many of them were of rounded river stones covered over with mud and we saw here and there in the fields piles of newly made unbaked bricks: if you cannot grow anything in your soil you turn it into a house wall. The churches were largely of the same material and often reinforced by baked bricks especially in the belfrys. Naturally architecture never evolves into very high forms in the centre of alluvial plains with nothing but pebbles in

the river bed in the way of stone for scores of miles. Street was so contemptuous of this natural defect, that apparently he failed to see the superb stork's nest on the top of every village belfry. At the first village we were delighted to see a pair of storks actually standing on their nests like the illustration to a fairy tale. The rough mud plaster of these villages is sometimes lined into crude shapes of trees and leaves showing that an aesthetic sense is latent even here.

As we approached Astorga we began to see a large number of red petticoats working in the fields and assumed that these were the wives of the Maragatos. Of the Maragatos we had read much but we saw little of them. Motor transport and railways have destroyed their trade.

Astorga proved an ill paved unattractive town with an ugly cathedral which was being closed as we arrived. Since there seemed nothing else to detain us - Gaudi's new bishop's palace, a dull imitation of a French Chateau least of all - we bought our food and set out to examine the Maragateria.

We retraced our steps to a turning we had noticed to La Baneza, the centre of the country in which the Maragatos live: besides the red petticoats we met a good

many men of fine and peculiar features, most of them on mules, and all of them powerful and brusque. Our tempers were not improved however by an unfortunate incident. We had seen for some time fields of sugar beet, a comparatively new and successful industry, and after several miles of an execrable road, we came upon a large sugar factory. Outside it half a dozen men were busily digging out the roadside ditch which was full for four feet in depth of an odious black stinking ooze. One of the men taking deliberate aim landed a shovel all over me and the car. Another example of what happens when the peasant becomes proletariat.

Shortly after this we had a puncture and then at last we arrived at La Baneza with two more, gained fortunately enough, at the very mouth of the garage.

We ate at a fonda, a good meal well served, and had coffee by the roadside. The town proved a typical market centre with delightful harness shops where we could see a great many of the mule bags which are the chief source of colour on the road.

We returned by another road to Astorga, having to pass through it on our way to the Bierzo. As it chanced we had to stop there for a time, since we procured yet another

puncture at the very entrance to the town. While the puncture was mending we had drinks and then set out to visit a tract of country which both Ford and Borrow and also Street had found more than usually attractive. A very fine road lead upward through typical meseta scenes: the peasants working in the fields wore red dresses and as in the Maragateria, many women had their hair plaited in one long plait down their backs. We reached the pass of Manzanal and began to descend into the Bierzo. Borrow's description of a deep and terrifying gorge was clearly an exaggeration, and we began to fear that we were in for some disappointments. Few trees and many detestable burrowings for coal did not seem to fit in with a 'Valley of Rasselas'.

It is very true that modern roads have destroyed all the romantic terror of scenery. Borrow probably followed the stream several hundred feet further down and with nothing but a mule path near him in these circumstances he might have felt nervous.

When we reached our first villages our disappointment increased we could not feel with Street that the picturesqueness of the surroundings atoned for the misery of the inhabitants. Poverty was apparent everywhere: dirt,

rags, toothless men and women, weariness, deformities, skin diseases. We had reached one of the most illiterate parts of Spain and one of the poorest. This in spite of considerable potential wealth both on the surface of the ground and beneath it. It was of course delightful to see trees and greenness after the meseta, but Bemibre, for example, was nothing so remarkable as our travellers had pretended.

Ponferrada was in a fine open situation on a delightful bend of the river and it has a good castle; but here too the inhabitants showed by their faces and form that they ate badly and slept worse. We had intended to stay at Ponferrada but our minds had been changed by what we had seen, and we hurried on determined to make the pass that night, and to sleep above the last human habitation. At dusk we reached Villafranca, a better place than the rest and well placed beneath the mountain wall, with several interesting buildings, owing their existence to the pilgrimages to Santiago.

Our journey in the growing night from Villafranca to the pass was made difficult by the large number of animals being driven home from pasture. The peasants with them were a cheerier sight, with more colourful clothing,

and some of the small villages were evidently celebrating some small fiesta.

After Vega de Valcara the pass began to be exciting, it was full night now but with a brilliant moon shining and giving remarkable shapes to the precipices and flanks of the valleys. As with Andorran mountains this partial view exceeded in grandeur anything which broad daylight could have revealed.

We reached the top of the pass and began to think of a resting place. Directly over the pass was the village of Piedrafira, the first of Galicia, and we drove round a few corners to find what we wanted. We selected a haystack on the right of the road where on the left was a grassy bank above a precipice. On the bank we ate, much to the surprise of several peasants, who came down the road clattering in their clogs. We slept under the haystack, or in my case lay awake dazzled by the brilliance of the moon. At 6 I awoke and began to mend punctures. Shortly after two peasants arrived to work in the field above the one we had chosen, and then a herd of pigs was driven into our field.

These were our first Galician experiences, and nothing could have been more delightful than the sight of

these peasants. The women all wore red or mustard yellow handkerchiefs and often red or green skirts, and blue or red crossovers on their shoulders. C. found a girl when she went to fetch water, who had evidently been a long distance to hoe a few potatoes.

Twenty-second Day, July 31st

I woke up in the morning finally at 7 to hear the sound of pumping. At first I thought it was John pumping the primus but I soon discovered he was hard at work mending some of our punctures.

I heard the cheery morning voice of a peasant greeting him and a moment afterwards a man and a woman appeared leading a horse. I was rather horrified to see the man break down the wall of the field in which I was lying and lead the horse over. For a moment in my half awake state I thought he was coming to turn me out of his field, but I soon realised that he was just on his way to work. The woman was dressed in a red handkerchief, red crossover and blue and white checked skirt, quite the gayest peasant I have seen in Spain.

I felt rather a fool as I lay in my sleeping bag and they passed by, but their pleasant greeting soon put me at ease and I asked them if it was their field I was sleeping in which it was.

When I was dressed I went off in search of water for our breakfast. I could see some in the valley below but started off up the road in hopes of meeting a nearer font. Soon I met a peasant girl carrying a hoe. I asked her where the nearest water was and she said abaix. I followed her down the steep hill and found her very friendly. She could talk Castilian though her natural talk was Gallego, she was going to work in a field the other side of the valley, she waited while I got the water and then went on while I clambered up to the car.

As we eat our breakfast peasants began to appear on all sides going off to their work. A boy of about 15 came by with a puppy. He was extremely interested in the punctures. After him the girl with the hoe came along, she could not have done more than a quarter of an hour's hoeing, but was on her way back to the village. She stopped and talked again.

Just after I had packed up our sleeping things a herd of pie bald pigs appeared and began eating the straw stack behind which we had slept, a small girl in a red handkerchief was looking after them and her mother kept shouting to her in Galician to go down to them but she was apparently afraid of us and refused to budge, finally after

much cursing she came down and peeped out at us from behind the rick.

A still smaller girl came by with a herd of cows looking very happy and not at all shy. A girl was singing up above us and a boy singing in answer below in the valley.

At last every thing was packed up and we started off slowly down the valley in the footsteps of Sir John Moore, Borrow, Street and Aubrey Bell. Although the pass was ft. high there was no view but the road wound down through a tight valley of rounded purplish hills, through small villages. The first of these San Pedro had houses thatched in a peculiar way with plaits of straw running horizontally across the thatch. Most of the houses were tiled.

The country was all exceedingly attractive, especially after the meseta, there were trees of many kinds, birches, magnolias, chestnuts, all in their natural shapes, a great relief after the formal poplars which are practically the only trees on the meseta. In every village were women and children with red or yellow head handkerchiefs and blue, red or black crossovers. The people are to the landscape what autumn berries are to the hedgerows

in England. When we arrived in Lugo we found the streets thronged with peasant women in every variety of head handkerchief and wooden clogs.

We went to a small fonda and had a really Spanish lunch of soup, olla, fish and peaches.

In the afternoon we walked round the top of the complete Roman walls and later went off across the Minho into the country. We kept passing small cavalcades of peasants on their way home from the market at Lugo, all were indescribably picturesque and very friendly, more full of smiles than any people of Spain I have met.

Twenty-fifth Day, August 3rd.

La Coruna may have a fine climate, as says Bell, but we have not met with it. Not merely thick clouds but a Scotch mist oozing up the streets and making everything clammy, so that although the temperature is not above 73 we are prostrate with a relaxed feeling.

The streets themselves are fine, the wooden painted fronts full of glass windows are attractive, the Calle Real, though no longer paved with marble, is smooth and cheerful, the cafes serve even tea well, the hotel has a bathroom and excellent food, for 11 pesetas a day. The sea and the ria are full of grey moist beauty, but the people are below standard, there is more spitting, more tuberculosis, and deformity, more plain distorted faces than in any other large town that we have visited. And the most ragged of all children pass in groups through the street.

La Coruna shows visibly the overpopulation and poverty of Galicia, and it was therefore significant that on the very day we arrived both the leading papers had editorials, long and violent, against birth control.

In these the writers stated with pride that Spain and Roumania had the largest birthrates in Europe; one of them congratulated the government on having stopped the Madrid Eugenics Congress: they attacked the American Neo-Malthusian Society and extolled the "Life and Family" movement. I resolved to go and see the editors. The editor of La Voz de Galicia proved very friendly and spoke English. He arranged for me to come next Friday for two hours to his house. The editor of La Ideal de Galicia was even more friendly. A plump, genial childlike figure, who talked with supreme conviction of his own wisdom. I asked him about the population problems of Galicia. He repeated with pride his contributors boast that Spain and Roumania headed the birthrates of Europe. "As a Catholic that pleases me very much." The death rate too is very high he admitted, but that is because here a child's death is not considered very important, after all a child is just a child, and these things do happen, and they can easily be replaced. He himself was the father of nine and was quite willing to have twelve or thirteen before he was done. The feel of his conversation persuaded one that he must certainly belong to a community where the women were illiterate. Statistics showed this to be correct. He deplored emigration since it impoverished the race. He admitted it had

certain advantages, not merely the few million pesetas sent home, for he paid more regard to spiritual than material effects, but chiefly the impregnating of America with the Spanish soul.

Asked whether the country could get on without emigration and if it was not overpopulated to the extent of poverty, he said the cause was absentee landlordism and the proportion of rent payers and rentiers. If this could be obviated the country could support its population without recourse to migration. He referred to the division of property and said that one man or family might perhaps cultivate twenty or thirty separate properties and own some and rent others. He thanked the Directorate heartily for having abolished the foros, all of which must now be redeemed with money payments.

It is worth noting that *La Voz* published an article on the effects of protection on Galicia, pointing out that its effect was to raise the price of production so much that nothing could be produced sufficiently cheap to compete with France. Even eggs can be imported more cheaply than they can be produced. *El Pueblo Gallego* also attributes a great deal of the difficulties to bad transport and demands direct communication from Vigo to Madrid.

The Catholic editor warned me also against looking for Folk Lore customs and insisted that there were no superstitions in Galicia. He particularly scouted the suggestion that superstitions existed about the maize granaries.

These maize granaries are a very special part of every Galician landscape. We had noticed them first on the way to Lugo to Betanzos and after puzzling as to their probable use had been enlightened by a man working in the road. These first had been made of wood, but later, especially round Pontevedra in the land of monoliths, they are of granite. They are some six or seven feet long, and perhaps two and a half broad and three and a half or four high. They stand on powerful stone supports, often being eight or ten feet in all above the ground and reached by a ladder. Constructed so that air passes through between each plank or slab of stone at both ends and both sides, they stand side by side, or even on the road in front of the house and are a most conspicuous feature in every village, especially the ones made of granite. They seem to be constructed on the strictest and closest traditional model.

But what makes them of most interest is their

adornment with symbols and decorations. In a country where the architecture of house and every building is notoriously unadorned, where all is rough and plain and utilitarian, these granaries bear their invariable embellishments. At one end the roof bears a plain cross, at the other one of several symbols, either a second cross enclosed in a sun disk, or a sun disk without a cross, or a Cleopatra's needle, an obelisk, or plain column ending in a point or a ball, occasionally a swastika is to be seen, or a crux insata, or a shape like a club in a pack of cards. On one of the wooden granaries near Lugo there was a crescent moon painted on the sides, and on another a sun. Finally near Bayona on the coast south of Vigo we came upon two, where an ordinary glass wine bottle had replaced the crosses. This was particularly interesting as the Catholic editor had said: "You must beware of the way people pretend to find meanings in the customs here: in the district from which I come, we always have a wine bottle on our granary: I don't know why, but we always have done so: and I have been asked a hundred times if it is not a remedy against witches, which is of course absurd."

Whatever may be true about these customs, it

is worth remembering what is said to have been taught by Priscillianus. Especially also there is the Galician belief in the Souls. There is the church of the souls in Santiago, and when we crossed over the bridge at Tuy into Portugal, the first town Valencia had a wayside shrine in which was a painting of Jesus and Mary and beneath them the souls in the flames of hell.

Twenty-sixth Day, August 4th

Just as we were about to leave Lugo, we became aware of an impending procession. The balconies were decorated and Guardia Civil were charging about on horses. It turned out to be Primo de Rivera on his way through. A bevy of smartly dressed señoritas were waiting to be greeted by him and a small crowd of peasants. I did not see him and we started off towards Betanzos about 3.30.

The first part of the road was straight and dull. The two things of interest being the ridiculous little divisions of fields which the Galician land system has produced and strange little wooden huts built on stone pillars. Every field is walled in with slate, often a hill looks like a patch of city allotments so small are the divisions.

We went many miles before we discovered what the wooden huts were for. Most of them had a cross at one end, one was painted with crescent moons, many had vestiges of former designs, we guessed many things, shrines, wood houses, barns, we felt sure that the clue was that they

were something which in any other country would have been many times as big. At last we could stand the doubt no longer and stopped in a village and asked a jolly round faced man, he said they were for keeping the maize in. In Catalunya they hang it up on the balconies, but doubtless in this wet climate it needs more protection.

Soon after this we had a puncture and changed a wheel. Later we came to a beautiful rocky hill with the river below us on the left, and we decided to stop and mend the puncture. We got water from the river and made tea meanwhile. A boy guarding sheep came and stared for some time and various cars passing by signalled to see if we wanted any help. One of these contained the governor general of the province on his way back to Coruna after greeting Primo.

The spot we had chosen was particularly beautiful, a green downy hill outlined with pleasant shaped rocks to the right of the road, and to the left, the river with green grass and trees.

The scenery in Galicia changes every five minutes, we had only to go round the corner to find that we had chosen the most beautiful spot for many miles.

Soon a car slowed down and we were asked what

the GE 2783 on our number plate stood for. We answered Gerona and the questioner turned out to be a French Catalan who knew an English friend of ours from Prats de Mollo, he was engaged by Michelin to test the hotels.

Then we began once more to meet cavalcades of peasants as brightly coloured as the pictures of Chaucers' pilgrimage to Canterbury.

At Betanzos we were greeted by a jolly innkeeper in a humble inn and put into his own bedroom complete with piano. Our joy was somewhat tempered by the fact that supper was not till 10 p.m.

Betanzos is a picturesque but overcrowded and dirty town. Pigs are kept right in the town and the women have to fetch all their water at the fountain by repeated journeys with barrels on their heads, not an incentive to cleanliness. The last few miles before Betanzos we kept passing inns with beautiful vine covered porches, thronged by peasants with ponies and donkeys with bright coloured saddle bags.

Twenty-sixth and Twenty-seventh DaysCoruna, Noya, Pontevedra.

From Coruna we departed along the road which also leads in from Betanzos, and soon began mounting up a long valley with green cultivated country beneath us to the right. Seemingly prosperous and very green, this cultivated scenery had little that was impressive about it. There were no longer the slate slab partitions so noticeable around Lugo and there were more vines and maize than heretofore.

The road itself passed chiefly through heather and pasture land ever climbing higher. Soon we began to meet a stream of peasants with their animals, and a little beyond the highest point, by the side of the road, apparently far from every village, we discovered the nucleus, a roadside feria, peasants selling and buying oxen in great numbers. The contrast with Reirosa was striking, the rags of these peasants stood out against the spotless velvet coats of their beasts. Though they owned animals they were

a poor lot.

We went on towards Santiago de Compostella which stands amid beautiful mountains, to-day fortunately not covered with misty rain, an exception in this city which has the largest rainfall of any European City. We were hot and clammy and the first sight of the city was not very sympathetic. Pilgrimages are only one species of the plague of tourism, and a swarm of human flies settled on us and tried to show us hotels, garages, petrol pumps, to mend tyres and to mind the car. We shook them off and fled seawards leaving Santiago for a later day.

A typical Galician road led on to Noya, sometimes through masses of greatly subdivided cultivated fields and vineyards, sometimes across barren stretches of rocky mountain.

The peasantry in these districts have not so much colour as those about Lugo: their handkerchiefs are less brilliant, usually of a pale yellow, rarely now of the red we had seen earlier. It is most noticeable that the dress of the men is far less striking than that of the women, their clothes were cosmopolitan rags, with no style or colour anywhere. The children are uniformly ill dressed in a shocking state of torn and dirty clothing. Sashes are

either not worn or are very insignificant.

Noya proved most attractive, an active little village with an excellent alameda, a large building calling itself a boys and girls' school and Popular library, a public lavatory, and some pleasant little streets, with white-washed arcades and vines growing everywhere.

We were conducted to a 'Comidas y Bebidas'. The ground floor was a primitive bar with three huge barrels of wine, a counter and some seats. Fishermen sat drinking and arguing. At the farther end, a partition to the left, was a kitchen, and another to the right, a small eating room for the simple visitors. Farther still a door led out into a courtyard entirely roofed with vines where more fishermen talked very loudly and probably drunk. The wooden stairs had a thin carpet of silver sand from the beach and upstairs were the bedrooms and a more expensive dining room. In this, at 10.30 p.m. was served a supper of omelette, fresh sardines, chops, cheese and fruit and an individual bottle of wine. The charge for this meal bedroom and coffee and milk and bread next morning was five pesetas each.

As G was unwell I ate alone with two Gallegos, both of them probably commercial travellers. With one I had a long conversation. He was small and hard and blunt,

and began the meal by spitting on the floor: otherwise his manners were perfect, and a good deal of time was wasted while dishes were passed from one to the other for first helps. We discussed the village of Muros, which I had heard was especially famous for the goodness of its sardines. "No sir, the sardines of Muros are in no way better than the sardines of anywhere else. But there is a special way of preparing them and conserving them which is practised in Muros and Muros alone, though they try to imitate it elsewhere without any success. That method is exquisite."

Muros is also noted for its women, or at least the taste with which they wear their traditional clothes. These by the way were striking enough at Noya, for while waiting for supper I stepped down the street to find myself by the side of the ria; a lovely stretch of water surrounded on all sides by green cultivated mountains: and there I found a boat being unladen of tiles and bricks by women who wore on their heads first the common yellow or pale green handkerchief, and on top of this a straw hat which was undoubtedly a caste off one of Bo-Peep's or Marie Antoinette, that had lost its bows. Half hidden from the eye by the loose end of the kerchief each wore a long thick

plait of hair. This hat must be very local, for on the seacoast to the south of Vigo we found the women in straw hats of far broader brim and deeper crown. Probably the Bo-Peep hat worn by the Virgin in San Pere de Gallegans in Gerona has no direct affinity with the one worn by the fisherwomen, but it is the product of especially bad taste of some late baroque freak imported from France. Nevertheless a Virgin above the main door of the ugly Pontevedra church has the same head dress, which for all that it is attractive on a fish wife is out of place on a Goddess.

Noya could not be in a more lovely position, it is almost surrounded by water and its inhabitants are not so afraid of it as those by the Mediterranean. Little boys bathe and splash eternally.

