

VI - 73 C - 1. Smedley, Agnes, "His Majesty's Opposition" book review
of China Looks Forward by Sun Fo, introduction by
Lin Yutang. The New Republic, August 21, 1944.

Retreat. The objective wreck of the ship is counterpointed with the subjective breaking of the self-loving will. (Someone could make a comparative study of "The Deutschland" with other poems dealing with disastrous sea-trips, like "Un Voyage à Cythère," or "Le Voyage" of Baudelaire, and with the death of the self, like Rimbaud's "Un Saison en Enfer.")

Miss Ruggles also draws attention to the intellectual support that the neglected philosophy of Duns Scotus gave to Hopkins' feeling for esthetic uniqueness. Here, as in so much else, Hopkins was ahead of fashion, and translators from the German *Existenz* school might, for instance, find a worse equivalent than *inscape* for that stumper *Dasein*.

He didn't matter: he had a silly face; he was a martyr to piles; he bored his congregations and was a joke to his students; he fiddled around with Egyptian and with Welsh and with Gregorian music; he wrote a few poems which his best friends couldn't understand and which would never be published; after forty-four years he died. Yes, like Don Quixote. His poems gloss over none of the suffering and defeat, yet when we read them, as when we read Cervantes, the final note is not the groan of a spiritual Tobacco Road, but the cry of gratitude which Hopkins once heard a cricketer give for a good stroke, "Arrah, sweet myself!"

W. H. AUDEN

The Bhagavad Gita

The Bhagavad Gita. Translated from the Sanskrit, with notes, comments and introduction by Swami Nikhilananda. Foreword by William Ernest Hocking. New York: Ramakrishana-Vivekananda Center. 403 pages. \$3.

THIS NEW TRANSLATION and commentary of the great Indian classic has the same brilliant ease and almost incredible sense of rightness and, as it were, natural clarity that characterized Swami Nikhilananda's volume, "The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna," which was reviewed in these columns two years ago. This edition of "The Bhagavad Gita" has a foreword by Professor Ernest Hocking. The extensive introduction involves a commentary that is gracious, useful and altogether of the first water.

The scheme of the edition is to print the translated text verse by verse, accompanied in each case by the commentary of Sankara (788-820 A.D.), the greatest exponent of the Vedanta system of philosophy in its strictly non-dualistic form. Sankara's commentary is in turn followed by the notes and interpretations of Swami Nikhilananda, the translator.

This volume of a great Indian religious classic is no mere flourish in scholarship. "The Bhagavad Gita" is still read and lived by, studied and believed in, among many millions of men. As Professor Hocking observes, "The Lord's Song" had an important message to a people whose religious ideal tended to be contemplative and mystical, who had the genius to reveal to the world that ultimate goal for thought and reverence sometimes called "The Absolute." The message was the meaning of action, the justification even of warfare in the light of union with the Ultimate.

This volume may be regarded as a direct answer to those who either believe or who profess to believe that the Indian spirit rests on the idea of retreat from the world of action and affairs. It is thus at this particular moment of the highest importance to our international understanding, if on no other plane, more lustrous, shall we say, and eternal.

STARK YOUNG

"His Majesty's Opposition"

China Looks Forward, by Sun Fo. Introduction by Lin Yutang. New York: The John Day Company. 276 pages. \$3.

THIS VOLUME of speeches and articles by Dr. Sun Fo, president of the Legislative Yuan of China, was originally intended for Chinese audiences only, "especially the younger generation who are being reared in war and are now preparing themselves for the tremendous task of national reconstruction in postwar China."

Reading this mine of information and hopes, so clearly and simply written, one can readily understand why the author has been given a high position, but no power, in the Chinese government. His critical mind, his broad reading and his deep desire to see liberal democracy and a form of state socialism introduced into China are not representative of the ruling Kuomintang party, of which he is a member. The fact that he is the son of Dr. Sun Yat-sen, father of the Chinese Republic, accounts for his decorative position and for the fact that he can exercise the civil rights denied the rest of his countrymen. Describing his position in China, a Bishop of the Church of England, writing me from Chungking a few weeks ago, says that Sun Fo may emerge as "His Majesty's Opposition."

This book opens with a speech, "Sun Yat-sen and Soviet Russia," delivered in March, 1940, following Dr. Sun's return home from his second mission to Moscow. The historic facts he gives are at complete variance with those dished out to us by official Kuomintang propagandists. This chapter is a tremendous tribute to the achievements of the Soviet Union. He remarks: "When comparing our achievements with those of the Soviet Union we find that in the years which have elapsed since Dr. Sun Yat-sen's death, we have little to show."

He quotes Stalin as saying that China is old, but can rejuvenate herself and become a great and powerful nation, and he himself believes that the Soviet Union's achievements consist in having brought to fruition the "Three People's Principles" originated by his father. These principles—national liberation, democracy and improvement in the livelihood of the people—which he explains with great lucidity, could "deliver China and be universally applied," he declares. He believes that what the Soviet Union has done, China can do. However, he labors under the illusion that the Kuomintang is the instrument with which this could be done. He believes the Kuomintang (representing as it does the ruling, owning classes of China) can be argued into changing its ways.

