

# Ways of Treason

## Diagnosis and Judgment

***The Traitors.*** By Alan Moorehead. Scribner's. 222 pp. \$3.50.

***Spies, Dupes, and Diplomats.*** By Ralph de Toledano. Duell, Sloan and Pearce. 244 pp. \$3.50.

ALAN MOOREHEAD'S *The Traitors* is a restrained, highly competent, and interesting account of three British scientists who betrayed atomic secrets to Russia. It is also a study of the motivations of traitors, of the process of confession, and of the strangely intimate relationship between criminal and policeman. Moorehead is a wonderfully accurate reporter who is also gifted with the qualities of human understanding and compassion.

The questions the book attempts to answer are: "Why these men in particular should have turned traitor when the vast majority of their colleagues did not . . ." and "whether the security services in Britain and North America blundered over these men. . . ." Writing as an English subject, Moorehead goes out of his way to exonerate Anglo-American political leadership of sloth and incompetence.

But the facts that he reports contradict this interpretation and constitute a formidable indictment of that leadership.

The Soviet spy ring documents were turned over to Canadian authorities in September, 1945. Prime Minister King immediately conferred with both Truman and Attlee on the matter, who advised him to "keep silent." For four months the spy case was shrouded in official secrecy. It was not until February 15, 1946, that arrests were made and a Canadian Royal Commission of Inquiry was authorized. This belated action was forced on officialdom because Drew Pearson was about to expose the spy ring in his February 16th syndicated column.

The British security record on Klaus Fuchs is equally interesting. In 1934, the Nazi consul at Bristol denounced him as a Communist and this charge was naturally regarded as of little weight. It is more significant that there seems to have been no investigation of Fuchs' close association with the German Communist GPU agent, Hans Kahle, in Canada in 1940. Although Fuchs'

name was found in the notebooks of a member of the Canadian spy ring, he was not removed from secret work. The British apparently did not check the Fuchs dossier in Kiel after Germany's defeat. As late as 1948, the "controlled schizophrenic" (as he described himself) continued to do secret scientific work and to betray it.

Bruno Pontecorvo was probably a more brilliant atomic physicist than Fuchs. After the arrest of the latter, MI-5 discovered that both Pontecorvo and his wife were secret Communists. Yet they were allowed to travel to the Continent without surveillance, from there to escape to the U.S.S.R. It is reported that Pontecorvo is at present making hydrogen bombs for Stalin.

Moorehead's effort to find a unifying psychological pattern for the three atomic spies is challenging, but not entirely successful. Possibly, there is no common denominator. Following Rebecca West, Moorehead stresses their laboring under the illusion of the omnipotence of the individual conscience — a paranoid view of self which comes close to the Greek sin of *hubris*. Certainly, there is truth in this, but is it not an oversimplification? In Fuchs' case, dissociation, incapacity for any genuinely intimate human relationships, exhibitionism, and prodigious exploits with the bottle were combined with a desperate need to "belong" to some group or other, much as a

schoolboy needs to belong to a gang. When Fuchs ceased to be a spy, his world became Harwell. He felt remorse because he had betrayed this microcosmic unit of society which had accepted him.

Elsewhere, Moorehead suggests that denial of God paves the way for ideological treason. Yet there are millions of skeptics and materialists who never contemplate treason and feel no need to submerge themselves in messianic movements. For men with anemic self-esteem such as Klaus Fuchs, the case is different. The tragedy for the West was that Fuchs found a malevolent faith instead of a beneficent one.

THE FIRST HALF of Ralph de Toledano's *Spies, Dupes, and Diplomats* is an account of the Sorge spy rings in China and Japan which stresses their more sensational aspects and is weak as to facts. The Asia story continues through Pearl Harbor, the wartime intrigues of pro-Communist officials to undermine the Nationalist government, the *Amerasia* stolen documents case, the role of the Institute of Pacific Relations, and finally the decisions which accelerated Red victory in China and encouraged the invasion of Korea.