Twenty-eighth Day, August 6th

Pontevedra

Pontevedra is a pleasant town: in the centre is a church, perhaps the ugliest in Spain, with a curved front looking as if it was made on the same plan as a child's cardboard village, bent along the dotted lines and glued on to paste board. It is I believe, Santa Maria de Peregrina, and therefore has something to do with pilgrimages to Santiago. Besides this the things to see in Pontevedra are "Church of Santa Maria La Mayor, 1555, Gothic style; inside delicate sculptured ornaments, Bishop's palace 12th century or 13th with beautiful crenelated tower. Ancient convent of San Francisco (Gothic tombs), ruins of church of San Domingo 13th century (Gothic and fragments of lateral naves) converted into a lapidary museum, Roman tombs of Middle Age, coats of arms". So much for the guide book: we missed all these as we only read the guide book after our visit.

The really interesting thing about Pontevedra is its setting amid the hills on the last thin windings of an azure ria. On every side are the small parcels of land, carefully partitioned with stones, upright, like a Dartmoor hut circle. Most of these particles of cultivated soil, these allotments, as one might call them, if the word did not inevitably suggest the ragged and untidy, are vineyards. But vineyards infinitely more satisfactory than those of Southern France or the Mediterranean Spanish provinces; the vines, instead of being pruned severely and shaved of their trailing beauty, are supported on chiselled columns of granite, four feet high, and forming a green platform above the shaded ground. These worked granite supports, square and comparatively thin give me an aesthetic satisfaction akin to that which comes of feeling a long, sharp, paleolithic flint flake, a joy in man's conquest over stone, a sense of ease in some small labour satisfactorily done.

This is indeed the country of superb building stone, not only are the vines supported by columns chiselled to about nine inches square and four to eight feet high, but instead of fences there are walls of monoliths, and the houses themselves are of monolith six foot high and two or three feet wide, joined with plaster. The wayside crosses are also of granite, and from Pontevedra to La Guardia ex-

traordinarily frequent. On one side is the crucified Jesus, on the other his mother, both figures crudely modelled, and crudely, but very successfully painted with red and blue wash. It is all the more strange that nowhere is there a village which has a church of any size or distinction in execution or design. It is easily explained why the inhabitants of the alluvial meseta are without any great achievements in architecture, though they did erect Leon Cathedral with stone from miles away, nature herself has set a ban upon the art. But here where every hillside is a cathedral waiting to be fitted together, where an acre of vineyard contains enough worked stone to form a town hall, the reason must lie in the direction of some economic inhibition. It is for the same set of reasons that ordains that in Galicia the whole country is thickly populated but villages of more than 1000 are rare. Many a Norfolk village of a few hundred has a huge church like a millstone round its neck, but these are relics of past grandeur, and every acre of Galicia seems to confirm one's feeling that there never has been any grandeur of that sort in Galicia's past.

And what of the present? Nothing could be easier than to believe that this country, where vines,

maize, potatoes, cover every valley bed, the roadside and the lower hills, was prosperous, and certainly more so than the cruel meseta of Leon, and the even more savage furnace of Aragon. And yet the least observation of the men and women and children passing in the road, or working in the fields, or of their cottages and hamlets would show how false this conclusion would be. We naturally feel that people who live within mud walls surrounded by baked plains must be poorer than those whose stone houses nestle amid interminable green crops; but nowhere in Leon, less still in Aragon and least of all in Catalunya will you see such worthless rags, such pinched faces, such obvious disease and anaemia, such undisguised deformity, such animal expression seared into all the features of the face. We saw in La Coruna the rags and the dirt, the tuberculosis and the poverty, we learned to suspect there that all the talk about gay, progressive cities meant nothing more than that a few cafes and hotels, well lit shops and pleasantly paved alemedas, had been stuccoed on to all the old shells, such as illiteracy, disease and poverty. We felt that La Coruna at least had not learned that just as a battle fleet can only sail as fast as its slowest ship, so a city can only progress as far as its least progressive, least successful, least happy citizens.

And here in Pontevedra, it is much the same, for under the lovely trees of the Alameda, half an hour's drinking of beer and lemon has revealed two children passing with Pott's disease, many white faces and rags through which ill nourished bodies reach rather unsatisfactorily both sun and air. What these towns need is not new hotels but sun bathing sanatoria.

Twenty-ninth Day, August 7th

A Visit to Portugal

We left Pontevedra after lunch and went towards Tuy. After Redondella about half way I noticed that the people seemed less poor and ragged and better looking.

From the side we entered, Tuy looked unattractive, but we went straight on to the bridge across the Minho, just before we reached the river I saw some white buildings on a fortified hill which I thought was a convent, soon we turned the corner and we could see Tuy standing up on a hill above the Minho and opposite on the other side of the river the white houses which were Valenca in Portugal. The river was exceedingly beautiful, we left our car with the Spanish carabinieri and walked over into Portugal. On the other side were soldiers in grey cotton uniforms surprisingly different in features from the Spanish carabinieri.

On a hill beneath the fortress sheep were sleeping and people siestaing on stone benches beneath chestnut trees. We climbed up through the immense fortifications to the town. It was bigger than it looked from outside and

quite clean to look at though smells were not absent.

From our twenty minute visit to a Portugal frontier town we were able to make the following generalisations about Portugal.

- (1) That there are no cafes in Portugal.
- (2) That the barbers' shops are inferior to the Spanish.
- (3) That the people are less shabby than in most of Galicia.

Having failed to find a cafe of any description we walked down again.

There we had a friendly greeting from the carabinieri who were hoping to hear us say that Portugal was very inferior to Spain. Unfortunately we said that it was very nice whereupon they remarked that Valenca was the best town in the province. We chatted with them a bit and a handsome Guardia Civil shut the door for me and we went back to Tuy to have a drink.

From Tuy we went close to the Minho to La Guardia on the coast. Soon after we left Tuy I saw a peculiar hill covered with a smooth white cloud which seemed very strange as it was a blazing cloudless day. As we got nearer the Atlantic we saw the hill more clearly and a long

roll of white mist was rolling along over the ground. At La Guardia we could feel the chill and damp from the mist and a few minutes later we were in it.

We drove along by the Atlantic seeing nothing but the breakers, all beyond was veiled in a dark grey mist inland we could see the fine weather above us through a thinner white mist. We came out into the sun for a minute then back into the mist, then we saw the sun red and bleary as in an English winter then for a moment the horizon appeared, then in the sea a ragged rocky island and above us on the cliff we saw a huge statue, a fine giant figure of the Virgin.

Twenty-ninth, August 7th

Pontevedra - Tuy - La Guardia - Vigo.

The day before yesterday the road from Noya to Pontevedra had shown us our first glimpse of Galician ria scenery. The incredibly indented coast must be somewhat like a tame and tepid Norway. The banks are steep and very high, often climbing up to two thousand feet and more, and their scenery is usually of two kinds, mixed: first, green cultivated gardens, far greener than anything August can show in England: second, uncultivated barren brown upper slopes with outcrops of granite, all made useless by the excess of rain which has thinned away the soil and denuded the bones of the hills, - barrenness produced by an opposite process from that which makes the desert of Aragon so sterile, for there many feet of soil lie waiting for the absent rain.

From Noya we had climbed into the barren part, cutting across the neck of a peninsula, until all sign of cultivation had ceased; then down to the other side, and

to small villages where everyone was out walking on a Sunday afternoon. Some of the women wore large black shawls covering head and shoulders and falling below the waist.

Noya itself had been having a bi-monthly feria as we left. It is the economic centre of the peninsula on which it stands. A picturesque sight reminding one of the illiteracy of the region was the ballad singer and his screen (see C.'s account).

Having crossed the peninsula the road had followed the ria and the river inland to Padron, a pleasant town with a stretch of water front and a good bridge then due south through Caldas de Reyes to Pontevedra.

Yesterday afternoon we went round the peninsula between the rias of Pontevedra and of Vigo. Exactly the same scenery and the same human activities. From Pontevedra to Marin a tramline taking sailors back to the three battleships lying in the middle of the ria, but afterwards, quieter, unsophisticated ways. Beyond Marin was a large wood of Eucalyptus, and everywhere southern trees and shrubs. On this journey the peasantry seemed rougher than any we had met so far, although the country was as green and as flourishing.

To-day we took the Vigo road out of Pontevedra to Redondela, Tuy - La Guardia - Bayona - Vigo. The proportion of vines here was noticeably greater and in consequence, probably, of the greater value of their crops, the inhabitants were far better clothed, decent shirts and cleaner garments altogether, while the women at least, were strong and fine to look at. It is dangerous to comment on physical types without careful comparison and measurement but there seemed, at a glance, to be a new racial admixture. But nothing stands out more clearly from this tour than the effect of work and environment upon faces. One is tempted to say, that two artists only have carved the faces of Spanish men and especially Spanish women, and their names are Overwork and Overfeeding. Examples of the former's craft abound in every field, and on every road and street, especially in Galicia, the latter's chef d'oeuvres are seated all around one in every hotel. The first artist imitates for his effects the surface and texture of mediaeval wooden carvings, he multiplies madonnas everywhere, especially where custom assists him with tight tied kerchiefs, showing and simplifying the shape of the head. The latter works in a wax which has not even the virtue of being inflammable, and in a style which is baroque without the grace of florid extravagance: these faces are disgusting

in their lifeless bestiality and the bodies to which they are fixed, like primeval chaos in being without form. As for the men shaped by the same artist, it is impossible to believe that in any country where women's desires are tolerated, such utter callousness towards physical grace, nay decency could exist. Since life left the sea sexual selection has prevented hitherto such accretions of shapeless jelly, and birds which have to compete so hardly for their wives develop beautiful plumage, but in Spain where sexual selection is largely in obedience life, as represented by the majority of middle class women and men, often approximates once more to the primitive and almost unmentionable monsters of the deep.

It is a relief, selfish and therefore temporary, to turn from the comfortably well off and more than comfortably fat, to the exquisite though harrowing, lines and texture of the masterpieces of Overwork. In Galicia these are almost all feminine, the men, weak knees unkempt, well nigh unnoticeable, remain so much in the background that one seems to be passing through a land of women, majestic, energetic, powerful, slaves to the labour of unprofitable fields, but slaves to nothing else, not even to their men.

Here, in this most southern district of Galicia

the tasks of the women seem to multiply and the whole of the men's sphere to be absorbed. Women not only till the fields and gather the crops, we pass them by the roadside in gangs of roadmenders, they sit by the heaps of stones which block up half the roads of Spain and earn their keep as stone breakers. It is difficult to know whether to be angry or pleased, whether to call this a victory or a defeat to the cause of feminism.

The conviction that the women are more powerful and more important socially than the men is reinforced by the way in which the two sexes are clothed. Nowhere else in the north of Spain will you see such rags on men's shoulders, but the women, with their coloured head dress, their coloured cross over and their strong skirts are as well covered as any. Why is there this distinctive and regional note about the women's dress, while the men's rags look as if they had in their best days only been the throw outs of some fustian producing factory worked by sweated labour? It is possible that the cause is emigration.

Thirtieth Day, August 8th

We spent the morning wandering round Vigo, it certainly seemed superior to Coruna, poverty, dirt and disease were less appallingly evident and the veneer of smart shops, hotels cafes, etc was thicker. Also it had a very much better bookshop. Whether the people are really better off than in Coruna remains to be seen, but Vigo is certainly a far more attractive and beautiful place.

We started to Orense over the mountains, at the top we had a puncture. After changing the wheel we went down to Porrino where I bought food and then on to Orense. By now the heat was terrific, we stopped in some shade to eat and mend the puncture. The place looked pleasant enough but we had not sat down long before we discovered it was inhabited by the worst of Galician flies. We eat our lunch in comparative comfort but mending the puncture proved very unpleasant and writing the diary impossible.

The country was pleasant, but it was too hot for us to see much of it and at one village we stopped at a font for a drink, we asked a man on the pavement if it

was good to drink and he beamed all over and added "I should just think it is" and he watched us with immense satisfaction as we drank out of the saucepan. It certainly was extra good water but we had not gone far before we decided it was time to make tea. Tea about 6 on a hot Spanish day makes the break between a burning day so hot that one sees scarcely anything and the cool beautiful light of the evening when everything looks interesting. As we made our tea we could hear a small boy in a tree above us collecting pine kernels.

Thirty-second, Thirty-third, Thirty-fourth DaysSantiago de Compostella

When we passed rapidly through Santiago on August 4th, bound for Koya, nothing that we saw or experienced prejudiced us in favour of a visit to the city. We had only time to note that a swarm of self-appointed guides and hotel or garage touts fastened on us like Galician flies, and it was clear that Santiago had some of the vices inseparable from tourism, however religious. Calixtus 11 did not mince his words about how its citizens treated the pilgrims in his day; later experience proved that their bark is worse than their bite, for having shaken off the pest of flies, and arrived, as it were under our own steam, we found an excellent hotel and fair treatment. This was fortunate as C. became so ill as to have to retire to bed.

Santiago is in many respects the most stimulating town that I have yet visited. Partly this judgment is due to the subjective effect of the courtesy,

erudition and human wit of the priest who was my hourly companion; partly to the background of knowledge which gave life and meaning to every grey stone under the grey sky of the wettest city in Europe: but with all allowances necessary for the enhanced receptiveness of the traveller, Santiago of itself is of unrivalled interest and beauty.

To reach our hotel we had to drive up an ill-paved and forbidding slope and through a narrow archway; these led from the highway to the beginning of a maze of streets through which it was never possible for me to find my way, save by resigning myself to God and continuing until the goal appeared. And this is the itinerary most to be recommended to the traveller, let him have no aim, and let him instead wander from street to street, staring into all the shop windows, however cosmopolitan they may seem at first sight: for, among American importations, or near advertisements of Singer sewing machines, he will find charms against the evil eye, or head kerchiefs and mule bags of great beauty, and sooner or later he will find himself face to face with the cathedral, surrounded as it is, almost on every side, by generous squares full of imposing buildings. It is as usual interesting to read Street, especially perhaps here where the superb plater-

esque and baroque, forces from even him a grudging half admission of their worth "As is so often the case in Spain" he tells us, "so great was the wealth possessed by the church in the seventeenth and early part of the eighteenth century, that all the churches and religious houses were rebuilt about that time, and now in place of mediaeval churches and convents, there are none but enormous Renaissance erections on all sides; and as they are bad examples of their class, little pleasure is to be derived from looking at them, either outside or inside. Perhaps some exception ought to be made from this general depreciation of the buildings at Santiago, in favour of the entourage of the cathedral. Altogether, the impression which is first given here is of a church which has been completely altered by Renaissance architects of rather a more picturesque turn of mind than is usual; and the general similar character of the work in the Plazas on the several sides of the church, gives certainly a rather stately, thought to me it was a very disappointing, tout ensemble".

As I have not overwhelmed the reader of this volume with a description of sights, it may be permissible to supplement the excellent Street and the guide books with

a few general remarks. The visitor who has taken my advice and lost himself once or twice in the streets of Santiago may now betake himself to the Alameda, particularly beautiful here, and from it he will have a remarkable view of the more interesting parts of the city. It is possible that though not one Gothic stone is visible, he may at once be reminded of Oxford, for though nothing can be more certain than that Oxford is far more superb than Santiago, at the same time Santiago shares with the northern university town that air of unity and logical consecutiveness which gives to the city that has it more than its finest single building can give. Seen from this spot Santiago makes a back screen for a theatre upon which no artist could improve, and though when I saw it, there was nothing but heavy grey clouds above it, it was not difficult to see that the effect would have been even greater in pouring rain. The mouldy yellow towers need perhaps this excuse to make them altogether permissible.

The best square around the Cathedral is of course that of the Hospital: for besides being very large it contains at least two superb buildings besides the Cathedral itself, while the fourth side is entirely filled with a government office which, if not beautiful or even satisfactory, is at least generous and imposing. The

Hospital is a long low building with a plateresque doorway, perhaps the best of its school in Spain, and therefore in the world. It is not difficult to see how its design was born in the mind, if not of a practising silversmith at least a man saturated with the best labours of this lesser art. Were it smaller in size it would act superbly as the door of a wine cooler, and even smaller still it would be unrivalled as the lid of a biscuit tin. As it is, it does very well as a door especially since the rest of the facade is as to its lower part quite bare of ornament of architectural feature. The eaves of this building from end to end are elaborately carved in the plateresque style and have a fine chain pattern as a leading motive. In the whole front there are only four principle windows, of which one is plateresque while the other three are very successful baroque additions, and the large prominent balcony supports are also baroque. This hospital occupies the whole of one side of the square and is about 200 feet long, its length in comparison with its height, and its doors, windows, eaves and balcony supports, lavish to a degree, and set in absolutely simple surroundings make of the whole a very superb and restful thing, which, though it may have disappointed the myopic Street, cannot fail to please anyone who has been, aesthetically speaking,

to a capable modern oculist.

The building opposite, occupying half of its side, is a college, plain also and low, with a lavish doorway.

It will not be necessary to describe the Cathedral as any guide book does this adequately; but it will be good to make some remarks about its chief glory, a glory of which the grudging Street actually says, "on the whole, with no small experience to warrant my speaking, and yet with a due sense of the rashness of too general an approval, I cannot avoid pronouncing this effort of Master Mateo's at Santiago to be one of the greatest glories of Christian art". This is the Portico de la Gloria.

The description given by Street is sufficient as far as the actual design is concerned, but he has left out some human details which were perhaps not serious enough for his readers. In the first place the Portico is the first piece of sculpture of any pretensions wherein the figures are grouped naturally; the apostles are actually talking to one another, nay more they and the prophets opposite are in some cases amusing one another. Thus Daniel is consumed with mirth, not altogether to the liking of

Isaiah, while St. John is in the very act of being told by St. James a conte drolatique. "NO, did she really" is all but framed on his lips. It may be regrettable but it is so. If one compares the rather listless manner of the central figure of Our Lord with the lively invention of the deadly sins who have the human beings heads in their mouths, one if forced to quote Blake's judgement of Milton "the reason why Milton always spoke in chains when he spoke of angels and freely when he spoke of devils, was that he, like all true artists was really on the devil's side without knowing it". Mateo was certainly in the same boat as Milton, while if we compare some of his designs with Blake's one will be persuaded that they crossed the Styx together. Mateo has been honoured and is still honoured to-day with a certain amount of frank pagan worship. The fertilising power of his imagination did not go out at his death, for students from Santiago University knock their heads against his statue which is at the foot of the central column, expecting in this way a smooth passage through their examination; while at the same time, though as my friend the priest says, this is less commonly mentioned, pregnant women rub their bodies against it to secure an easy birth. This belief in the fertilising power, both intellectual and corporeal of dead genius will be found sympatico by all those who themselves

admire the human brain when it functions exceptionally well.

It is worthwhile noting also that students contrive another way to achieve their end: they cut crosses in the fabric of Mateo's work, and some of these have become so deep they have had to be plastered up; on top of the plaster however may be seen new crosses nowadays made with indelible pencils, but as of old intended to ensure that text books and academic lectures should leave a lasting impression on the mutilator's memory.

The central pillar representing the tree of Jesse has five small cavities, purposeful and part of the design, and into these it is the popular custom to inset the five fingers as a protection against all kinds of evil and bad luck. It is commonly believed that these cavities have been formed by the fingers of many generations of pilgrims while a German guide goes one better and attributes them to Jesus himself, who paid the Cathedral a visit especially to leave his fingerprints, but the truth seems to be as we have said that they are part of the design, interstices indeed between the branches.

One custom of the Cathedral is probably unique: there is a giant censer four feet high and weighing

a great amount; it needs six men and special cranks and pulleys to swing it, and this is done on all important days in the year. The explanation given is prosaic enough, when great multiples of pilgrims used to come they slept in the galleries and the odour of sanctity engendered could only be modified by a censer of quite extraordinary size. When not in use this king among censers is kept in the Silla Capitular where also can be seen a rich collection of tapestries after Goya, Teniers and others.