His faith returns even after it has been slain a hundred times. He stands speaking and writing before that Great Wall of Chinese special privilege, self-interest and proto-fascist-feudal mentality, hoping to move its heart. The

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Kuomintang, he says, has not lived according to the principles to which it pays lip-service. It is now a "dictatorship and tyranny" which has "forgotten the very substance and method of democracy."

One interesting chapter reveals his attempt, in 1940, to induce the government to introduce a state rice monopoly which would have prevented in part the disastrous inflation which has since almost ruined the people. His plan was rejected in part, and "inflation given a free ticket to heaven." An extract from the facts which he piled up at that time, to change the heart of the ruling party, follows:

We can take Szechuen [the province in which the government is located] to begin with. The tillers of land in this province are mostly tenants; rents are as a rule paid in kind, from 60 to 70 percent of the rice harvest, to landlords. . . . As things are going now, the landlords will continue to acquire land and hoard rice . . . grow richer and richer, without a thought of contributing their share to the war effort. . . . The millionaire profiteers of this war have also acquired great estates. The government could not mobilize their wealth without serious resistance.

The book is peppered with exposés of the vicious exploitation of the people, some 80 percent of whom are peasants. He tells of usury which has reduced the peasants to a state of feudal serfdom. "We are lazy good-for-nothings," he cries out at the Kuomintang, charging that some of the highest officials are the worse offenders; he writes of the time spent in gambling and gossip, with men waiting for the war to end so they can return to the movies and dance-halls of Shanghai.

In an address before the official San Min Chu I Youth Corps last year, he continues his harsh criticism. This corps produces puppets, he says. "The first thing they learn to perfection is how to click heels at the mention of, or mere reference to, the Supreme Leader." He admits the corps claims no allegiance from youth, but fails to tell that it is modeled on Hitler's Youth—and for the same purpose. He thinks it can be reformed, and its members trained to introduce local self-government in China. Of village government, he says:

Village government is . . . the private preserve of the corrupt gentry and rapacious landowners. Since the war, the tyrannous grip of these local leaders over the village people has been tighter than ever. Taking advantage of the government measures for the collection of grain and the conscription of soldiers, these people have increased their power for evil-doing, at the expense of the helpless peasantry.

The mountain of cruel facts which he piles up in order to arouse his countrymen to the internal and foreign danger facing China, has made no dent in that Great Wall of official pro-fascist mentality. Considering this, his condemnation of the Chinese Communist Party and its Eighth Route and New Fourth Armies, have a superficial and hollow ring. He gives only the official view of the Kuomintang-Communist conflict, and demands that the Eighth Route and New Fourth Armies submit themselves totally to the Kuomintang and relinquish control of the territory which they have liberated in the north and into which they have introduced the very system of democracy and improvement in the people's livelihood which Dr. Sun urges,

in vain, the Kuomintang to introduce into territory which it controls. Dr. Sun, unfortunately, has not taken the time and trouble to visit those regions, though many foreigners have. For the Chinese Communists to submit themselves to Kuomintang rule today, before that party has totally changed its practices, would be nothing less than treason to the Chinese people and nation. Dr. Sun Fo is in the wrong camp.

The last half of this book, devoted to a study and interpretation of the thought and social trends in the Western world, is rich with knowledge and thought. Americans who wish to know the mind of Chinese liberal democrats cannot afford to ignore it. A chapter, "The Mikado Must Go," is a sharp criticism of certain Americans and Britons who want the Japanese Emperor left on the throne on the utterly false theory that he is not the willing instrument of Japanese warlords. Some Americans will shrink at the hatred, justifiable indeed, in the author's statement that Japan must be "so beaten and crushed and pulped and pulverized that it will not dare dream of aggression for a hundred years." His twelve points for peace with Japan are also enlightening.

Occidental postwar planners who dream of doing in Asia what they will, should pause long enough to read the postwar plans here discussed. The Chinese demand the end of every form of imperialism in Asia. They demand a free and independent Asia, racial equality, a high standard of living for their people. Dr. Sun Fo voices the opinion of the majority of Chinese when he warns his people against future economic imperialism in China over which so many American bankers and business men are licking their chops. He wants no postwar "orbits," "spheres of influence" or balance-of-power politics. He wants an international body of free nations to maintain peace, law and order.

But: "We must hope for the best and prepare for the worst," he warns his people. Considering the present trends in the Western world, he believes another global slaughter may take place within ten or twenty years. This third world war will take place, he says, if such theories as those of Professor Spykman, or those published as a memorandum by the staffs of Life, Time and Fortune magazines, are adopted by the Western world. Certain Western schools of thought which advocate that Japan must be left strong enough to balance against a hypothetical Chinese imperialism or, possibly, a Chinese-Soviet bloc, can lead to nothing but another war, he declares.

The book abounds in ideas with which progressive Americans can agree and for which they can work, though it is marred by occasional statements, *e. g.*, one against birth control for China, with which only reactionaries can have sympathy. Despite such aberrations, however, this book will enrich the knowledge of anyone reading it. In a way it is historic, for it is the first expression of a Chinese democrat—and a socialist of sorts—which has appeared in book form in this country. On many points Dr. Sun does not express the views of advanced Chinese democrats. All of them, however, will agree with his campaign for a democratic, even a socialist China. Dr. Sun wants a good life for his people and for the world. Whether he gets it or not will depend in large part upon which groups in China the American government will support. AGNES SMEDLEY