The final chapters contain a powerful indictment of General Marshall, Dean Acheson, and the junior architects of Asiatic disaster who advised them. De Toledano's partial summary of the McCarran Com-

mittee evidence is a skillful exposition of the labyrinthine maze of the American Communist conspiracy against China and of the pivotal role of the I.P.R. in that conspiracy. De Toledano gives documented evidence of alleged misrepresentations and false statements made by Secretary Acheson when under oath — a matter that would seem to warrant further inquiry.

One of the main weaknesses of the book is its structure. On its last page, the ghost of Richard Sorge limps past muttering, "It is all according to plan." Yet the undeniable links between the Sorge apparatus and certain I.P.R. personnel do not justify the inference of a single, coordinated conspiracy.

Moreover, Sorge's role is inflated. The jacket blurb informs us that shortly before his arrest the Soviet agent "informed Stalin that Japan planned to attack Pearl Harbor," and on page 4 de Toledano repeats this inaccurate statement. In reality, Sorge merely reported that Japan would strike southward against England and America. He did not know that Pearl Harbor was the target. He was not nearly as well informed on Japanese naval plans as President

Roosevelt. Nor did Sorge know — as de Toledano claims he did — the time of the attack, for, on October 18, 1941, when he was arrested, it had not been decided.

Of these two books, the first examines the causes and course of treason as a psychological phenomenon; the second surveys them as a moral phenomenon. Moorehead seeks to be a diagnostician, de Toledano a judge. Moorehead's narrative is perceptive and brilliant, but political naïveté and lack of distrustfulness mar his conclusions. As to de Toledano's book, while sometimes wrong as to facts and unsound in interpretation, it has one great virtue — it reveals the complex ways in which Communist apparatuses helped engineer an Asian policy suicidal to American interest. Infiltration is certainly less clearly understood than espionage; it is always more difficult to prove; it is frequently more dangerous. Defense of infiltration agents is becoming the last refuge of a mechanical and backward liberalism which refuses to recognize that liberty does not cover conspiracy and that free societies have the duty of self-defense.

NATHANIEL WEYL

# BOOKS IN SHORT

## Brazilian Provincial

*Epitaph of a Small Winner.* By Machado De Assis. Noonday Press. 223 pp. \$3.50.

MACHADO DE ASSIS' Brazilian classic, a pleasant novel in the eighteenth-century manner, is not an original work or a great book; but then Machado himself makes no such claim. He aligns himself in his foreword with Stendhal and Sterne, and frequently indicates his debt to Voltaire in the body of the book. *The Epitaph of a Small Winner* is entertaining on a high level, and one would be content with just this — if the translator, William L. Grossman, and at least one reviewer had not grossly exaggerated Machado's accomplishment.

Unhappily for Machado, he was identified, even in his own time, as Brazil's leading man of letters and classic writer. Such a distinction should signify a combination of power, breadth, and uniqueness. This Machado, for all his genuine talent, simply does not possess. The story of a Rio de Janeiro aristocrat of the post-Napoleonic period, *Epitaph of a Small Winner* is, when you get right down to it, the tale of a dilettante written by an epigone.

The dilettante (Braz Cubas) is clever in inventing cute conceits (e.g., an "anti-melancholy plaster") and sharp in baring sham. The description of his mannered love affairs is the best thing in the novel, though here *Epitaph* is in no sense an advance over the French and English models, and certainly not equal to the moderns with whom it has been compared, Hemingway and D. H. Lawrence.

But Machado's ideas — about politics and philosophy in particular — are simply not first-rate, whether he is bringing Aristotle up to date, or spoofing the cult of optimism ("Humanitism"). He suffers from a fault common to many good craftsmen who attempt novels of ideas: the story moves well, the characters are fine in their own right, but the thinking in the book either intrudes on the story and character, or else seems an affectation in them. Braz Cubas' pessimism rings true as part of the offhand weariness of a weak-willed aristocrat, but the iconoclastic paradoxes expressing this pessimism cannot really be taken seriously. They turn out upon examination to mean far less than they seem to imply with their deliberately casual manner. In a sense, Machado, like his hero, falls in love with his own