Thirty-seventh DayRibadeo to Oviedo

We left Ribadeo under a cloudy sky, we followed the ria to Vegadeo where we got petrol and discovered a slit right through a front tyre, also that we had left the pump behind. The whole village was turned out to produce a pump and then back we went to Ribadeo to fetch our own. Within an hour and a half we had bought a new tyre and had all the old ones put in order and we started off again.

Soon we found ourselves in the rain, we looked back at Ribadeo, the last place in Galicia from Castropol in Asturias across the ria and then followed the coast towards Gijon.

At first the people were much like Galicians dirty and shabby with small horreos. We stopped in the rain to eat our lunch of bread and cheese, cucumber and cyder and then went on through faster and faster rain. It was the first time we had had to travel in the rain. Dur-

ing a lull in the rain we arrived at Luarco a town on the coast entirely shut in by cliffs. Here we stopped and had some coffee. We had thought of staying the night there but it was too shut in.

Everywhere were signs of Primo's approach.

After Luarca it cleared up and we were able to notice the country. One of the first things we noticed was a completely new type of horreo. The villages became more and more flourishing and also the people. Near Oviedo we saw troupes of well dressed, healthy good looking girls a refreshing sight after Galicia.

The country itself was very attractive. When the light was at its best we passed a ria with a small town on each side and mountains rising up in land. When we approached Oviedo it was nearly dark but we could see the outline of the cathedral standing up against the mountain behind.

Portieth DayRibadesella to Torrelevega

We woke up in the windowless room having slept fairly well and went to fetch our letters.

Ribadesella is an extremely beautiful place ranking with Ribadeo, Luanco, San Vicente, various Basque villages and San Sebastian itself among the most beautiful places on the north Atlantic coast of Spain.

But, as often before, our reaction on arriving at a beautiful place was not to stay at it, but to go on somewhere else. Whether it is because one beautiful place arouses expectations of a still more beautiful place or whether it is mere restlessness I do not know.

Anyhow we felt that the windowless bedroom in the morning was rather too sordid and we packed up and went off towards Covadonga.

Before long we were delayed by the usual puncture. Fortunately at a peculiarly beautiful spot by a

river full of large fish which leapt up to the surface every few minutes after flies.

I read through two copies of "Books" and buried myself in reviews of books on psychoanalysis and American poetry of the kind which compares to , and emerged happily shaking off such far away things as a dog shakes off the water when it comes out of the river.

We stopped at a small inn and bought bread and cyder and filled our water bottles. Then we stopped to eat under some huge chestnuts.

Eggs and sardines presented to us by the factory owner at Candás. The primus worked extremely badly but we got our meal in the end and I washed up our things in the river while John struggled once more with the punctures.

After lunch we went up a beautiful valley to Covadonga, brakes full of holiday makers passed us singing, so powerful is the veil of a foreign language that instead of feeling jarred by the noise one was pleased with their jolliness. The songs they sung were Spanish and the women wore no hats, they did not seem to clash with the landscape. But at Covadonga a most hideous chapel had been built which

clashed to the maximum possible amount with the valley.

We went straight through Covadonga up a very steep and narrow road to some lakes, twice the water boiled and the scenery got wilder and wilder till finally we found ourselves right under the Picos de Europa, a light pink, bare group of mountains against the blue sky.

As we looked round we saw on one side, rows of huts where mine workers lived. Above us a strongly built house looking like a telegraph station and in front of us two figures. A young man in grey trousers and a blazer and a girl in a pink dress. We watched them walking about and thought they walked like English people, especially the girl who took much longer steps than any Spanish girl dressed in that way would think decent. Later we saw them moving as if they were playing golf and finally we saw that they actually were playing golf. Then they drove slowly towards us and we heard clearly a cockney voice "Did you hit it?" from the girl. When they were quite close John went straight up to the boy and said "I wonder if you could tell me where I could get some matches?" The boy dropped his hands and stared in astonishment and after a long pause answered "I can give you some."

Wherever in Spain there are mines, new railways

or important factories there is generally an Englishman about. These were the children of the English mining engineer. Don Tomas who had lived up there for 16 years.

1.3: The Open Road

(July, 1928)

THE OPEN ROADChapter 1

Light-hearted but, thank heaven, not afoot nor for that matter with a donkey, we took to the open road; healthy, free, the world before us, the long brown path before us leading wherever we choose!

We left San Feliu de Guixols on a roving commission to study agriculture, rural life, population problems and general economic conditions in Northern Spain, Catalunya, Aragon, Navarre, Old Castile, Leon, Galicia; and back through Asturias and the Basque Provinces to Irun and England. Before us over parts at least of our journey had gone the Wife of Bath on her pilgrimage to Santiago de Compostela, George Borrow selling protestant bibles, Sir John More retreating, Mr. Street studying Gothic Architecture, and of course everywhere that prince of travellers in Spain, Richard Ford. There had also been Roman legions,

several French invaders, and many guerrilla chieftains of civil wars, all making reasonable life impossible and cutting down human happiness wherever they could see it. Religious processions, peasants upon mules, shrieking wheels of ox carts, parish priests, itinerant pedlars, gypsies in golden corduroy, migratory shepherds and their flocks, guardias civiles in patent leather hats, black old women handkerchief on head driving little pigs, day labourers in wooden clogs their footsteps ringing out on the road as they returned from work in the evening, mules hidden under towers of corn or straw, slow heavy waggons carrying one huge cask of wine, Hispano-Suiza motor buses roaring uphill with every manifestation of power, motor lorries full of cork, or wood, or cement, or potatoes, innumerable private motor cars driven by Spaniards with a mania for showing that they could do one thing too fast in spite of the mañana tradition in their bones. Certainly Walt Whitman was right: "you road I enter upon and look around, I believe you are not all that is here, I believe much unseen is also here. You paths worn in the irregular hollows by the roadsides! I believe you are latent with unseen existences."

How to squeeze the juice of these unseen existences out of the dry road before him is the problem of every

traveller; and this really can only be done by knowing the thoughts and actions of all the people who use it to-day and have used it for several hundred years. Without foreknowledge of his fellow travellers, he has no nearer contacts, nor deeper understanding of the road than his boots or donkey or motor car. He will store up within him exactly what his cyclometer does for him more accurately, the mileage he has covered. He will be like a snail leaving a sticky track behind him which can be seen straggling across any good map; and where the snail has paused to sleep, to ease himself, and to eat will be found in the guide books and hotel directories.

We have tried not to be snails, but spiders swallowing the road, its history past and present, digesting it in our minds and producing from it a thread out of which something may be spun. Our book, we hope, is not simply a snail track, but a thread or clue with the help of which others may follow and see, physically perhaps, upon the road itself, or in armchairs scattered about the world, the visible and the unseen existences which jostle one another on this northern Spanish road.

Chapter 2Departing from San Feliu

The evening before our departure had arrived and our three years living by the Mediterranean hung by the thin thread of a single night from the future. We had made very little difference to the life of San Feliu although we were perfectly familiar to nearly everybody in the town. Probably we had been much discussed by some of our neighbours, but the infinite politeness of the unsophisticated Catalan had quite prevented any speculations of a personal sort reaching our ears. They had accepted our habits, and the genial respect for the foreigner which seems to be increasing all over Spain had provided excuses for every eccentricity. We were leaving behind us only a few friends and hundreds of pleasant faces known by sight; people with whom we had danced the Sardana; who had listened to our large gramophone, from the road outside, on hot nights, and applauded the Fifth Symphony or Paul Robeson's negro spirituals; who had sold us things in the market and in the shops; who, for the most part, had merely learned to

greet us as we strolled up and down the Passeig by the side of the blue harbour, or sat drinking vermouth at little tables on the sidewalk. We have never perhaps, before or since, felt so much at one with the surrounding community as we did during those three years at San Feliu de Guixols.

I do not know what effect a name has upon the history and civic temperament of a town, but in the case of San Feliu it is certainly hard to trace much connection between the sainted martyr and the present attitude towards life of his townsmen. Our cook, Mercedes, who came to us from the neighbouring episcopal city of Gerona attributed everything that went wrong locally to the lack of respect paid to the patron during his annual feast, which lasts a week and is entirely devoted to dancing. And it is true that I never heard San Feliu invoked during my whole sojourn under his wing. Yet he has some claims to notoriety and was given a fairly certain immortality by being sung in a hymn by the great Prudentius of Saragossa. His martyrdom took place in 304, along with Saint Narcis. He had been studying the liberal arts in Africa when news came of persecutions in Gerona. He hurried home - en àgil navegació, as a local historian says, meaning that the

journey was completed, like that of Saint James' in a miraculously short time - and began to preach with great success to the faint hearted citizens. He was arrested and bound with chains, tortured and dragged about at the tail of two horses; but as this had no effect upon him he was carried off to the nearest seashore and thrown into the sea. He still remained obstinate and with the help of an angel returned to the land, 'gliding suavely over the waves'. How they finally induced him to part with his life, I do not know, but he has a large church in Gerona and was the only saint in Spain whose day was respected as a truce throughout the middle ages. If you wanted to kill your neighbour you had to wait until the following day.

St. Narcis who was the fellow martyr of San Feliu and became the patron saint of Gerona has had, on the whole, a more exciting posthumous history. And his life was not without incident: on one occasion he had the misfortune to put up at a brothel but turned the mishap to excellent uses, converting the inmates to a woman. In 1285 when Gerona was besieged by the French the saint successfully repelled them by a novel piece of strategy: he waited until the enemy came to steal the silver off his tomb and then discharged from his nostrils a host of yellow, white, green, red and black flies.

Chapter 3Corkwoods

We drove up the long straight hill out of the town with cork factories on each side and at the end a little wayside drinking bar and the customs officer's hut. The old woman at the bar like every other woman in Spain was dressed in black, being in mourning for Eve's original sin for which Adam south of the Pyrenees has never forgiven her descendents. At such little public houses you can buy for ten or fifteen cents a small glass of wine, vi ranci in Catalunya, rancio elsewhere; ordinary wine which has grown strong and old in the wood; or a sweeter drink, muscatel, tasting like a sweet grape, sometimes good, sometimes doped and liable to upset an alien stomach. Or you can get anis also in a small glass, which is very pleasant on a sudden chilly evening, but best of all taken with ice water and sugar and drunk out of a Catalan porro.

This porro must be carefully described as it will be met with along the road throughout Catalunya. It is a glass retort with an upright stem an inch or so in

diameter through which wine can be poured; at an angle from one side is a second exit tapering to a very small hole at the end. Through this second hole the wine is tilted in a parabolic stream through the air, in such a way that the stream is finally caught in the mouth a couple of feet away. It is an excellent invention for drinking for it has two virtues, first the porro can be passed from hand to hand around the table, a loving cup which never touches anybody's lips, and second the stream of wine seems to find with much accuracy the thirsty spot in a man's throat thereby enabling one to be satisfied with far less and ministering to temperance and economy.

The skill of the Catalan is the result of having been born as it were with a porro two feet from his infant, wailing mouth: or at least from having gone straight from the nipple to the porro at his weaning. The alien must expect to baptise neck or eyes at first, but if he will persevere he will be rewarded in more ways than one: he will enjoy his wine better, and he will get on better terms with his fellow travellers; for there is nothing more important than to do the everyday things as others do them, if one is to feel one of the family, and no prying stranger. That is particularly to be noted in America, where the

Englishman will feel uncomfortable until he has adopted the table manners of his hosts. In America they affect the German mode, banishing the knife to a far edge of their plate and eating fork only in hand. Until an Englishman has learned not to hold his knife and fork at the same time, he may as well wear the traditional monocle into the bargain.

The old lady at the drinking bar stands behind her counter rinsing the glasses at a fountain precisely like the one which is shown as a venerable civic antique to all visitors to New Orleans. New Orleans, as everyone knows, boasts of a past; it is different from all other American towns; and when you go there, you are shown the actual apparatus where Latin Quarter folk prepared their absinthe before 1921. Here on the outskirts of San Feliu no man-made law has invested the marble with the venerability of a secular holy water stoup and you drink rather than worship. These dram shops are a typical feature of Spanish life: it is impossible to find a human habitation without one in the vicinity for if there are two houses one will certainly have a little sprig of furze hanging above the door, the sign that wine is for sale within. "Good wine needeth no bush" is a phrase used by a hundred people

for everyone knows what it means; but here in Spain the bush hangs outside the door wherever wine, good or bad, is to be found within.

We do not stop to-day so early in the morning to spend a penny at the old woman's shop, but we turn our head that way as we pass: "do you remember" we say, "when we came back from that mushroom foray how she told us to be sure to eat onions with them in case they were poisonous?"

Chapter 4Nostra Senyora de les Angels

We pass through the little villages all of which derive their livelihood from these cork woods. The first is Llagostera, one can see exactly how it grew up; they set a church on a hill and held a market in its courtyard; every peasant for miles round struck out through the woods each Sunday to worship and to sell. At first he followed the streambed down his little valley, but directly he caught sight of the church steeple on the hill he made a beeline for it. His travels wore out a path, and to-day Llagostera is approached by straight roads from each quarter of the compass, whatever your direction of arrival you see a ruled line before you, a hill blocking it in the distance and on the hill a tower. Such is the formula upon which half the villages you will meet are built. It is astonishing what 'significant form' it gives to the road.

Llagostera we leave on our left, for the original

track which continued straight on up the hill to the church becomes a cobbled street and the new road which has hitherto overlain the track touches but does not penetrate the pyramid of houses. Nine out of ten of the villages of Spain have no real road to them; theirs is not the civilization of the motor car, but of the mule; you pass them by, but you would never want to visit them. This gives a curious sense of living in one world and seeing another close by on the hill tops. In the open country the two civilizations mingle on the same road, the peasants driving their mules and donkeys to the local market, and the motor traffic whose business is far over the horizon: they are on nodding terms with one another but at the village gates they separate without really having mixed at all: for the mules and donkeys though seemingly our companions have not been using our road at all, but the immemorial track hidden beneath it.

Cassà de la Selva comes next: here we rattle through the centre of the village, because it has grown up as a result of the new road-civilization. It is a factory village rather than a market village, a centre for the little cork industry rather than for peasants. That explains the formlessness of Cassà compared with Llagostera. Churches and markets are like the axle to which spokes point from all

the country round, factories are just dumped about.

The road begins to skirt a series of coastal hills to the right covered in woods and dotted with farms and cultivated fields; presently a sign-post points out to us our first digression, a road winding up amid the trees to Nuestra Señora de los Angeles as the Castilian has it. Here is something as important to the life of the road as the cork woods or the market place of Llagostera and we will climb the winding tributary to the very top. We find a whitewashed chapel, a restaurant and a priest's house.

The Spanish peasantry from Catalunya to Galicia have a passion for picnics; although they regard a solitary walk, such as we would go on summer evenings at San Feliu, as a form of madness; at stated intervals on special days the whole village gets up and walks several miles to some place and eats its dinner, tea, and supper in the open air. It is a curious migratory instinct; on some saint's day or other you go out into the street to find all your neighbours armed with bundles and baskets, dressed in their best clothes, packing themselves by families into vehicles or marching off on foot; you look out of your top window and see the neighbouring bare hill blossoming with white and

red and blue dresses as knots of girls climb slowly and very noisily over the brow towards the woods beyond. Soon the village is deserted, its inhabitants have encamped en masse elsewhere. The 'tornaboda general' or 'romeria' or whatever it is called locally is usually held near a sacred edifice where Holy Mother Church watches over the pleasures of her flock and sells it drinks.

Nostra Senyora de les Angels, to write it in Catalan, is a typical assembly ground for these modern pilgrims; a little votive chapel with an amazing view over Ampurdà, La Selva, the Pyrenees and the Sea. We enter: do we want to kiss the toes of the miraculous image? If so there are steps through there. We pass a little door and find ourselves in a picture gallery, decorated, apparently, with canvasses by the primitives of the school of Rousseau. Charming little paintings of incidents where Our Lady of the Angels has intervened successfully at awkward moments. Thus Josep Pujol was driving his cart on the edge of the precipice; something frightened the mules and they galloped away; ever nearer the cliff-edge swayed the cart but fortunately Josep prayed to Our Lady of the Angels and vowed her an offering and she immediately calmed the animals and brought them to a standstill. The votive picture il-

lustrates the event; a nice crude cart, childlike mules, two dimensional Josep, a cloud of light with Our Lady, very baroque and much crowned, in the centre, calming the mules. Near by is Maria Pagés lying in a four-poster, almost dead of a fever; she prayed to Our Lady of the Angels, and there sure enough is Our Lady suspended from the ceiling. Maria got better and here is her votive offering; it is dated 1742. Hundreds of pictures are crowded together side by side, stacks lie on the floor; most of them have a label telling of the miracle which they commemorate. Other objects also hang from the wall, locks of hair, garments, grizzly nondescripts, and masses of waxen replicas of parts of the body, waxen arms and legs, waxen eyes, waxen breasts, organs which may be hearts or livers faded and dust laden. Censorship limits the parts to these, though in other times the votive offerings included many even more appropriate for a shrine to some goddess of fertility. But interesting as these eighteenth and nineteenth century drawings are, there is one votive offering which is more interesting than any other. Hanging on the wall among the rest, part and parcel of the exhibition, dated 1927, there is an X-ray photograph of a broken arm: the patient vowed an offering to Our Lady of the Angels, and behold! another X-ray photograph of the fracture mended! Our Lady had in-

terceded and the X-ray picture hangs with the little oil paintings done by the village artists two hundred years ago. It was worth climbing up to this exquisite viewpoint for that alone, for how could one learn more graphically the first truth about the Open Road in Spain, that the more it changes, the more it is the same thing. Motor roads have covered and obliterated the ancient mule tracks, but the men who ride the mules, which we pass amid our cloud of dust, are riding along the ancient track and not the modern road. Our Lady of the Angels is graciously pleased to accept an X-ray photograph of the bones she still assists to mend.

Chapter 5Gerona

We enter Gerona by passing the cemetery. It is necessary always to pass the cemetery on entering or leaving almost any Spanish town, for it is likely to be situated outside the limits on one or other of the main roads. "The early market man, the hearse," says Whitman, "the moving of furniture into the town, the return back from the town; They pass, I also pass, anything passes, none can be interdicted, None but are accepted, none but shall be dear to me."

Now I can accept the market man, early or late, but the hearse is a more difficult matter. 'Pompas funebras' is the Spanish for Undertakers and in Madrid or any other large town there is certainly plenty of pomp about a funeral. Just as a merry-go-round at an English fair is our best example of baroque, the tinsel and flourishes obviously coming from the same aesthetic urge as a village church altar in Spain, so a Madrid funeral must be

the realisation of the dreams of domestic servants in the Victorian age. The richer you are the more fantastic the cortège you allow your corpse on its last journey.

Gerona being a provincial capital has many hospitals and therefore you are bound to meet a funeral as you enter: drive slowly and take off your hat to the ecclesiastical paraphernalia. The horses have plumes like pampas grass dyed black; the little boys covered with wax carry smoky candles; the corpse is going to be shut up in a cement and plaster cell betwixt sky and earth, to crumble away. The cemetery wall looks like a post office private letter box section with the names of the owners or occupants painted on each square box. The system is probably meant to facilitate the resurrection of the flesh, which my Spanish friends seem to expect will be a tricky operation at best, but made hopelessly complicated by cremation, which they regard as a suggestion of the devil. Whatever its future advantages the system has temporary drawbacks: Count Herzen was told by a fruitarian that it was shown that men who lived entirely on fruit had their physical being so refined that after death they were odourless or even sweetly scented, like a medieval saint. "Well, I don't expect to be sniffing around my own body after I'm

dead" said the Count. "My dear sir" replied the fruitarian, "The time will come when you will talk very differently." There is a great deal to be said for the fruitarian's point of view in Spain.

I myself have had to take part in a funeral in Spain. It was in a little Catalan village hidden in the Pyrenees. My next door neighbour was the peasant who tilled the garden round my house and in his family there was a cripple, very ill. One night we looked over the balcony and saw the garden paths beneath the poplar trees aflame with tapers. Like a crowd of fireflies the friends and relatives of the cripple were standing, burning candles to light the priest on his way to give the viaticum, to light the soul about to start for purgatory. Silent little girls, their heads covered with black muslin mantillas, their long bare legs and short skirts gleaming amid the green leaves as the candlelight flickered upon them; the black forms of the older women motionless and gloomy.

Next day the funeral procession formed up, the men separate from the women, and escorted by dirty little candle bearers we walked to the monastery church. There the men and the corpse remained outside, while the women went in to take part in the funeral service. When they

had entered, we began to move again, this time up a ragged hill to the final resting place, and at the gate of the cemetery we left the coffin to the bearers and wandered back to the town. It is a curious habit this segregation of the sexes at funerals and although the peasants explained that the walk up the hill to the cemetery would be too much for the women in their state of grief, there is probably a deeper meaning than this.

We get past the cemetery and the inevitable funeral and turning a corner find ourselves in the city of Gerona. Spaniards give their cities orders like the O.B.E. and Gerona is "molt noble", "molt lleial", "fidelissima", "immortal", and "excellentissima ciutat", very noble, very loyal, most faithful, immortal and most excellent city. It is also a very beautiful city where at night the middle ages are lit up by discrete electric lights and you wander about the walls, the stairways, the passages, under arches and through tunnels, with nightingales singing close by and silent figures passing by in black blouses and dark corduroys, their footsteps muffled by rope soled shoes.

There are three grand views of Gerona: the first from the train as it comes into the town from the

French side: below is the river flanked by tall plain houses washed white and pink and egg-shell blue, above tier upon tier of grey buildings with the great spire of San Feliu and above everything the gaunt huge impressive mass of the great cathedral. The second view is from the town bridge whence you see the houses at closer range and turning to your companion say that it reminds you of Venice, though perhaps you have never been there. The third is from the old battered walls above the city; you look down the hill upon the roofs and then across the plane to the mountains beyond and count the shades of grey and greyish blue.

Evening in Gerona is like being lost in a superb stage setting, the narrowness of the streets, the stairs up hill, the arches, the wayside shrines and all the glimpsed interiors of shops; an eighteenth century life being led in a sixteenth century setting. And all is made perfect by electric light, a blessing which is far commoner in mountainous Spain than in England. You will find it rare to be benighted too far from a village to see the electric lights twinkling in the distance.

Gerona is an ecclesiastical centre and a military centre: priests, nuns and conscripts are everywhere; and one

Chapter 6Gerona Cathedral

A cathedral is usually like a great stranded whale among the bathing huts of modernity; something which would be in a museum were it not too big; something uncouth and out of place amid the buildings to left and right; too obviously belonging to a different and dead age, the age whose fragments we look at rather than live among.

Not so Gerona cathedral: its surroundings are perfectly in keeping; long before one arrives at its door the years have been picked off one by unseen hands from ancient balconies, courtyards, walls and staircases, and one is left with nothing but a medieval body clothed here and there with baroque eighteenth century trimmings.

Its spirit is strongly Catalan; it is the work of men who found aesthetic joy in the solution in stone of mathematical and engineering problems. Its builders were not much interested in plastic arts, nor the pleasure of

the eyes; they thought in terms of eternity and put their intellectual energies into building something which would last for ever and make men think each moment of the immensities of time and space. Gerona cathedral is infinity lasting for eternity.

Someday a historian must write a social study explaining clearly why such structures are built; why the burghers of the middle ages decided they must spend their money precisely in this way; where the money came from; who recruited the labour; how the town's folk felt as the huge structure grew. The story of this cathedral is especially interesting because we possess many of the documents which throw light on these intimate matters. We know a great deal about one particular episode, when the board of directors became uneasy about the daringness of the plans and summoned in a board of distinguished architects as consultants. The point at issue was the determination of Guillem Bofill, the architect, to make a nave as wide as the choir and its two aisles, but in a single span without any aisles at all. This plan involved an arch of no less than seventy-three feet in width, compared with which the expanse of Canterbury Cathedral of forty-three feet, or of Westminster Abbey of thirty-eight feet

seems small indeed. In 1416 a commission of architects was set up to consider whether such an arch would be safe. They were asked three questions:

1. If the work of one nave of the said cathedral church, commenced of old, could be continued, with the certainty of remaining secure and without risk.
2. Supposing that it is not possible to continue the said work of one nave with safety, or that it will not be lasting, whether the work of three naves, continued on, would be congruous, sufficient, and such as would deserve to be prosecuted; or, on the contrary, if it ought to be given up or changed; and in that case unto what height it would be right to continue what is begun, and to specify the whole, in such sort as to prevent mistake?
3. What form or continuation of the said works will be the most compatible and the best proportioned to the Chevet of the said church which is already begun, made, and finished?

In short they had to choose between Bofill's one nave and

a continuation of the three naves of which the choir had already been formed, and give their sworn testimony upon the matter. It is pleasant to think of eleven architects responsible for such buildings as the cathedrals of Toulouse, Tarragona, Barcelona, Perpiñan, Urgell, Narbonne, Manresa and Castellon de Ampurias sitting together in one room debating whether the twelfth, Bofill, was sound in his theories. We are apt to regard Gothic cathedrals as emanations of a few centuries of disembodied imagination, this brings them down to blueprints and mortar.

All the architects agreed that Bofill's one nave was possible; Guillem de la Mota "a mason and colleague of the master of works at Tarragona Cathedral" thought it might sink with earthquakes or with great hurricanes; Guillem Sagrera architect of Perpiñan Cathedral said he had never seen an earthquake which would move it; Arnald de Valleras architect of Manresa Cathedral offered to get leave from his employers to come and do the job himself. Only four however thought that the one nave would be better than the three, Antoni Canet, mason and sculptor of images to the city of Barcelona and architect of Urgell Cathedral, Antoni Antigoni architect of Castellon de Ampurias, Guillem Sagrera aforementioned, and Inan de Guingnamps of Narbonne Cathedral. The last summed up the pos-

ition in these words:" That the plan of a single nave is beyond comparison more fit and proportioned to the choir of the said church, than would be that of three naves for several reasons. First: That the deponent knows that the plan of a single nave with the said choir would be more reasonable, more brilliant, better proportioned, and less costly. Second: Because, if the work is carried on with one nave, there would not be deformity of difference that disgusts. And though some may say that the plan of a single nave would make the choir look low and small, the more on that account would no deformity be produced, rather it would be more beautiful; and the reason is that in the space which would be left between the top of the choir and the centre of the great vault, there would be so large a space that it would be possible to have three rose windows: the first and principal in the middle, and another small one on each side; and these three roses would do away with all deformity, would give a grand light to the church, and would endow the work with great perfection."

It was seven against four or with Bofill himself five: nevertheless a great ally was fighting unseen on the side of the minority - One nave would be cheaper than three: Bofill had his way. And so to-day at Gerona you can stand beneath the widest span in any Christian

Church, five hundred years after the twelve discussed whether an earthquake or a gale would blow it over. Economy aided the daring design to reach fruition, and vastness was captured by a cheeseparing policy. They never finished the baroque facade. Inside however the triumph of Bofill leaves one free of all criticism. In the distance the amber coloured mass, according to Miquel de Palol "looks like a monk, above the horizon, elevating towards the sun the host of his ; while on its knees the city watches the consecration."

Chapter 7

San Feliu and San Narcis

Chapter 8

Banyoles

The best way to enter Banyoles is on the top of a Hispano-Suiza bus on Sunday. We ourselves on this particular occasion were in our own Fiat on St. Christopher's Day which happened to be a ; but at other times we have chosen the other means of approach, and recommend it to our readers.

Only eccentric foreigners climb the ladder which leads to the luggage and fresh air: within an ever increasing mass of peasantry accumulates from each farm and village that is passed. As the bus starts after each stop, they cross themselves, as well they may. Walt Whitman's "paths worn in the irregular hollows by the roadsides" spread all over the road itself in Spain and though they are "latent with unseen existences" they are seldom filled up with anything more substantial. The bus canters and rears along and everyone is enveloped in a cloud of dust and a sense of adventure.

You roar into the village square and no sooner have you regained your breath from the bus ride than you lose it in delight at the spectacle around you. You have come upon an assembly which has met periodically every week without interruption for centuries. Groups of peasants stand talking on every side and forming such a bevy of sights and sounds as it would be hard to equal in any European country.

Like nodding poppies in a field of wheat, the scarlet caps of the men blaze in the sun. They will be the first thing to attract your attention these caps, not merely for their colour but for their shape: you are seeing in its original home, upon a Catalan peasant's head, the scarlet cap of the French Revolution, the symbol of liberty and of freedom. The barretina has died out in the coastal regions but among the foothills of the Pyrenees it is universally worn, just as in the eighteenth century it was worn by the southern French-Catalan peasants who started the Revolution and brought their traditional head-dress to Paris.

Barretinas are of two colours only, scarlet for most men, purple for widowers, and the dye used in their manufacture is of so penetrating a tint that it catches

the least ray of sunshine on a cloudy day, and flames out more brilliantly than anything else under the dazzle of a Mediterranean summer. The mountain peasants wear with it a black or very dark blue loose smock, a scarlet or green or blue sash a foot wide, brown corduroy trousers and canvas shoes. Often these last are in the shape of a Roman sandal showing thick woollen socks almost bare to the dust and mud. Market day in a village like Banyoles brings hundreds of such men down from the neighbouring hills: they go to mass, they complete their business, and then they stand about and talk, or sit and drink coffee at little tables in the shade. There is nothing operatic about them; they are not so much picturesque as dignified and nothing in their dress is quite so fine to look at as the lines in their faces and the poise of their bodies, graceful with reasonable labour: "now" says Whitman, "I see the secret of the making of the best persons. It is to grow in the open air and to eat and sleep with the earth."

Certainly it does not suit these men to go to the large towns and become middle class; for then they run the risk of a metamorphosis into one of those fat, unlined, waxen horrors that litter the cafés of Barcelona and Madrid.

Where are their wives? Down a narrow street to

the right we pass to the market. Rows of women, dressed in black, sit with their wares in front of them: rabbits and poultry, alive and unconfined, sit up in baskets waiting to be bought, vegetables and fruit everywhere. Market women are the only articulate women in Spain: their dress is sombre to a degree; on their heads, silk handkerchiefs usually black or sometimes olive green or plum coloured; black knitted bodices, black enormous skirts; quite often even their canvass shoes are black. But their enjoyment of the occupation of buying and selling is whole-hearted and often the shadowy obscurity of their clothing allows their old ivory faces to glow out the more.

An old lady sits behind a little table: on it is nothing but the two claws of a vanished hen and a cockscomb: she has had a good day, all the rest of the bird has been sold in one and two ounce portions; all the things which my ten year old son calls, "interior decorations, organs and so forth" have been bought separately by careful housewives needing a flavouring for the Sunday rice dish. In another corner is a huge pile of local pottery, plates, dishes, ollas, chamber-pots stacked up like a barricade; a little heap of miniature articles mimic the

larger ones; these are the toys in which the Catalan child delights. You can buy a miniature of almost any peasant produced article for your doll's house.

Now and then amid the barretinas and the handkerchiefs can be seen a third head-dress, perhaps the most distinctive of all, worn by infants and young children: it is a stiff basket-work helmet, jutting out over the forehead and domed above the head, so contrived as to make it almost impossible for the child to knock its head. These helmets are invariably trimmed with light blue or light pink ribbon and dolls are supplied with replicas in miniature.

Chapter 9

From Banyoles the road winds ever nearer to the mountains; over the ancient bridge of Besalu, past the basalt pedestal upon which Castellfollit is perched and on to Olot. The little plain of Olot is a green and golden chessboard of fields, a fertile paradise locked in by massive walls; where life has remained very much as it was hundreds of years ago. It looks least impressive when you approach it this way, but when you have been there two or three days and learned to love it, you will climb up the pass beyond and look back in admiration at the little villages beneath your feet, the symmetry of their fields, the blueness of their houses as the early shadows begin to choke the valleys.

The whole little world owes all its features to volcanic action; cones of extinct volcanoes each crowned with a chapel or hermitage rise to a little height above gardens made fertile by the crumbled decayed larva. Here and there a waste of uncultivable stone shows

where the produce of later eruptions has not had time to disintegrate. It is well to print upon the memory a clear picture of this green, tree-haunted spot, where water is abundant and things grow, for use at a later day when the desert of Aragon or the llanura of Leon or the bare hills of Castile have begun to make the mind ache with their cruelty and endless monotony.

A - 2: ESCRITS AMERICANS

2.1 : Primeres impressions (1924)

Wednesday evening

The City Club

We arrived in this morning, roughly at dawn: it would be hard to describe the amazing perfection of it all. The night before had been a brilliant moon and a motionless sea and with the noise and sentiment of the last of any haphazard companionship, everybody stopped up till two. The boat deck looked like the Brighton front and in the security of speedy and final separation, everyone seemed to be swearing eternal vows, chiefly au pairs. I got up at six and came on deck to see the sun rise blood-red out of the mist, after breakfast and the giving of tips, people gathered on deck and odd points of land kept appearing on either side of the channel. At eight we anchored for quarantine and passed before the doctor at quick march. Then the marvels began, just as the Statue of Liberty appeared, the Z.R.3, flying her German flag, passed straight over the ship, low down, at the end of her Atlantic voyage. Ships' sirens and cheers from the ferry boats excited everyone and then we came full in view of New York. It was lovelier than anything I have ever seen, the massing of the light and shade on the buildings and the skyline is like a fairy city of palaces. Each build-

ing is conceived as a whole and they form together a perfect whole; and the slight mist, quite blue and unlike London fog, held everything in an even more perfect unity. The weariness of the emigration inspection and the customs inspection was an excellent contrast to all this. Everyone had to present their hands to a doctor who examined them for scabies and turned up the whites of our eyes for some other purpose of his own. Rooms of ladies took off their gloves and held up their faces for this unnecessary caress. Baggage was worse, as I stood in the queue for an hour to get a document signed. The monotony was relieved by a nice white haired official who took a cable for Connie from me as I stood, but late hours are bad prologues for long queues and I was glad when at one p.m. I was through. By the way a wireless message had reached me at eight a.m. from Feakins "greetings."

Having tipped my negro porter I set off in a Yellow Cab to the City Club. A notice in the Cab was a good variant on "do not spit" or "beware of pickpockets": it ran "75% of Yellow Cab drivers are married men leading clean, god-fearing, upright lives and they strive to earn your respect by their unfailing courtesy and nobility of character." The road 'downtown' was squalid and rough but soon we got into civilized parts and I set down at

the Club, presented my letter of introduction to the secretary, was greeted effusively and given a room with a bath and showerbath etc. all to itself. I was told by a member that the man to whom S.K.'s letter was addressed was extremely sorry not to come down to see me but he had just had a tooth out. I had a bath and went to the club dining room for lunch. I had a "blueplate lunch" and experienced the first concrete example of N.Y. genius. A blueplate is a large plate with three compartments containing meat and two vegetables, three in one and one in three. Think of the labour saved. This was served with a large glass of ice to drink.

Next I rang up Feakins and fixed to see him at two thirty p.m. He is a plump kindly man of about sixty: it is useless to mention that he has glasses, I might as well say that he had a nose, for nobody in N.Y. would think of going about with their eyes unclothed. He and all his office were delightfully friendly and there was a letter from Connie as well as some others. All his news was good except that the Pittsburgh date was cancelled. The big lecture at Chicago is to be on "Can Women Remain Feminists" all the rest so far on Labour. Feakins says he has never had so good a beginning for an unknown lecturer. His office was my first

experience of another N.Y. thing, a nonstop express lift, which took me to the fourteenth floor.

I found also at his office a card from Sureda the Catalan and rang him up: he met me at the club at seven p.m. and showed me the N.Y. Public Library. This is amazing, I have no idea how many floors there are, but they are all built of white marble and lit with sunlight electric globes which give the impression of general dimness until one realises that what one is experiencing is absence of glare, not absence of light. The reading rooms seemed about as big as Olympia. You order your books and then wait until you see the number of your chair flashed on an electric signboard when you go and get them. The card index room is about the size of a college hall and seems to contain a complete author and subject catalogue combined; I can say that egoistically considered it seems fairly complete: there are two books by B.N.L.D., one by C.L.D. - not Connie but my grandfather, and one by myself. I got none of them out.

The library is really beautiful, in fact material culture is quite staggering; there is every opportunity and inducement to people to read or educate themselves and I never saw anything to equal the passionate belief of Americans in culture and education. On board I made friends

especially with four or five people, the men being College men one might expect question and argument but the girls never stopped either. While foxtrotting I had to manage the roll of the ship constantly beguttering unwary couples and at the same time I had to explain to my partners anything from exact science to mysticism. I made one charming friend, a Louisiana girl of French descent, rejoicing in the name of Irva Sempayrac. I don't think she ever stopped giving me a general knowledge paper and on saying goodbye she said without the least affectation "I would like to emphasise that it has been a real honour to have this opportunity of learning so much and I feel that you must be very good to give a perfect stranger the benefit of your intellectual force." I felt like roaring with laughter until I realised that a foxtrot and an improvised lecture on E.Russell's A.B.C. of Atoms are in America apparently social functions, as it were, of an interchangeable order and all she meant was she'd enjoyed the dance.

But to return to Sureda and my first evening in N.Y. he took me to dinner at a small restaurant in a main street: it is difficult to think of its exact counterpart in London, not foreign or odd like Soho, not cheap nor vulgar like Flemings; perhaps like Slaters. On half

the tables were coffee-pots containing wine: white wine was poured into glasses, red wine into china cups. Now in the event of a raid I would have thought that a sufficiently well organized police force would be able to detect wine in a coffee-pot as well as in a bottle. The people drinking were mostly well dressed women who looked as if they had been shopping. All the women are better dressed than in London and all the men worse.

After dinner we walked down fifth avenue and Broadway. You have no idea of advertising as it is understood here. Heat and noise are added to light. Suddenly I felt my face scorched and found that a motorcar advertising electric fires with one on board was passing. Some of the sky signs crackle loudly with lightening.

Note added to the end of this text .

Sent off in a hurry.

Friday Oct. 17

all N.Y.

Oct. 19	League for Public Discussion - Why Trotsky Hates Macdonald
25	Hard School - The Impending English Elections
25	Canadian Society - The Achievement of Labour
28	Public Library - Why Trotsky Hates Macdonald
27	Civic Club, Complimentary Dinner - Some Labour Personalities
<hr/>	
Nov. 3	Chicago - Can Women Remain Feminists
9	Bloomington Ill
19	Milwaukee
23	Detroit
30	Philadelphia
-	Mount Clair

2.2: Flags (1930)

F L A G S

Nov. 11 1930

To-day began as almost all my New York days begin: a baked apple, cornflakes, hot muffin and coffee, while I read half-heartedly the New York Times. I saw the daily graph of some index of American trade continuing its downward course, I read the daily obituary and admired the daily debutante, I glanced at armistice day programmes and smiled at Will Rogers, I noted that British labour continued to become more insecure, that Austria and the Balkans had their problems, that people must buy more, that soon unemployment would be reduced, that the daily great business leader was optimistic and that elephants had stampeded at a papier-maché tiger in the Lord Mayor's Show of my own London. Everything suggested that it was the world of every day, with a normal sunrise and doubtless a normal sunset to follow. My breakfast cost me fifty cents as usual and my generosity crystallised into the daily dime; I walked out into the

street. I turned into Fifth Avenue.

There are two sorts of memory: one seems to be a willing though sleepy slave; you send him errands and he goes hither and thither at your bidding, never asking a question, nor making a suggestion; you use him and he does what he is paid to do. But every now and then something in the outside world, a building, a mountain, an unknown person, a tree, without even waiting to ask permission of the owner, hurls in a message, before your eyes or ears can detect its arrival, and galvanises quite another memory to the most active life. This memory takes possession of you, shakes you, intoxicates you and jangles every nerve in your body, until you feel like a very little child walked off its feet by an adult and swallowing bewildered tears down the same Fifth Avenue, which a moment ago was as normal to you as baked apple, cornflakes, hot muffin and coffee for breakfast.

My mind can reconstruct what happened clearly enough now: a flash of flags from the tall buildings, a conditioned reflex, and an understanding that it was Armistice Day. But at the time there was no such orderly progression as one can read in a psychology text book, there were only many changes in the tension exerted by nerve ends upon muscles, and bloodvessels, and glands;

there were darkening cheeks, watering mouth, smarting eyes, and hot jabs in chest and stomach all roused into action by the drooping flags, and a raging memory dashing down the Avenue pulling me off my feet.

True, I had known perfectly well that it was Armistice Day as I sat at the little table and read the paper; I had known then that it was Armistice Day 1930; but now this rarer and more unruly memory refused to let me stop at that gentle and harmless piece of calendar information. I was living in every November since 1918, a many dimensioned world quite beyond the space-time of here and now; I was living in sight of many other displays of flags. More than this I was living in a state in which every laconic newspaper item had become charged with vitality and although I thought of none of them - I did not think at all - everything that could respond to Flags was whipping my unconscious self with thongs of flame and steel and sorrow and exasperation.

I moved through the crowds: from the buildings hung the Flags; at the street corners were boxes of red apples, very beautiful apples, being sold by the unemployed. I could not separate the unemployed from those flags; they seemed to be part of one big paradox and I felt that I wanted to understand the paradox, and that I could not

understand it unless I knew exactly why each shop manager had hung out each flag, and what each passerby felt as he saw them hanging in the breezeless day. The apples, I felt, will soon be sold and after that some new makeshift, makebelieve paliative will serve its turn; but in the end what will happen to those unemployed depends largely on what those flags do to the nerve ends of all these passers-by.

On what different occasions these protean symbols might be hung out in precisely the same way; on Labour Day the flags would be there, and the apples too; on Lincoln's Day and probably on Mother's Day also; certainly on St. Patrick's Day and certainly too on the day when war is next declared. Thinking of this I strove to take comfort at the sight of a few flags which were different from the majority, white flags with a red cross. My eyes began to try and see no flags but these; it was difficult; for every one pile of apples being sold by an unemployed man under a red-cross flag there were a hundred beneath the others. I tried to think that the red-cross flags were protests not merely against past wars, but against future ones also, but I found it hard to do so. I wanted to find out exactly how many of the passers-by were being dragged off their feet by this raging memory, but there was no way of finding out; a neighbour spoke out loud to his

companion as he passed me, but all he was saying was: "I tell you, Bill, if the stock market slumps again today, I'll be through." The unemployed man on the other side was munching one of his own apples.

2

On November the eleventh 1929, I was in Devonshire at my own home. In England the great moment on Armistice Day is the eleven o'clock Great Silence. Everything throughout the cities and villeges stops; one becomes aware of Time marching through eternity and then the bells begin to peal.

For myself every year at about ten o'clock I begin to lay plans for being entirely alone at the hour of silence; the strain is so great and the appalling self-consciousness so terrifying to one whom modern science is pleased to call an extrovert. In city offices you will find solid looking men who find it necessary to go off and wash their hands at eleven o'clock on November the eleventh every year so as to avoid catching the eye of a neighbour at the moment when God seems to be seeing through each silent, awkward human being.

I was safe within my private study surrounded

by four walls of books, looking at the minute hand of my watch and thanking heaven that I was bashfully alone. Down the garden path came the heavy scrunch of a well known pair of feet and shortly from the kitchen the loud Devonshire voice of the man who sells me both milk and beer. A lot he cared for two minutes of silence on that or any other day. Having spent years on the Western Front, in Mesopotamia, in the Occupied Area he had sat down to milk his cows and to tap his beer casks as if he had never gone out of his Devonshire village for an hour. His only stories about war are amusing ones about how the Germans had disliked having to billet him after the war was over, but that they soon got quite friendly when they found that "we all treated them decent like," and pathetic ones about how these same Germans had not enough to eat so that the soldiers had shared rations, and rather stupid ones about how he had succeeded in getting home with a "souvenir." One wonders sometimes what a man must experience to be changed a little. One wonders how Flags can be made to galvanise men into real masterful memory. If a man like this farmer has locked so securely within him the years 1914 to 1918 that they never come between him and a cow's udders, never even send him a dream, how can one hope to unlock them for all these younger people walking unperturbably down Fifth Avenue.

I suppose that at all times in human history it has been depressing to watch the proportion of people younger than oneself increase while the older and therefore more nearly doomed disappear. If you stand on the long moving stairway which in London leads a subway passenger from underground to open air, you feel a certain gloom sometimes after you are half-way up and see the lower steps crowded with newcomers, while above you, one by one, your predecessors disappear out of sight. It is the same thing which attacks you when ever a disagreeable task or period draws to its long desired end; you thank heaven for the release, but you feel deeply conscious that also there have passed a certain number of irreclaimable days. This all men have known; but it is perhaps doubly powerful to-day to see the streets filled every year by a greater proportion of people to whom the effect of the Flagg upon men only slightly older than they is inexplicable. Men who are thirty to-day were eighteen years old when the war ended and fourteen when it began; they represent the downward limit of those whom older men can understand; all younger live in a different world. The worlds touch part of the time; but when the Flagg are brought out and hang above the heads of the apple-sellers in the street, they draw apart.

3

On November the eleventh 1928 I was in Spain. That to me was the humorous Armistice year. Spain had decided, or rather Primo de Rivera had decided to have a two minutes silence like the rest of Europe, just as, I believe, there is a Spanish "Unknown Soldier," probably brought home from Morocco where he had been slaughtered by Abd-el-Kuim. This passion for being in the Armistice seems strange for a country that should be thanking God and trade requirements that it was lucky enough to keep out of the War. But Primo wanted his two minute silence and who should say him nay. A royal decree commanded that all government offices should observe the day by suspending work for two minutes while the officials stood at their desks in silence. The newspapers announced the decree, but remarked that in payment for this the officials might very well demand extra wages for working overtime, seeing that November the eleventh was a Sunday; a fact apparently overlooked by whomsoever it was that had suggested the official decree! I suppose I am grateful for this since it is the only thing funny that I have ever heard of in connection with Armistice Day, most things such as anniversary banquets, masked balls, and heterogeneous parties seem merely pathetic.

Does anybody remember Armistice Day 1918 in London? There in the centre was Trafalgar Square, the place par excellence for any crowd. The greatest war in history was at an end; the hand of death had quite suddenly been removed from almost every door in the land; at home you no longer needed to feel your heart stop at the sight of an official War Office envelope, out there, "a war could stand up." London proceeded to celebrate. It is strange what things people do at the greatest moments of history, how grown men and women behave at moments of superlative relief.

Into Trafalgar Square there surged the whole of the East End, a cockney army of ecstatic, humorous, unself-conscious, strangely dressed, fantastic elemental beings. "Suddenly everyone burst out singing"; and the song they sang in Trafalgar Square that night was about a certain Mother Brown who was exhorted incessantly by suddenly formed groups of arm-linked strangers to keep her knees up. "Knees up Mother Brown" echoed incessantly through the Square, along the Strand, down Whitehall until the dawn. Britannia was never mentioned, she was as retired as Mrs. Grundy; the unknown goddess Mother Brown reigned supreme. I suppose she had had her worshippers in the unmapped

East End for some time before; she could not have been created from the womb of the Trafalgar Column; she may be a London deity as old as Gog and Magog; but never before and never since have I heard the whole of London ring with her name and her knees. Those who plan armistice celebrations would do well to remember Mother Brown, the unknown goddess, so secure in men's hearts that when the fear of death was taken from them they could only express themselves by exhorting her to keep up her knees. Compare her with "Land of hope and glory" or "Eule Britannia": it is the difference between the cheer raised in response to a cheer leader and a spontaneous burst of applause. The first is raised in the hope that as a result something worth cheering may happen, the second is produced by a good piece of play. So with patriotic songs; they do not express existing feelings, they whip up a feeling which is desired; when a true human elemental feeling exists, when something really worth singing about has happened, no patriotic song in the world can stand against the knees of Mother Brown.

And while people sang that night in Trafalgar Square they were busy with their hands. They held little paper balls attached to a yard or so of elastic, and threw them at strangers in such a way that having hit the stran-

ger gently on the nose the elastic drew them back to the throwers' hand. Everybody in the London streets on Armistice night had one of those balls. I cannot imagine where they had come from. It is hard to see how any manufacturer could possibly have known beforehand that when the hand of death was finally stayed, human beings would want to throw little balls on the end of elastic at one another. Had the manufacturers been looking up the history of what happened at the end of the South African War, or the Crimean War, or after Waterloo? And does humanity always celebrate release from tension by hurling little balls? Conjured out of the toy factories by heaven knows what intuition, there they were by the million; and nobody ever threw one of them without the reward of a hearty laugh and a friendly shout from the recipient. Oh how many a gloomy function of intended pleasure, where the crowds of polite guests have stood around in silent anguish, would not a few score of balls like these have produced a desirable melting, a nearer approximation to the abandon which is real enjoyment. For my own part at least I can say that often while listening to the chairman's opening remarks at a banquet at which I was to speak, I have sighed for a missing trinity, for Mother Brown, a ball and a piece of elastic.

5

Walking down Fifth Avenue to-day in the many dimensioned world of memory, conscious only of disobedient nerve ends and unruly glands, I was influenced too by a dimension still further removed than Armistice day itself. It was the day when flags first meant some of the things which they now mean. A wild, uproarious crowd which had not yet learned to worship Mother Brown; a crowd therefore content to sing the Marseillaise. Those were the days when we learned not merely that familiar tune, but one which we tried to like because it was Belgian, the Brabançonne; and one, which, thank heaven, was easy, the Russian national anthem; while some no doubt even went so far as to learn the tune from Serbia, or possibly even the Montenegrin, the Portugese and the Greek. But on August the fourth 1914 the Marseillaise was enough. It was sung from the tops of taxicabs, from the plinth of the Nelson Column, round and round Trafalgar Square, down the Strand and along Whitehall. It was sung by a happy crowd that had submitted to the cheerleaders. How disappointed I, a boy of seventeen, would have been if at midnight it had not been possible to wave at Nelson's feet the fact that war had been declared.

There were no red apples in the streets in

those days and to-day, if war were declared they and their unemployed vendors would disappear like lightning and a period of prosperity would be ushered in, of prosperity and death. It needs a war to bring crowds from the Marseillaise to knees up Mother Brown and yet it is a pity that some shorter cut cannot be found. A war can give employment as surely as a gale can shake the apples from the trees. There are a thousand good reasons asleep in every human being's heart why he should be prejudiced against peace. The one answer can only be given by this rarer kind of memory, which is only occasionally brought to life.

I have often watched snails progressing laboriously in pursuit of their destiny down garden paths or up the sides of trees, and wished that men, like they, left in their tracks a visible ribbon of slime. I suppose that there were many others who like myself found themselves in Trafalgar Square both on August the fourth, 1914 and November the eleventh, 1918. Consider the track we should see, were they but snails, left by their movements between those two nights. Consider the progress they made from the foot of Britannia to the knee of Mother Brown. Probably the biological use of a snail's slime is to direct other snails in some way, to attract them or to repulse them.

It is a pity that human beings seem to have lost the art. At least it seems to have been overlaid by other things.

For example, consider these flags. Consider first the text book illustration of a conditioned reflex: you wave a red handkerchief before your dog whenever you give him a meal; his mouth waters at the sight of food; you later wave the red handkerchief without giving him a meal; his mouth waters at the sight of the handkerchief. Memory interferes with his nerve ends and all sorts of glands get out of hand. That is what the flags did to me; they brought me after some painful moments to the Mother Brown condition, without my having to go through a war as well. Now why is it that flags do not do this to everybody? The reason is obvious; because we have carefully associated them in quite other conditioned reflexes. The loneliness which I feel walking down Fifth Avenue beneath the flags is due to the fact that most of the passersby including all the younger ones have quite another reflex from mine. Consider a dog who was always beaten when a red handkerchief was waved, and ten others who were always praised at that moment; the first would for ever put his tail between his legs while the ten were wagging theirs; the first would inevitably feel lonely at such a moment. And now we are breeding puppies all over the place whose conditioned

reflexes are bound to leave the men over thirty, who can remember, who have not had their reflexes reconditioned, as many have, lonely and afraid.

2.3: A Clean Man (no datat)

A CLEAN MAN

I had been lecturing at Palm Beach, that comfortable centre of culture. I don't remember my subject but the affair was a success and, after the lecture, I was invited to stay as house guest by three different hostesses. That gave me a whole week of what some people call rest.

The local society paper described me as the lion of the hour and published a photograph of me sitting under an umbrella at the Everglades with Mrs. Grosse B. Stix III, which took a lot of explaining afterwards when I got home. With my hand on my heart, however, I can truthfully say that the only thing I can remember about the lady was that I asked her if the figures meant she was the third wife of Mr. Stix.

I had only asked for information but it was taken as a sparkling example of the British sense of humour. I also remember that when it was being repeated over

cocktails later a man whispered in my ear that as a matter of fact she was the fourth, and that Mr. Stix was her third. The figure however referred to the fact that grandfather, father and son had all been Christianed Grosse - most remarkable!

So when, very early in the morning, I sank into my Pullman chair on a train with a lovely name going north, I felt tired, depressed and lonely. My week at Palm Beach had passed very rapidly and every minute had been filled with pleasure, but in retrospect I found nothing to linger over with loving gratitude. It had not added to my store of lasting happy memories. It had certainly not been rest, relaxation, recuperation, it had really been very hard work indeed.

I suppose it was this dissatisfied frame of mind that induced me to do what on normal occasions I avoid beyond almost anything else; almost before the train began to move I got up and staggered down the car to the smoker. I did not normally smoke except after dinner when I liked to have one of those cigars which used to cost two for twenty-five cents. Heaven knows what they cost nowadays, for this was in the days before the war, and besides I have given up smoking even cigars.

But my chief reason for avoiding the smoker is that I find it very hard to speak to strangers. I like strangers speaking to me but I am ashamed to say that there is something about my appearance, I put it down to that most formidable of iron curtains, my obvious shyness, which makes it very rare that anybody speaks to me, even in a smoker. It makes one feel very conspicuous not to be talking at the top of one's voice in a smoker and that is why I keep out of them as a general rule.

Of course the best time to remain unobserved in a smoker and therefore, in my case, unembarrassed, is at the very beginning of a long journey, for then most men are smoking a cigar with their eyes and mouths hidden behind the morning or evening paper as the case may be. You can sit down and observe the shoes and pants and the relative baldness of each of your neighbours without the slightest risk of molestation, and you can put up your own paper as an extra precaution.

On this morning the Palm Beach papers had been distributed and the established passengers were busily examining them to see what the great world had done since they left Miami. The Pullman porters were gathering up the fragments of Miami papers that remained.

There were for the moment only three men besides

myself in the compartment and all the other three were well covered by the Palm Beach Daily News. I lit a cigar and leaned my head back and shut my eyes.

I recapitulated the events of the week, which had ended up with a farewell party given by the wife of a lumber millionaire who was not in the Social Register but was too rich and too well dressed for even that not to be quite fatal.

The English Earl, who made his living by selling very harmless water colours, had been induced to come to her party out of courtesy to the English visiting writer, so that there were further grounds for hope that she might make the grade when next year's edition of the Blue Book was being prepared. Thus, from her point of view, the party was a success and she was able to buy a nice but expensive water colour for the servants' parlour.

Although it was only about eight thirty the day was already too hot, at least as the aftermath of an all-night party, and a rising tide of misery seemed to be about to swamp me. I had no headache, but only that miserable feeling that nothing exists behind the eyeballs and that everything in front of them is unutterably boring.

When at last I opened my eyes it was to find

the man in the corner diagonally opposite me carefully examining my features. I pretended not to notice but out of the corner of my eye kept a discreet watch on any further moves he might make. I did not exactly want him to talk to me, but I did not want him to show the usual signs of feeling that I was not the sort of guy he wished to converse with.

He looked from me to the paper in his hand and back again, several times, and then he looked away thoughtfully in the direction of the receding scenery. He had soft brown eyes and that look like an overblown rose which so many Americans get as they approach the late thirties. Healthy yes, very healthy, a good colour with an authentic bloom; but just a little too soft, just a little too comfortable.

He was of course beautifully dressed in a Palm Beach suit which must have been pressed just before he put it on and left for the train at Miami. He had on one of those very expensive tapestry-like ties which went with Palm Beach suits in those days. He had no sign of baldness and his dark hair was well cut and well brushed. His neck was as clean shaven at the back and as soft and fresh looking as his cheeks. He showed no signs of having any problems whatever.

One felt that he always breathed pure air and that his linen was always as fresh as when it came out of the box. You could not imagine him having a cough or cold and of course his teeth were as good as the best to be seen on the bell-boards. And, thank God, he did not look capable of that terrible grin which always accompanies them in the tooth-paste ads.

From the very first, indeed, I knew that if he were to smile it would be with his eyes rather than with his mouth, which, to tell the truth, was rather undistinguished, not to say weak. When later he did smile, I found that I had prophesied right.

It is generally agreed that smiling eyes are nobler, more genuine, more trustworthy than smiling mouths. There can be no doubt about the truth of this generalisation. But it is also true that if a beautiful woman has a big enough mouth and knows how to use it, knows indeed the difference between a smile and a grin - well there are a number of eye-smiles that I for one would be willing to sacrifice for this less noble variety. For eye-smiles are by no means all the same. Some people smile with their eyes so easily, so indiscriminately, so gratuitously, so oh-I-like-you-so-muchly, that it means as little as the perpetual tail-wagging of an over-enthusiastic dog; other

eye-smiles are as full of weariness, tolerance, wisdom as a thoroughly comfortable cat. And the curious thing is that you sometimes meet with this kind in quite young girls whose store of wisdom can only be what they brought into the world with them.

Well, the clean man in the Palm Beach suit - I am sorry, but the obvious adjective for him, the one Homer would have used, just as he always called Odysseus the many-wiled and the sea many-twinkling and words winged, was "clean". That is what you felt about him first, last and all the time: he was a clean man, clean not only on the surface but down to the very last little convolution of his internal machinery - a dead loss to half the advertisers in the world. Well, when this clean man did eventually smile at me it was with his eyes and it was neither a doggy nor a feline smile, but the smile of a little child.

I didn't really like it. Men in Palm Beach suits smoking cigars should not have trusting childlike smiles. A man with a smile like this smile ought to be down and out in this wicked world, and there was no doubt at all that this man was never down and out.

He caught my eye and smiled and launched him-

self over from his corner seat back to the engine to the open space between me and the gentleman in the corner on my left.

"Say, excuse me," he said, "but haven't I seen your face somewhere? Don't I know it?"

I looked at him. I was young in those days and therefore arrogant. "It's quite possible," I said, "there's been a good many photographs in the papers lately."

I did not want to say that I had been watching him comparing my face with the likeness published in the Palm Beach Daily News that morning, sitting with Mrs. Grosse B. Stix III at the Everglades. I was very suspicious of him simply because I was not used to strangers wanting to speak to me and I felt he was flattering me for some sinister purpose of his own. Clean men can be sinister.

"That's right," he said, "you're a writer, aren't you?"

"I am."

"Might I ask what sort of books you write, - fiction, I take it."

"No," I snapped out. For some reason which I have now forgotten, I used to regard it as an insult in

those days to be asked if I wrote fiction; nowadays I only wish it were true. "No, I do not write fiction."

"Oh, then may I ask what sort of books you do write?"

"Well," I said, "most of my books might be called social science. My last one was called a Short History of Women."

"Ah," he said, "that's mighty interesting; women."

He looked away with a soft brown-eyed far-away look at the retreating scenery, mostly swampy land with trees smothered in grey green Spanish moss. He seemed to be weighing possibilities and like a well-trained business man he came to a rapid decision.

"Say," he said, snapping his attention back from the outside world into the smoker and training it on me, "I have a feeling you're the man I need to talk to. Can you let me have some of your time? Kind you I'll pay for it of course. You'll only have to name your price."

I was naturally somewhat surprised, and for a split second or so I hardly knew how to take it. Certainly there is no place in the world except an American smoker where a stranger would ask to buy one's time be-

cause one had written a book on women. And even in America any sensible man would feel inclined to laugh it off as a joke. I did laugh, but a little uncertainly because I happened to glance at the fellow and, in the midst of his soft brown eyes, I thought I saw an expression which, to put it mildly, was no laughing matter. He wasn't joking, and that being so it seemed that the only alternative solution must be that he was mad.

Now if there is anything that bores me it is conversation with a lunatic. You are so sorry for them that you feel bound to be polite, and they are so sure of their own sanity that they soon make you doubt your own. You begin by courteously greeting their statement that they are Napoleon without contradiction, and very soon you begin to wonder if they are not Napoleon after all.

"Of course," I said after a moment's hesitation. "I'll be glad to help you if I really can, but I find it hard to see what use I can be to you."

"Ah, you never know," he replied with an appealing, rather too appealing smile, "I am quite sure you're just the man I need for advice."

"What's the trouble?" I asked.

"Well, I'll tell you," he answered. "I want

your advice. I want you to tell me, and I believe you would do so honestly and no nonsense, if you think I ought to marry."

I looked at him. There could be no doubt about it. He was serious. He really did want me to tell him, whether or no it would be a good thing for him to marry. I probably showed something of what I felt, for he put his hand on my arm and drew me towards him and went on in a lowered voice:

"Mind you, I don't expect you to come to a decision here and now. That's why I said I'd buy your time. Say, why don't you come and stay with me a couple of days. You'd be very comfortable, my old mother would see to that. And you'd like my house. It's on the city line in the best neighbourhood of Philadelphia. I've got a wonderful dining room. It's on three different levels and it's all built of travertine marble. You'd be crazy about it."

"It sounds wonderful," I said, "and it's very good of you to invite me, but I'm afraid I'm due for a lecture in Washington tomorrow evening and then I'm going to the Middle West."

"Don't you worry," he said, "I know you're a busy man and, after all, time's money, isn't it? Say, what would it cost me to make it worth your while to

visit me for a couple of days? I know you'd like it and you'd like my old mother too, she's wonderful. Come on, sir, let me make it worth your while. I'm not a millionaire, mind you, but I do pretty well in selling real estate and I can buy your time all right."

Nobody had ever offered me money to go and visit them before, let alone with a three-level dining-room in travertine marble and a wonderful mother, and the man was so genuinely anxious to consult me, than which no compliment can seem greater when one is still in one's early thirties, that I decided to accept.

"It's very kind of you," I said, "and I would love to come and see you. I daresay I could manage a night when I'm going through Philadelphia in about three weeks time."

"That's mighty decent of you, and my old mother will be tickled to death to hear your Oxford accent, and of course you'll let me know your fee."

"Nonsense," I said, "of course you don't have to pay me. To tell you the truth, you've made me very curious to see your house. Why is the dining room on three levels?"

"Well, the man I bought it from said it was built like the houses in Italy. You see, it's built of

travertine marble like they have in places like Rome...
 Oh! And I tell you another thing; you're a writer, well,
 I've got the house full up with books, they're a wonder-
 ful lot and you can have your pick of them; they'd be
 more useful to you, seeing you write, than to me."

I pricked up my ears. I had not been seduced
 by a money offer, but the idea of being offered the pick
 of a gentleman's library was another matter altogether.

"What subjects are you most interested in?"

"How's that?"

"I mean, what special subjects do your books
 deal with?"

"Oh, they're all sorts, just as I find them
 at auctions. If I go to an auction and there's a lot
 of books there I just can't help buying them. And, mind
 you, some of them have wonderful bindings, real peaches.
 You can have the lot, if you like. And, gee, some of
 them are very old."

Could this man have incunabulae, Elzevirs,
 Aldines, heaven knows what? Would I find early Ameri-
 cana, rare Walt Whitman pamphlets? It seemed too good
 to be true.

"How old would you say the oldest books were?"

"Oh, I daresay there are some sixty or seventy years old, leastwise fifty. But you can come and see for yourself. You can choose out what you want and I'll crate them up for you and ship them to your home in England."

It was my turn to look out of the window at all that waste of Spanish moss smothering and throttling such millions of weak, watery trees. I never get tired of looking at Spanish moss. It is, to begin with, a beautiful sight and a terrible sight too, miles and miles of trees denied light and air, doomed to die in the tangles of grey-green, mermaids' hair, mermaids who have left the sea for love of the trees they will kill, a very symbol of the love that destroys. But besides this I never cease to marvel that this stuff is not a moss at all, it is a flowering plant closely related to the pineapple. How very dissimilar relations can be. It is one of the things that make life bearable.

I felt that courtesy demanded I should lead the conversation back to marriage. Natural modesty and also natural boredom made the task seem difficult, but I need not have worried. My friend was only too anxious to approach the delicate subject once more, and I felt his well-manicured hand passed through my arm and a gentle pressure drawing me closer to him.

"It's just swell of you to be giving me your time like this," he said, "and I'd like to hear a bit more of your views about my marrying," and he gave me another of those gentle childlike smiles.

It is hard to know what to do with misplaced humility. It was absurd, of course, that he should treat me as an authority on his private life, at least it was still absurd in those days, for remember this was before universal psychiatry had descended on the United States of America. Of course it was absurd, but you can't insult a man by telling him he is a fool to put you on a pedestal. Good manners sometimes demand that you step on the pedestal, however little you like the posture.

"Well," I said, "why don't you outline your difficulty? Is there anyone you want to marry at the moment?"

"No, I haven't got down to thinking about the proposition in those terms. It wouldn't be much good choosing a girl before you'd made up your mind whether you want to marry at all, now would it?"

"I suppose not," I said. Put in that way; what he said was reasonable enough. But then what kind of man could he be to put it in that way?

"Besides," he went on, "I often wonder, if I

do decide to marry, and look around for the right girl, whether she'd be willing to have me; what do you think?"

That was an easy one. Many normal men have asked it, always expecting an affirmative answer. For a moment my irritation and boredom nearly got the better of me. I longed to say: To tell you the truth I don't think she would. But the man was in earnest; deep down in his eyes you could see a little area which reflected the terror in his soul. It would have been cruel to give him anything but the answer he expected, the answer, at least, which any normal man would expect, for in his case I felt he really feared that the reply might be No.

"What!" I exclaimed, laughing, "with that wonderful house and your health and good looks and, I should say, good prospects, - why any girl would fall for you."

"Do you really think so?" he said eagerly.

"You bet I do."

There was a brief pause while he helped me relight my cigar.

"Gee," he said, "you can't know how it helps me to have your opinion. After all, you're an expert aren't you? I can believe you when I wouldn't believe another. So you really think it would be a good thing

for me to marry?"

"No, I didn't say that," I said in the serious, judicial tone which I had decided to adopt. After all, it was what this unmitigated ass needed of me. "I only said I was sure any girl would be glad to marry you. It's for you to tell me why you think you shouldn't marry, if you've got a reason."

"I haven't got any reason, only I just can't visualise the proposition clearly, you see. The fact is, I'm perfectly happy as I am. I've got the most wonderful mother and I'm comfortable and I just hate to think of making any change.

"When you've seen my mother you'll understand. Why, she's just cute. You know I get the hell of a kick just taking her out in the automobile of a Sunday. There's nothing in my home life I want changed. But then you see, this is what I sometimes think: mother's old and getting older. She's seventy-three, and though she's a grand companion for me now, well, I think sometimes, what about later? In ten years she'll be eighty-three and, maybe, you know, after all I must face facts, maybe she'll be gone. And when I think of sitting by the fire - Oh! - did I tell you? We've got an open English fire, you'll be glad to see that; we burn natural gas but it looks

just like a log fire. They call it the Baronial Model. Well, just at present I'm happy evenings sitting turning over the Saturday Evening Post or Life, with her on the other side asleep; but I say to myself now and then, it would be darn lonely without her. You see what I mean? After all, you've got to think of the future sometimes haven't you?"

I agreed with him that one must certainly think of the future.

"But then, you see, when I think that marriage might change that wonderful companionship with my mother.. Of course she could live with us just the same, but things would be bound to alter just a little bit, don't you think? I mean, a wife couldn't help intruding, as it were. After all, she'd be there, wouldn't she?"

"What does your mother think about it?"

"Now it's funny you asking that. I suppose you can't see it as we do, mother and I, or you wouldn't ask that question. You see, I mean, it's not the sort of thing, marriage, that would come up in conversation between me and my mother. As a matter of fact we don't talk so very much about anything, but I would never bother her with a problem. She's too cute. You couldn't want to hurt her. You'll see what I mean when you come and stay

with us."

"Are you an only child?"

"There's my sister Gemilla. She's a good girl, our Milly, but I couldn't leave her in charge of Mother. Not much. You know, it's a funny thing, I mean the way a girl don't appreciate her mother. Not as she ought, I mean. You'll be seeing Milly and you'll know what I mean. Anyways Milly's a good girl but she don't really appreciate Mother like I do."

We separated soon after, I making the excuse that I had to work on my Washington lecture and also to make up my lost sleep. He didn't attempt to hold on to me as I had feared he would. He fully appreciated that a writer chap must be alone to think. After all, that's our job, isn't it, thinking? We met again in the diner that evening.

I kept the conversation on general subjects such as the difference between base-ball and cricket, the English sense of humour, fogs in London, hyphenated names and the pronunciation of certain English words such as Schedule. Over coffee I noted with uneasiness that my friend was preparing for what would doubtless be a long session in the smoker, a long session devoted to his problem. So I briskly took out my note-book, wrote down

his address in Philadelphia, and explained that I must turn in, since the train was going to reach Washington very early indeed in the morning. We agreed that I should telegraph him a day or so before I was to pass through Philadelphia and that I would spend a night at his home.

About three weeks later I took a taxi from that huge undistinguished terminus so unlike most American termini which reflect the pride and imagination of an essentially nomadic civilisation, and found myself approaching a very good residential area with wide streets and detached houses. We reached the city limit. All the houses were about ten years old and in what was then described as the ten thousand dollar home class. Heaven knows what they would cost nowadays.

Every house was of course different from its neighbours and all were inspired by the domestic architecture of many varied climes and many different centuries. And yet in spite of this carefully conceived variety, with not a line, a curve, a facade the same, they all looked as if they came out of the same box of bricks.

The air of what might be called failed variation was accentuated by the fact that the same landscape gardening firm had evidently got the contract for every house and had carried out the job in New England Italian

Formal style. This has much to recommend it, especially if you are interested in what is happening on all your neighbours' porches, since it has no hedges and those trees such as cypress and fir and box, normally used precisely to obscure the view are arranged carefully so that the view is not restricted. Having said this, I must add that few English gardens laid out in the course of this century can compete in appropriateness and comfort with these hybrid American creations.

At the door there stood my friend and host for the night. He was dressed in a faultless suit, had obviously just had a shower, a haircut, a manicure and some ultra-violet treatment. He gave me a very welcoming hand slightly bruising two boxes in my own, flung the door open wide, put his arm on my shoulder, and "See, there's my home," he said.

It was indeed. I am ignorant of those things and in the train coming to Philadelphia I had murmured to myself more than once: "What exactly is travertine marble?" Now I knew. Now there is nothing wrong with travertine marble as such. I have looked it up in a suitable work of reference and I find that it is "a white or light coloured concretionary limestone deposited from water holding lime in solution, quarried in Italy for building." It is excellent in its proper place, but as a rhomboid intrusion in a hall wall

otherwise finished in ornamental biscuit-coloured rough-cast, or as a low arch over a staircase where no arch is required for constructional purposes, or as a knee-high altar to hold a pot of evergreen fern, travertine is unnecessary.

I longed to see the dining room for aesthetic reasons, but for mercenary reasons I most longed to see the library.

It was not exactly a library. The books were kept on the landing outside the bathroom. There were about two hundred of them and in their way they were the most remarkable collection of books I have ever seen. I am very catholic indeed in my taste for books, and it is rare for me to find a shelf, even in a hotel writing room, where there are not one or two volumes in which I can pleasantly browse. But I lay my hand on my heart and affirm that there was not one single volume in that two hundred, which I could conceive of holding interest, not only for me, but for any human being whatever.

My host indicated them with a generous sweep of his arm. They were all mine, he said, and left me to make my choice, while he went to see if his mother had woken up from her afternoon nap.

I put half a dozen books aside for politeness sake but I was drooping with boredom and disappointment by the time he came back. Dear little mother had woken up and was just tickled to death at the prospect of meeting me, but, as she would find the party tiring, she was going to stay in her room until the guests came.

"Party?" I said, with desperation growing in my heart. That was something I had not bargained for. I had a depressing foreknowledge of what that party would be like.

"Why, we couldn't be so selfish as to keep a guest like you all to ourselves, could we? We've asked in a few of the neighbours for dinner. Mother's a wonderful party organiser you know, and the coloured girl's a swell cook and of course Milly helps. And," he said, nudging me, "I've got plenty of the real thing. You don't have to worry about the Scotch."

In the end there turned out to be twenty-six invited guests. They began to arrive about six, while I was lying in a splendid hot bath. You might criticise the architecture and the decor of the Clean Man's home, but the essential fittings were beyond dreams adequate. I wanted to lie in that bath for ever.

As the loud greetings of arriving guests floated up from the hall below, I even toyed with the thought of imitating disillusioned Roman gentlemen and opening a vein in my arm. I estimated what depth of colour my life-blood would impart to the warm water lapping about my weary body. Would it be deeper than that travertine marble over the staircase? That was pink of the shade of the cheaper canned salmon which is really cod dyed to imitate the more aristocratic fish. But on occasions like this one simply cannot take the easy way out. I dressed, pulled my dinner jacket into position, straightened my tie and, with firm step, descended the stairs.

The voices came from beyond a door on the left, and, without a moment's hesitation, I turned the handle and like a Christian entering the circus prepared to be butchered.

I found myself on the middle level of a large room. Above me was the dinner table, elaborately prepared, and behind it an open English fireplace. Below me a number of easy chairs and beyond them a large French window. To step up or down one had to trust oneself to what looked like a slab of congealed pink brawn. The seven or eight people who had already arrived had their backs to me as I entered and seemed to be surrounding a figure, invisible to me, in

a high-backed chair. This was Mother.

Naturally I had visualised the Clean Man's mother and had come to certain conclusions about her. I had, I suppose, leaned on the books of modern psychology which I had read. She would be a domineering type of woman with a harsh masculine voice, used to giving orders and unable to bear the presence of younger women near her son. She would of course have been disappointed at a very early age in her marriage and have tried to compensate by a devastating, throttling love of her only son. You know the type as well as I do, it is as well-known in modern psychology as the Widow Twanky used to be when pantomimes were still pantomimes. Statistics show that one in four of the men who feel their lives have been ruined lay the blame on this sort of mother.

Well, the lady in the chair did not fit the picture at all. She was, to begin with, very small, not more than five feet high, she was rather blind and very deaf and most sparing with her conversation. Indeed, she only opened her mouth three times during the ensuing evening and none of her utterances suggested dominance, nor an aggressive transference of her love object. All three utterances were short and to the point and concerned the food. They were addressed to me in the place of honour

next her and they were the three statements that (a) she liked the salad, (b) the Chicker Southern style met with her approval, and (c) she always liked pecans.

I need not describe the guests. They were monuments of affability, but they did not stand out from the vast mass of kindly Americans with one exception. The exception was Vera. Almost all American girls look attractive at parties. They dress beautifully. They are not afraid of making the best of whatever nature has given them, nor of improving on nature whenever possible. Vera, being the only guest who could suitably be called a girl, was in an impregnable position as far as I was concerned, and I was glad she was on my other side. Mother's conversational demands, as I have said, were not great, and Vera and I found plenty to talk about. I soon realised that she was more than a well-shaped, well-covered, but not too-covered, body. She was intelligent. Very soon the unutterable loneliness which the company would have made me feel was destroyed by the feeling that Vera was not of the company; that she was on my little desert island.

Not that we had any very deep discussions, rather indeed it was that we had several delightful little silences together, well covered by the hearty din which

the company in general maintained.

I shall describe nothing of that dreadful evening but the agonising incident which followed the excellent dinner. Mother went to bed, helped upstairs by her son. Before he left I saw him whisper to one or two of the men who proceeded to take the chairs on which we had sat at dinner and to rearrange them in a V-shape on the middle level of the room. When on his return my host took the chair his mother had been sitting in before dinner and placed it facing the V, a horrible suspicion began to paralyse my higher faculties. The performing animal was about to be made to perform.

I tried to make myself inconspicuous by sitting in one of the chairs comprising the V, but that was greeted with uproarious laughter and merry protests and I was pressed down into the chair of honour by several pairs of male hands. I am sorry to say that I began not only to feel cross but to look cross, and, what made matters worse, I could feel Vera's eyes fixed on me. I felt she was watching to see if I was going to take a step in either of two opposite wrong directions. Was I going to accept the situation in a way which would suggest arrogant, self-satisfied acquiescence, or was I going to reject it in a way which would be bad mannered and would

(n): Aquest paràgraf ha quedat incomplet al manuscrit.

.....Very soon the unutterable loneliness which the company would have made me feel was destroyed by the feeling land of steam-healing. "So long as you just talk your English accent." I glanced in its direction and identified it as Miriam's, Our Nilly's. Miriam, the sister, who didn't appreciate Mother, was a rather plain woman in the middle thirties. Her hair was hennaed. It was just the same colour as the binding of my Spanish dictionary which happens to be lying in front of me as I write. And that is absolutely all I can think of to write about Miriam.

"Well" I said, trying not to disappoint the good opinion that I had decided Vera already possessed of me. "If you really want me to talk perhaps you'd like to ask me some questions. Anything that might interest you and I'll do my best to answer."

There was a bit of nudging and giggling at that

and one elderly female voice like a dry cracking seedpod said: "Why sakes, we an't clever people, we can't ave questions, you just say somethin." But a reddish man with a turkey neck, a poor imitation of a caricature English colonel, set the ball rolling and for the best part of an hour I answered questions, dull ones, stupid ones, unimportant ones, even one or two important ones about British politics. The only one that I can remember would interest nobody to-day for it dealt with unhappy far off things which time has solved for all of us. It was: "Why don't you British give us India in payment of your war-debts, so that we can give India back to its own people?" I cannot remember my answer.

Then suddenly as if it was time to sing a hymn the whole company rose to its feet and prepared to leave. I have no idea what the stimulus was. They just got up and rushed for their coats and rubbers. They were mighty glad to have met me of course and they thanked their host for a swell evening and as they could not all crowd out into their cars at once I had just enough time to whisper a word or two to Vera. We arranged to meet for lunch downtown next day somewhere near the terminus. My train left at three and the Clean Man who had a business lunch-date had already arranged to have a coffee at the depot before

I left. He had to leave for business just before eight next morning, I was very glad to hear.

"Not a word to anyone here," Vera whispered.

"Of course not," I answered with the delicious sense that I was going to be repaid by a little romance for the terrible boredom of this occasion.

It was one of those cosy little restaurants with discreet cubbyholes for two along the walls and as we sank into cushioned luxury opposite one another I gazed with frank admiration at the lady. I was about to say something. "How could you let yourself in for that ghastly gang" I was going to say but Vera opened her lips and began a fraction of a second before me.

"I simply had to see you" she said. "You've got to help me." I gave her the look which implies that one feels born for the very purpose of giving such assistance. But I was surprised at her next words.

"I saw at once," she went on "that you had guessed my secret. I've been in love with him for such a long time now and he simply cannot realise it. I've done all that a fairly modest girl can do to make him see, but I might be his little brother or nephew or something, the way he reacts to me. He treats all the girls just the

same and the trouble is some unscrupulous girl who won't make him half as good a wife as I would will get him."

"Well" I said, having made that rapid reassessment of the situation which rather vain young men are called upon from time to time to make. "What do you want me to do?"

"Do?" said Vera, "shake him. Make him see that he can't go on for ever sacrificing himself to that half dead caricature of a Mother."

In view of what happened later I want to make quite clear what happened now in my mind. I was repulsed at the idea of a lovely and intelligent woman like Vera marrying this silly, flabby, peach-bloom Clean Man. I was shocked that she should be so at the mercy of the vagaries of the human female heart as to see anything at all in him. I was of course vexed to find that she saw less in me than I had imagined. I was also annoyed with myself as usual for harbouring fantasies, - they were no more - which were not exactly proper in a happily married person. I was fuming over my twenty-four previous hours of undignified self-imposed boredom. When I found myself furiously determined neither to lead this ass to this life-giving water nor to make him drink, I grew uneasy. It seemed obvious that this marriage would prove not to have been made in heaven. But no sooner had this reasonable conclusion established

itself in my mind than conscience made a coward of me.

Was it not just what we have been taught to call a rationalisation? Didn't it seem like this because my emotions of attraction towards Vere or repulsion towards him forced me to find a reason for refusing to stir a finger?

"I'll do what I can to help" I said after a pause during which these ideas winged their way very rapidly through my mind.

She rewarded me with a radiant look which however gave me little pleasure and we said good-bye.

At three thirty I joined the Clean Man over a couple of chocolate malted milks.

"I've been thinking about you," I said "and I've come to a definite conclusion."

"Why that's swell!"

"I will not tell it to you unless you promise to follow it out. Remember I'm the expert."

"I guess that's fair enough."

"Do you promise to do what I say?"

"Unless it would hurt Mother."

I summoned up all my resolution. This horribly weak specimen of humanity could easily be lead, of that I

was certain. I stared at him deep into those soft brown eyes, so trusting, so contemptibly trusting and said in the best manner of the stage hypnotist:

"What I am going to tell you is what your mother wants you to do, as you know very well. You must marry and you must marry Vera."

"Vera? Whatever makes you say that? Why she wouldn't have me."

"You must make her have you for your mother's sake. I saw how your mother looked at her and I know."

"Well if that's so - " There was a cry of "All Aboard" and the usual rush for seats. I saw to it that I was the first to climb up and left the Clean Man high and dry in the middle of his sentence.

As the train rushed through the avenue of billboards which divides Philadelphia from Princeton I suddenly remembered a very foolish thing: I had never found out Vera's surname. I would have liked to have kept in touch with her, especially when about six months later my letter to the Clean Man was returned with *Gone Away* scrawled across it.

It was nearly two years before I found myself in Philadelphia again. The weather was uncommonly warm for so late in the year and the maple leaves still delight-

ed the eye with their blood red and brilliant yellow hues against the sun. I had two hours before moving on and I decided to take a taxi to the Clean Man's home. As the taxi stopped I saw my friend sitting on his porch. He was dressed in the identical Palm Beach suit with which I associated him and he was absorbed in the Saturday Evening Post. He held it before his face exactly as I remembered him in the Pullman smoker and he was so interested in his reading that he didn't hear my light step until I was on him.

"Well how are you after all this time?" I said.

The Saturday Evening Post was dropped and revealed the face of a complete stranger. It was a well groomed, well manicured stranger, recently, one felt, out of a shower and back from ultra-violet treatment, a Clean Stranger in fact, but not my man.

"My God" I said "I've made a mistake."

"I guess you have" said the stranger "but is there anything I can do for you?"

I explained the situation briefly. "Ah, you knew him did you," my new acquaintance said. "How long is it since you heard of him?"

"Quite two years."

"Well, he don't live here no longer. I bought this house from the, " he seemed to pause, "from him almost that time ago."

"Can you tell me where he has gone?"

He looked at me, I thought, rather carefully.

"Well," he said, "I suppose by rights I can't tell you where he's gone; but if you don't know, I can tell you how he went."

There was a pause: The Clean Stranger was still looking at me in a rather strange manner.

"Was he a very close friend of yours?"

"Oh no," I said "as a matter of fact I only saw him once. We picked up acquaintance in a Florida pullman and I promised that if ever I was in Philadelphia I'd look him up."

The Clean Stranger looked relieved. "In that case I may as well tell you all I know. I never met him even once but it was all in the papers for days and I guess I remembered it pretty well because of the coincidence of buying his house. Kind of brought it home, you might say."

I waited while he poured us out two generous highballs.

"It seems" he continued "he got himself married. Pretty sort of girl from her photo in the paper. Well they had quite a swell party here and afterwards they drove down to New York where they'd booked a room on the twenty-fifth floor of the Waldorf Astoria. They were very happy, so the girl told the reporters and glad to be alone, I guess. I daresay they found plenty to occupy them during the next few hours and then at three o'clock in the morning or thereabout he jumped up in bed and said he was going to shut the window. What happened next the girl didn't make very plain. She said she was half asleep at the time. I suppose he tripped. The body crashed into an empty taxi drawn up on the curb. I remember that detail because it was the only thing that puzzled the coroner. It looked you see as if he jumped, or he'd have fallen on the sidewalk."

"My God" I said "what about the widow?"

"Never heard anymore of her. I guess she's married again by now. The mother died a good while ago, I believe. Sorry I've no wife to join us. I'm a bachelor still. Have another highball."

"Please, a stiff one if you don't mind."

We sat for a moment drinking in silence. I had already decided never to give marriage advice again.

"Tell me" my host finally began "Haven't I

seen your face somewhere before?"

I leapt to my feet. "My God, my train." I said "Please excuse me I must hail that taxi over there. Thank you very much for the highballs. Goodbye" and I rushed down the garden steps.

2.4: Lecture Tours I (no datat)

1

The young lady, though she was, so they told me, a southerner, was no exception to the general rule. As we danced the ship was lurching somewhat less than usual: now dancing on board ship conforms to the rules which govern beauty in nature, when the living being has so far conquered its environment as to have gained a little leisure from the struggle for existence, it seems to put its surplus energy into decking itself out in vivid scales, feathers, fur coats and repaying its companions with a vision of beauty. Beauty is the measure of a living animal's superiority to its natural enemies and difficulties, and so on board ship conversation is the measure of the dancers' superiority to the lurching of the ship. As the ship was lurching less, there was more conversation, and that conversation proved once more how thirsty for knowledge these Americans can be.

Doubtless it was partly my fault: I was English, and I had already been warned about what I must expect by

the charming young man from Chicago. He had said "We folks in Chicago say that you tell an Englishman a joke in his youth so that he shall have something to laugh at in his old age." I had also gathered that we English, were dignified and formal and perhaps there was enough lurching to preoccupy me and to give a fixed and thoughtful expression to my face. So it may have been partly my fault.

The young lady knowing that I was a lecturer on science was sure I would be interested in the other lecturer whom she had met in the course of her life. She told me all about him: I gathered his subject was Cosmic Consciousness, an important subject about which much might be said: we danced on rather grimly.

The young lady was charming; and we talked about politics, economics, philosophy, primitive technology and commercial art. She knew a surprising number of facts and the short titles, so to speak, of a great many theories and they were linked together not so much by logic as by a gentle enthusiasm for things in general. Regarding her strictly as a symbol, I realised I had met her before, in my bunk, during the four days during which I had admitted my inferiority to the lurching of the ship; only the symbol had then been in a different form, an ocean edition of a newspaper full of the most fascinating little scientific

facts, as that so many million cows were needed to produce the cream for the annual American consumption of sundues, and that a crab born in the Panama Canal had been fished up in the Zuyder Zee, and that eclipses of the moon were foretold by the ancient Chinese.

I admit that the newspaper had depressed me: it held out so much promise of news from England and from the night before and it only gave me news from the spiral nebulae or from the palaeozoic: and I called to mind the worse American scientific textbooks which had floated, - doubtless buoyed up with a lifebelt seeing that they were all on heavy leaded paper - over to England, most of them on sociology or the psychology of advertising, and I felt doubly doubtful about American social sciences, too many of the wonders and too few of the dullnesses of science, I thought. But when I danced with the young lady I realised that, even as a symbol, that newspaper was inadequate: its breezy pa_s from the prehistoric were not the whole attitude of the American public to science, they were the pollen out of which that amazingly busy bee makes honey and as it is the quality of that honey and the possible effect of eating it, which are the subjects of this book, the reader will perhaps pardon a few pages about a foreigner's spiritual adventures and his first American contacts.

A Sand-storm in Mid-Atlantic

Europeans who have not been across the Atlantic have every excuse for assuming that sand-storms in mid-Atlantic are rare. To disabuse themselves of this fallacy they have only to cross to New York by a one class cabin ship full of the less wealthy and more intelligent Americans and they will soon begin to find themselves covered with a golden brown dust of facts blown in on them from all quarters: every American who approaches proves to be a courteous, earnest eddy of information. They regard you as a fellow fisherman, they want to see what you have hauled up in the prawn-net of life and they are sure you will want to compare your haul with theirs.

Returning to the previous metaphor: I felt at first a spiritual kinship with the walrus and the carpenter who:

wept like anything to see

Such quantities of sand.

'If this were only cleared away'

They said: 'It would be grand.'

Indeed, had not the charming young lady from the south converted me it would have been far better for me to have launched a millstone on the Atlantic and tried to paddle it

back to England; for the whole of America turned out to be a perfect Sahara of facts good, bad and indifferent, well-nigh covering the ancient, incompetent European civilization.

At first I resented their being so well informed, it was too blatant, I felt; then I began to worship them all for their enthusiasm and energy; if later I modified this worship, this is not the place to confess it. I have not yet safeguarded myself against the consequences by giving my American readers 4 to read.

First of all there was what in more stable conditions would have been the drawing-room conversations. I heard for example: "Oh, psycho-analysis is quite passé, it's ten years old." That was good hearing and I wondered why I had never thought of saying exactly that when repressed, depressed, impressed young people had bored me in Bloomsbury drawing-rooms with ill-informed small talk about incest.

Next there were the young assistant instructors at the universities who failed to convince me that there was any difference at all between what we called anthropology and what they called sociology: and finally destroyed me altogether by some such statement as: "Well, in America we have abolished the whole concept of instincts:

we find it unnecessary." On reflection I saw that, apart from Christian Science, they had indeed done so, just as Einstein has abolished the universe, and that the only difference was that Einstein would not have put it that way. But it needed getting used to: the difference between the American and the English language is more than mere phonetics and vocabulary, it is a difference of idiom and nuance.

Determined that my voyage out should not be a busman's holiday I assumed a sort of gas mask of frivolity which kept out the sand and with their accustomed politeness my new American friends descended to my level: indeed on the last evening my table actually rose to a man and instructed me in the singing of "hell! hell! the gang's all here;" though I think they expected me to be a little shocked. I liked the horseplay, though I confess that I sometimes laughed at the wrong time out of fear lest if I did not laugh I should prove that they were right in believing that no Englishman has a sense of humour.

Thus on the last evening the sandstorm subsided and next day a clear dawn was the prologue to my first great experience of what America could offer me.

On the previous evening another Englishman had behaved very oddly: we were all sitting in the smoke room drinking our cocktails when the first lights on land were announced. The Americans with a sort of reflex action hastily ordered further refreshment, but the Englishman went off to see the lights: when he returned his face was flushed, he was well-nigh in tears, he tried to control his emotions, "you boys" said he "can't understand what this means to me, I've been waiting to see those lights for twenty years;" and he left the room. He was a seller of gas fittings in a small way in West Ham. I only mention the story here because it may appeal to a certain type of American and tend therefore to cement Anglo-American feeling.

When my moment came next morning I did not behave like that: perhaps some unsuspected strain of Latin blood cools in me the usual Nordic sentimentality; but of the overwhelming effect of what I saw there can be no doubt whatever. I should explain in brief here what I shall elaborate later, that the American idea that English people approach their shores in a spirit of undiluted haughtiness and with a sense of congenital superiority needs to be modified: since the break up of our civiliz-

ation in the twilight of the post war period we have begun to look perhaps not too hopefully to America for a revival in a generation or so of the culture which we held dear. Depression and poverty are destroying us and we look across the sea for something new, it may be a policy of despair, but at least we look.

And the first thing America offers us surpasses all our hopes: it is New York from the sea. This vast architectural triumph is indeed the fine flower of our commercial civilization: bowed down by the mess and muddle of European capitalism and its petty material shell scraped together from a rubbish heap of old sticks and stones, we come upon something which is so beautiful that we cannot believe that social injustice or greedy shortsightedness had anything to do with its construction. Just at the moment when we have extinguished the last fronds of maidenhair clinging to our English rocks, we find this stately grove of treeferns dipping into the blue depths of the sky. By day, it is Babylon; by night, a galaxy of fairy palaces.

This is, or will shortly become, a treatise on sociology and it is not therefore the place to discuss the aesthetics of the New York Skyline, but we must think a little about its sociological implications. However,

in passing, I would like to remind you of a fact, already noted elsewhere, that architecture is the first art to bloom in a youthful culture and that it may therefore be hailed as a vanguard of lovely things to come.

The New York Skyline owes its existence to the great height above the subsistence level to which America has raised itself. I began by a statement, which was really stolen from Mr. Clutton TS rock, that in nature, living beings clothed the useless in beauty directly they could spare time from solving the problems of bare existence. It is not a very scientific remark, but it is true of human beings in society; and the true significance of the New York skyline lies in this, that the society whose individuals have adopted the highest standard of life since before the garden of Eden, can yet find time and energy to create so fine a luxury as this. As a necessary outcome of this success Americans are the most optimistic people the world has ever known. Energy has bred success; success, optimism; and optimism, more energy; that is the American virtuous circle.

2.5: Lecture Tours II (no datat)

1

A year or so ago I was engaged to lecture for one week at a woman's college in a southern state. The weather was very warm and the place congenial.

On the Thursday I lay on the campus at midnight in an endeavour to cool off. It was a grand night for the contemplation of stars. Suddenly against the background of the Milky Way I became conscious of two looming black spots and it being uncomfortable to be loomed over when in a recumbent posture, I sat up. There was a tension, and to relieve it, I ventured the unoriginal remark, "Good evening". The tension was not sensibly relieved. "We're the Campus Police" said one of the spots, "and its pretty strange to see a man on the campus this time of night".

"Oh that is quite all right" I replied, "for I am Dr. Trevelyan who is lecturing here this week!" The tension was at once alleviated. "Ah, Doctor, you just stop there as long as you wish; sorry we disturbed you, doctor, it's what we're here for, but go along and cool off just where you are." The Milky Way once more was unobscured; I cool-

ed off. Nice genial fellows these campus policemen; harmless necessary campestrian fauna living in symbiosis with the campestrian flora, the southern girls who were studying so hard in these scholastic cloisters!

2

I had already admired the vegetation in the course of the week. I had walked up and down the campus with specimens and got their reaction to life. There was one who was hostess when the college branch of the Y.W.C.A. asked me to tea; I had admired her Botticelli characteristics well set off in a flowered print dress. The only magazine she read, she told me, was the Saturday Evening Post, because you could be quite sure that its stories would all be clean; which could not be said of other magazines nowadays.

She told me much about life in the college and how in winter the campus gates were closed at six in the evening after which no man was allowed on the premises. "But what do you do to amuse yourselves?" I asked her; and she said that half of the girls dressed up as men and danced with the other half. A resourceful lot these Y.W.C.A. maidens with their instinctive flare for pure literature. I felt also that the campus police must have very little to do.

Later I was not so sure for at an interview that I had with the septuagenarian president of the college he explained why he had installed them and gave me the astonishing, and, if I may say so, fascinating information that "we have all sorts of girls attending our courses, why, we have women of the street from X coming here for the summer". There is a limit to the amount of vocational training a college can offer and hence, I suppose, the campus police.

This interview with the president, I am glad to say, took place on the last day of my visit; so that I was able to enjoy my whole week walking up and down the Campus with Y.W.C.A. hostesses without realising the evil shadows flitting between the trees, without fearing to meet Lilith Libifera lurking among the uncorrupted adolescent Eves.

At least, I was able to enjoy the week until Thursday evening with the campus police and even later until Friday morning. On Thursday under the stars I did not know that the rising sun was to bring me a very flattering letter, the sort of letter that any man likes to receive. Hitherto my pleasure had largely been social; the Y.W.C.A. hostesses did not discuss my work; they attended my lectures and gave me to think that they ap-

proved of them, but in a way not so flattering to my intellectual vanity as to some other of my vanities. They liked my accent more than my message, my presence more than what I stood for in the realms of intelligence. But on Friday morning having torn open an envelope I experienced a new sensation of egoistic satisfaction, for here was an unknown Eve taking the trouble to write that she had been so interested in my lectures that she must ask me a few questions before I left, and could I spare her a few minutes at any time.

At once the charm of these foamborn incorruptible Aphrodites, whose sex was still in their souls and whose brains were nowhere definable in space or time, faded before the beckoning Pallas Athene. To be a scientist and an anthropologist instead of an adventure, however mild, and a man, this indeed was delightful, and I fell to wondering who the unknown anthropologist could be and what her questions about anthropology would be; for since my lectures were mildly anthropological I assumed that her questions would be anthropological also. And, in a sense, I was not mistaken.

I scribbled a reply and fixed the Music Porch of the South Dormitory as a trysting place, it being where most people foregathered in the evening, and eight o'clock

as the hour. I considered spending a portion of the afternoon in the library rubbing up my anthropology so as to be fully prepared.

3

Evening came, and with it relief from the burning rays of the sun. I repaired to the Music Porch of the South Dormitory. It was a languid and breathless scene with dark forms of trees rising from the campus, and behind all the promise of a yet unrisen moon. But there was no one about waiting for me and no one amid the many groups whom I recognized as an old friend. The Y.W.C.A. hostesses were all on the Porch of the Western, or possibly Eastern, wing, I forget which now, and the nearest thing to friends were the two campus police whom I descried sitting beside a tree. I hailed them heartily, but they were not, I felt instinctively, in a mood for talk and so I left them alone almost immediately.

Seven minutes late there appeared what I can only call a quite astonishing vision. Had I been sitting in a Barcelona cabaret with benedictine and footlights before me, I should not have been so astonished, but here in the midst of methodism, I could not have imagined that such an exotic orchid could grow. I need not describe the effect of this college student upon me, except to say that

her presence was so other-worldly, so grotesquely out of place in the very extravagance of her allure, that at once a gulf grew between us, the gulf that always exists between drama and life. Had she been less perfectly produced it might have been love, or something of the sort, at first sight; as it was, nothing was awakened but a cold curiosity as to where all this was supposed to lead. I entered upon our relationship strictly in the capacity of observer and I even felt a little amused.

We resolved to pace the campus. We walked down one side, passing and meeting many of the students and the less bed-ridden of the faculty. We reached the end and turned through a right angle. As we did so I glanced back along the way we had come and noted in a quite colourless manner that the campus police had risen to their feet and were slowly walking away from their tree.

We completed the second side without mishap and once more turned through a right angle. A backward glance revealed that the campus police had reached the previous corner, but again my brain accepted this percept without any comment whatever. We completed the third side in like manner, and turned as before through a right angle: the campus police had reached the second corner; but my brain refused to work in any way whatever.

We walked out into the road outside; hundreds more of the college folk were promenading beneath an avenue lit by blazing incandescent globes. I nodded to several friends and having reached the end we turned face about in our own steps. And then we ran straight into the campus police.

Deep down in the lower strata of my brain a whimsical idea began to tingle and take possession of me; an absurd suggestion that these guileless men were following me. It was of course ridiculous, but I felt that it would be fun to play a little game with myself and enjoy in imagination the experience of being hunted. I motioned my companion down a darker and lonelier road at right angles to the first.

We had not gone two hundred yards when an automobile passed us. So slowly did it go that I was able to see wedged within it, three men, two of whom were my old friends the campus police, and with them a large bloodhound. I was flattered at the reinforcement, mindful of the hound, and fascinated by the whole thing. Certainly I would join in the little game.

The moon had risen; on our left was a narrow footpath leading across a field and into a woody copse. Along it I lead Pallas Athene without telling her of what

I had seen. By the edge of the wood was a wire fence over which I lifted Pallas and leaped myself; within the trees was a little moonlit space whereon I sat side by side with the goddess, ready for anything, but more especially for the baying of a hound.

Pallas was tired; physically at least she had a very high brow, for it was the year in which they were the fashion. She touched it languidly with her fingers and then fell back suddenly, but fortunately in a direction which enabled me to catch her. At that moment there appeared from three directions three men and behind one of them a bloodhound happily wagging his tail.

4

It was quite clear that the best means of defense was attack, and so I attacked. I asked them what in the name of heaven they were doing there. They asked if we were college folk. I told them that they knew perfectly well who I was since I had told them the night before and that any girl was allowed to go anywhere with me, and that I should go immediately to the President and demand an explanation of their abominable conduct.

They said that if we went at once to the College they would be satisfied. I told them that I had

great hopes that my impending return to the College would lead to their complete dissatisfaction and haughtily ordered them off. "Come my dear" I said to Pallas, "pray do not worry at all, nothing shall happen to you" and I assisted her over the wire fence as any gentleman assists his hostess into her dinner-party chair.

We reached the campus in comparative silence, though I remember that Pallas was good enough to say that she feared she might have got me into trouble, to which I said, tush! and promised that she should get immunity. Arrived on the campus, still full of strolling students, she went in one direction to her dormitory, I in another to the President's house. We turned to wave goodnight and, as we did so, saw, stalking her through the undergrowth, the three campus policemen. Unnerved by this sight Pallas flew like the wind toward the distant dormitory and after her flew the police while some hundred students watched with astonishment one of their number leaving the side of a distinguished visiting lecturer, ardently pursued by police.

Meanwhile I reached the President's house and demanded an immediate interview. Moreover I insisted on the presence of his wife, an unprepossessing woman and as like a fifty year old virgin dean of women as a wife could

well be. I had no mercy on the grey hairs of the septuagenarian president. I told him that if he needed to adopt peeping tom methods to secure the virtue of his students it was singularly inept of him to use a visiting lecturer as a stalking horse. I told him I should consult a lawyer, since I had my wife and children to think of and my professional career. It was then that he brought up the question of the women of the street from X and I assured him that Pallas was quite in a different category and I must say that in all our short acquaintance she showed no taint of commercialism whatever. He could only say that a mistake had evidently been made, to which I replied that I was convinced that the police had deliberately been put on my traces and that I should come for a full explanation early next morning. The president looked very tired when I left his house at ten p.m.

I did not go immediately to bed. I bethought myself of a very nice matron with whom I was friendly. I asked her to find out all she could and then I returned to my room. I slept but fitfully and at one in the morning awoke to find that underneath my window the campus police were patrolling my room. At seven I called on the matron. To cut a long story short "they" had steamed open my letter to Pallas making an appointment on the Music

Porch of the South Dormitory, and had set the police equipped with automobile and hound to shadow me thereafter.

I need not go deeply into the denouement. Suffice it to say that tired of foolish virgins and demi-vierges I went before leaving to say goodbye to the wise virgins who were the faculty. I realised at once the advantage of the mere fact of being a male over being an attractive female student in the eyes of such a faculty. All the sympathy was with me. "We have only to look at your face" said the virgin librarian, a strict fundamentalist, "to know that there can be no truth in this story." After this gratuitous insult, I turned to the virgin teacher of Latin, "We know you are old in intellect" she said "because we have heard you lecture; but you are young in your knowledge of the world; you have been picked up by a bad woman, a thing that might happen to any man, and you must not let it worry you." I hurried away for a breath of masculine decency. I found it in an old professor who by his age was qualified to be allowed within the gates after six p.m. and he was disposed to think I had got off lightly. There had been a lecturer some years before who had got on well with the girls, being a personable young man, and had strolled up and down the

campus and sat down to talk under trees and presently a light would be suddenly switched on as he sat and he would have to move on to another clump, only to be met with a similar contretemps there. I shook the dust of the place off my feet, lest a worse thing should befall me.

On the way to the station whom should I meet but the Y.W.C.A. hostess! She was so sorry and could she have my address. A month later I received from her a letter which from internal evidence lead me to believe that she must have extended her reading for the purpose of composing it. I do not think it would have been regarded as clean or pure by the president's wife or the virgin librarian. I found it a little insincere. Wild bloodhounds could not drag from me its contents however, except that referring to an evening's walk we had had, "did you know" she wrote, "that I would have given you anything you asked of me?" Either the question was rhetorical and requires no answer, or the answer is in the negative; but the whole letter leads me to believe that something is able to climb over campus gates after six p.m. on a winter's night, when half the world is dressed as men and dances with the other half. Pallas Athene has so far been silent, and I have never answered her questions, since she was so rudely interrupted before

they could be asked.

5

Now I offer this true story humbly enough as an example of the case method of studying educational problems. I do not pretend to know whether these peculiar methods of preserving chastity are used or found necessary elsewhere, though certain elements in the picture can be duplicated from my experiences in other institutions. I think that the college authorities in this case were probably rather more naive than they would be in most cases; but I venture to suggest that their basic obsession is almost everywhere to be found. This obsession is that students must be discouraged from any thought about men and that the best way of achieving this laudable end is to prevent any contact with men at all. The method seems to fail; and if it was concerned with any other subject except one having vital connections with human happiness we should expect a scientific investigation into why it fails and what alternatives are available. I propose to put a series of propositions, or questions to an imaginary jury of deans of women so that as a potential father of daughters I may have some light upon an admittedly difficult problem; and as any such investigation must start from some point, I propose to start it from

the case history outlined above. I shall expect the jury to answer logically out of the wisdom of their experience and never to fall back upon the twilight country of taboo, or the untrustworthy bogs of tradition.

In the first place a system which induces perfectly healthy girls to dress up as men and dance with the others and to make the life of visiting lecturers more interesting and more complicated needs to be justified of its own fruit. I suppose that the justification is that chastity is so fragile a flower that it must be protected by greenhouses even of the most extravagant, inartistic and stupid shape.

Now what evidence has the jury of deans of women that this is so? Supposing someone was to argue that young men and girls require all sorts of outside stimulus, alcohol on the one side, taboos on the other, before they can be urged to take on such a troublesome responsibility, what evidence could the jury bring in rebuttal?

Let us go a step farther: suppose that the youth of to-day held such things as chastity in disrepute, is the jury quite certain that it is really worth while going to such lengths to combat what would then be a natural tendency? Why would the jury devote itself so

thoroughly to the task; for the good of the students? So as to prevent a college scandal, which could probably be avoided more efficaciously by having a course in birth-control, even if the course in business ethics had to be omitted to make room? Or would it be because of the natural jealousy of all middle aged people who suffer from the physiological incompleteness not unrare among deans of women, a jealousy which goes to all lengths in its war against anyone more beautiful or more happy than the person who feels it?

I think that we can agree that it is a good thing for a girl to graduate intellectually before she graduates emotionally and to gain her degree before she loses her maidenhead; but it is generally admitted that if a girl has to work so hard to gain her degree that she becomes distorted meanwhile in her attitudes towards life, then she is best without her degree; cannot something of the sort be possibly true about the other? Mind you these questions are not rhetorical at all; I have no idea whatever they should be answered yes or no, because I am not a dean of women and therefore I am ignorant about educational morality. But I marvel that it is supposed that all of them are closed questions never to be raised in serious society.

And so too with the following question: if I were asked, doctors attribute the unsatisfactory nature of most marriages to the ignorance of sex of the innocent participants, would it not therefore be better for human society if every girl of eighteen were seduced by an experienced man, and every boy of eighteen by an experienced woman? If I were asked this I would not feel I had a right to answer; that is why I need this imaginary jury of deans of women to assist me, for that is the sort of thing they must have thought out while endeavouring to qualify for their jobs. And yet I would be prepared to wager that quite a number of the jury have never formulated this or any other relevant question. That is why we are left in a world containing such offensive institutions as this particular southern college.

Candidly I prefer the girl, as I prefer the man who can "forget the he and she" from time to time, and my objection to such a regime of apron string morality is that it eliminates the possibility of such a person surviving. Think of not being able to go for a walk with a man without attracting the attention of three whole campus policemen complete with automobile and bloodhound and, I dare say, guns as well. Who would willingly be good when the wages of sin is such excitement as this? What possible

advantage is there in trying to get a civilized attitude towards sex when this barbaric system encouraged by deans of women all over the place can afford such thrills!

APENDIX 3: CRONIQES DE L'ESPANYA REPUBLICANA

3.1: The Country of Quixotes

("The Listener, juny 1931)

THE COUNTRY OF QUIXOTES

Our attention as citizens of the world has recently been claimed by Spain to a larger extent than usual; for we have been watching there a well-nigh bloodless and good-tempered revolution which seems to be as complete in its results as it was unconventional in its methods. Of course, nobody should estimate a revolution until the next one is over; but it seems at the moment as if Spain is about to settle down to something new after a real break with the past. This happened in a very odd manner. The Spanish towns held elections for municipal councils and because of the results the most absolute monarch in Europe became overnight a private citizen; the closest alliance between Church and State was loosened; a government of professional politicians, military gentlemen and aristocrats, backed apparently by Army and Church alike, gave way to a group of writers, poets and sociologists; Catalonia, Spain's Ireland, gained without a blow the freedom which centuries of violent rebellion had failed to recapture; a feudal aristocracy found itself forced to migrate across the Pyrenees. All this as a result of municipal elections for town councils in a country where armed police stood at every corner, and law and order seemed as

stern force can ever make them.

Naturally we all want to know more about a country where such miracles can happen. And the first step, if we are to understand the real Spain, is to forget the commonest picture of Spain to be found among foreigners who have never been there. Spain is not the Spain of Bizet's opera, 'Carmen'. Toreadors, serenaders climbing up balconies, ladies with flowers in their hair and daggers in their garters, oranges, gypsies: all these may exist, some of them certainly do, but the sentimental picture of them which we have in our minds has nothing to do with the soul of Spain. Spain is above all unsentimental, unoperatic; it is, rather, tragic in the Greek sense of the word, for in Spanish history and daily life you feel always conscious of that mysterious thing which the Greeks called fate. It speaks to you even in the scenery which is shaped as it is because of things which happened hundreds of years ago.

Separate Spains

Let us visit Spain together for a few moments. From whatever direction we approach we must pass over a range of mountains. Between them and the sea are green and busy stretches of land, Catalonia, the Basque Provinces, Valencia, Galicia, Asturias, Santander; each an individual

nation, a personality, one of the many separate Spains which until yesterday pretended to be united under one Spanish king. Beyond the mountains we come to the heart of Spain; something very different from any of these. A vast plateau, dry, stern, monotonous, deserted by tree and man alike. Dust and stones; browns, purples, yellows; green grass is in England the everyday dress covering and expressing its soul; bare earth, hungry stones, cover and express the soul of Spain. Castile, Aragon, Estremadura, La Mancha, it makes little difference; everywhere nature, cruel, hot, gloomy if you like, overpowering certainly, monotonous beyond the imagination of an Englishman used to tame, neat fields. In England your town is separated from the next by people's property, in Spain by nature's property; it all belongs to somebody, no doubt, but if you went and appropriated it, nature would usually raise more objections than any human owner.

Each little town is an island separated from the next by a sea of stone, and life is driven inwards by this, so that a Spaniard feels a far greater patriotism for his own town than for Spain itself. He is a citizen first and last and his town preserves its individuality because it is an isolated unit surrounded by leagues of lifelessness. And it was right that the voice of local town councils should decree the end of a king.

Peasants like Kings

We enter one of these towns at dusk and what do we find? A community where everyone knows everybody else, where there is hardly any class system, where the aristocrat of the spirit is that peasant who has but recently ridden in on his mule from his daily battle with nature. Look at his features. You have seen them before in the paintings of Velasquez, and Ribera, and Zurbaran and El Greco, the features of a stern, dignified man, who has never been debased by too much taking or giving of orders. A great Spanish writer, Unamuno, has said that every Spanish peasant looks like a dethroned king. You will feel that it is true as you look at him. And look at the house in which he lives. You have heard of castles in Spain; every house is a castle, a defensive stronghold against inclement nature, against heat, and glare and dust and violence of the elements. I know of nothing more strange than the contrast between the street outside and the cool, sombre, quiet interior of a courtyard, or even more of a cathedral. Spanish architecture will strike you especially for three qualities: first, it looks as if it was as natural as nature itself; most Spanish towns and villages crown a rocky hill and it is hard to tell where nature ends and man's building begins.

Second, it has grown piecemeal through the centuries. Hardly a single Spanish building looks as if it had been finished when it was first begun; generations have added here and there to the original design, and instead of a hotchpotch the result often seems more 'right', a better design than it would otherwise have been; evidence this of the continuity and changelessness of Spanish social history.

And third, is this quality of being a defence against the outside world, of shutting the Spaniard away from the enemy, nature. One more example of what you cannot help constantly feeling in Spain, that everything is truly Spanish, only in so far as it looks away from natural, material things into a life of the imagination.

You may have heard that the Spaniard is lazy. But is he? Look again at those peasants. Their lives are spent in squeezing bread out of stones and wine out of barren hill-sides. Look at the lines in their faces, grand faces full of dignity and melancholy; faces like these discovered America and became its conquistadores. They are not lazy faces. But they are the faces of men, who, though capable of action, are not anxious to waste time in mere activity, and especially the sort of activity which consists in competing with other men. To conquer nature, yes; that is necessary; one works to do that; but having done that, it is far better to loaf with your own

soul, than to dissipate your will and your vision in competition with other men. It is this in the Spanish spirit that keeps Spain, the best in Spain, so un-European and makes the Pyrenees and not the Straits of Gibraltar the real boundary of Europe.

Biblical Scenes

From the first moment you cross the frontier from France I think you will notice that there are far more priests and far more babies everywhere than in France, and of course, than in England. Priests and babies litter the railway platform and are a source of constant alarm to the humane motor-driver. Then you will notice the biblical nature of the little things of daily life - the village well, the women in their black cloaks carrying earthenware pots, the vineyards, the olive grooves, the ox-carts, the labourers resting in the heat of the day, the absence of modern agricultural implements. You can reconstruct the Book of Ruth or the New Testament parables at every turn: look at the sower going forth sowing: look at that fig tree and look at that stony ground.

Then in the villages you will notice the peasant industries: hardly any factories, but every home a factory. You can walk down a street wherein each house is devoted to some craft, canvas shoes, rope, saddlery, harness, cork articles, mattresses, carpentry; in each case you will see each member of the family from the grandfather

to the baby, working at his own particular division of labour. And if you go into a shop you will feel at once that you have gone into a private home. You are not only a customer but a guest as well. Every shop in Spain, whatever it sells, has a jar of sweets for customers' children, and a purchase must be made in the guise of a social visit.

Making an Art of Life

The joys of life for the average Spaniard are walking about in perfect weather and drinking a cup of coffee at one of the innumerable cafés which are the free-for-all clubs of the country. You cannot be long in Spain without realising that after all these are two of the best ways of spending leisure that man has yet devised. More modern ways of enjoying life are, of course, to be found. The butchers in the small town in which I lived found that they could only sell half as much meat as five years ago, because the town was economising on meat in order to patronise the cinema once a week. It is worth going one Sunday to a movie in a small Spanish town; everyone is there, including all the infants in arms, and the audience takes a noisy part applauding or reviling the hero or the villain loudly, for all they are only shadows. You may have noticed how someone in the audience threw his hat on the stage at La Argentina's recent London concert. That was a compliment to the great Spanish dancer. In Spain I have

seen the audience throw all sorts of things on to the stage and take part in other ways in the passing show. Often dancers and singers will carry on long pieces of backchat with individuals in the gallery or the stalls, and indeed at moments of great excitement it is hard to tell on which side of the footlights the drama is being enacted. I think the audience must have been like this in England in Shakespeare's lifetime. A Spanish audience does not intend to be passive and mere onlookers; it is part of the show.

As with the movies, so with a mysterious thing called futbol. You may be surprised to hear that Spanish teams often beat visiting English First League teams. Football is probably as popular as bull-fighting. Sometimes here, too, I have seen the onlookers insist on taking a - from our point of view - rather unorthodox share in the game.

Pursuit of the Impractical

Of course, the most noticeable difference between Spain and England is that Spain escaped the Industrial Revolution. This explains all the most obvious differences that excite the foreigner's wonder and often his too hasty criticism. It is not only that Spain remains a land of peasants and agriculture with few industrial towns, nor that the middle class which is such a feature of English or American life hardly exists, nor even that democratic

institutions like Parliament do not flourish; there are effects still nearer life and death than these.

Of every three Spaniards born one dies before the age of five years, which is none the less tragic in that one of the two survivors lives until past sixty. The highest birth-rate in modern Europe goes with a terrible infant mortality, and Spain remains underpopulated in consequence. Schools are few and bad, and illiteracy reaches great proportions. Education is better than it was one hundred years ago, when a Spanish king decided to close the universities and to establish schools of bull-fighting in their place; but thought and learning are scarcely encouraged. Only a year or so ago the ecclesiastical authorities placed a ban on Rotary Clubs and women's clubs, which are hardly considered dangerous to morals or law elsewhere. Women especially are almost encouraged to remain ignorant. But all this is changing; health, education, woman's emancipation are becoming live issues. But as sympathetic foreigners we need not dwell on these things, nor, worse still, make the mistake of assuming that the goodness of social life and government are to be measured by whether trains run on time or hotels have bathrooms. These things are coming to Spain because cosmopolitanism has abolished the Pyrenees.

In the Spanish genius, wherever you study it in the every day life of common folk or in the writings of philosophers there is a rare gift for humanity. Perhaps we will not go to Spain for the fruits of practical genius, for scientific civilisation, or for good ways of government. The best Spaniard would not even suggest it. But the Spaniard has always behaved as if practical things should be the slave and not the driver of the life of the spirit. Queen Elizabeth's men were glorified pirates who colonised chiefly for trade and practical ends; Queen Isabella's men, the conquistadores, went to America chiefly to enlarge the kingdom of Heaven on earth; their queen was God's secular representative on earth and they went out to make more Christians. That the British empire was a success while the Spanish melted away in cruel incompetence proves nothing except that a practical attitude is practical. We might say that all Spanish history and Spanish daily life as well is tinged with this pursuit of the impractical. As superficial travellers in Spain we can see dire results of this, but we should pause and see the glory of it also. It is valuable to Europe and the world to have within the brotherhood of nations one where cult of the practical has not swallowed up all the other virtues; where time is not money; nor business business; nor people less important than things.