

(continued from previous page)

battle, murder and sudden death, the rattle of the tay cup and the dart of innuendo.

No greater contrast to *Richard III* could be found than Sheridan's comedy. Superlatives become redundant in trying to describe the excellence of production and teamwork in this mannered and stylised version of the play. Sets, costumes and orchestra play an integral part and are not mere incidental backgrounds for the performance. Simplicity is Cecil Beaton's keynote for the sets. All we have is painted backdrops, painted "tabs" and a few well-disposed tables and chairs. These are enough to make the rooms appear spacious, gracious and fully furnished. Sir Peter Teazle, standing in front of a painted door, raises his cane to knock. The music takes up the beat, the painting rolls upwards and we are in Sir Peter's house with the footmen, punctilious, moving in time to the music, ready to take his hat, offer wine, replace his coat with a lounging robe.

And the players? Teamwork all the time, with Vivien Leigh coming into her own as Lady Teazle. Beautiful, pert and vivacious, she holds the stage as her husband did in the older, darker play. No declamatory, contradictory character here, but a definite, delightful characterisation which is a joy to watch. Derrick Penley, taking the part of Sir Peter at a few days' notice, played the kind-hearted, testy old gentleman to perfection. Peter Cushing as Joseph Surface, George Relph as Sir Oliver, deserve their special meed, and the metamorphosis of Dan Cunningham from the handsome Richmond to the snub-nosed, posturing Sir Benjamin Backbite was a measure of the versatility of the whole cast.

The temptation is to analyse each character as they come, but this would be boring for those who have seen and useless for those who have not. Perhaps Charles Surface smiled too much, perhaps Mrs. Candour overplayed, in some places apparently it was hard to hear the words, but all these criticisms are trivial compared with the effect of the play as a whole. It will remain in memory as joyful, witty and superlatively presented.

The Old Vic season has more than justified the British Council's decision to sponsor the visit. No more effective manner of presenting some of the intangibles of British culture could have been thought of. The women in the queue did not wait those hours in vain.

Personal taste would prefer more drama and less comedy. More enlightenment rather than mere delight. Would have asked for a repeat of *Oedipus* and *The Critic* which played so well in England and America some time ago instead of, say, *Skin of Our Teeth*. The uplift of spirit experienced through seeing Laurence Olivier as Richard III has not been encountered very often in New Zealand as yet, but perhaps this too will come, and in the meantime we can only relish in retrospect the little which we have already tasted while hoping, with our fingers crossed, for more. Soon.

The New Education in Europe

A YEAR spent visiting the universities of Europe, on both sides of the Iron Curtain, might help to answer the question many of us are asking these days—will Communist influence, with its implications of rigid dogma, stultify the liberal tradition of learning built up over the centuries in Eastern Germany and Czechoslovakia? G. W. Parkyn, a research officer with the New Zealand Council for Educational Research, had a partial answer to that question when he returned from Europe last week, and he also had some interesting things to say about international co-operation in the field of education, as he had seen it at two conferences he attended, one at Geneva and the other at Ashridge, England.

He explained first of all that his travels were the result of a Carnegie Fellowship granted him last year, and that he had one important object in mind when he left—to investigate contemporary opinion on the question of providing a general rather than a specialised education during the first years at university.

All the German universities he visited, he said, were functioning remarkably well, and their problems were mainly the same as ours—overcrowding and understaffing. He was impressed by the fact that they were still being run on quite liberal lines, and this applied to universities in the Russian zone too. The main difference he had noticed there was that they had carried out the denazification of their staffs more ruthlessly. Where the Russians had tried to impose controls on courses of study, these appeared to have been ignored.

"At the Humboldt University, for instance, there was supposed to be a compulsory first year course in philosophy—along Marxist lines—but I found the bulk of the students simply didn't bother to go. And more important, there was no check to see whether they did go. Some of the junior staff I spoke to didn't even know it was a directive that this particular course should be studied until I told them."

No Purge in Prague

"Was there no purge of staff or students?"

"There were certainly no wholesale purges as may have been reported in the newspapers here. At Charles University in Prague only four members of the staff were removed, and they were apparently due for removal anyway, because they had collaborated with the Nazis. Most of the staff at Charles were social democrats and liberals, not Communists, but although they had not been removed, I thought they were a little uneasy in their jobs."

"Perhaps you could say there was a silken purge, a touch of the velvet glove, which operated by shifting people like teachers and doctors out of their old environments into new districts. . . . And yet that doesn't present the whole picture either. The threat was there and there was no doubt as to its magnitude; and things may have got worse since I left."

"One matter that interested me was the question of intelligence tests. We know the Soviet government abolished their use in the late '30's, since they think that environment, not heredity, is the important thing in life. Well, I asked the director of the Research Institute in Prague if he would continue to use them. His answer was that he expected they wouldn't be encouraged to go on using them. This suggests that although there was little direct interference, and things were still left mainly to the discretion of individual teachers and students, some thinkers may unconsciously change their ideas because of



G. W. PARKYN
"Swamped with enquiries"

indirect pressure in the background—a form of self-deception we are all liable to fall into for our own protection."

Those were the main points Mr. Parkyn had to make about German and Czech universities, so we passed on to what he had observed at the Eleventh International Bureau of Education at Geneva, and at the UNESCO Seminar at Ashridge.

Forty Years Behind Us

At Geneva, he said, apart from the study of special techniques, delegates had been assembled from different countries to pool all available information on recent educational tendencies. He noticed that Central European countries which were starting to democratise their secondary education were looking towards America and the British Dominions for guidance rather than to Britain.

"I found that France and other countries were about 40 years behind us in this respect, and when I came my turn to speak I felt impelled to modify my report in order to describe our new curriculum reforms, classification of classes, and so on. Afterwards I was swamped with all sorts of enquiries about our teaching methods."

"The Ashridge seminar lasted six weeks. We worked on what the Americans call the 'workshop' or 'group

dynamics' method. That means that instead of the subjects, order of discussion, and so on being decided by a chairman beforehand, we sat around and argued out just what our main problems were for two weeks, and then tried to get agreement on those points only. For instance, we all agreed that to develop better social understanding it was desirable that children of all religious denominations should go to the same school, but it took us 11 weeks to agree on what we meant by social understanding, particularly with the delegates from Communist countries. We eventually decided that it implied an acceptance of the aim that it is desirable for people to live together and co-operate rather than to live too much to themselves."

Bongo Bongo Bongo

"Did you co-operate yourselves?"

"Yes, very well. We got over the language difficulty by speaking French and English. Most of the Continental delegates spoke French, while we of course spoke English. But French is still widely spoken, and I went away feeling that it would be a good thing if more of the men New Zealand sent to international conferences could speak French. At the same time I noticed some curious things about language. In Czechoslovakia I met a group of students who were learning American. Not English, mind you, but American. When I met them at a friend's apartment they were all sitting around chanting 'Bongo, bongo, bongo, I don't want to leave the Congo.' When I asked them why, they said there were two reasons—if I wanted to be idealistic it was because they thought America was the country of the future and so American was the language to learn; if I wanted to be realistic it was because when the next war came they were going to make straight for the American zone of Germany, and they wanted to be able to make it clear which side they were on when they got there."

"Did you find that any national or political group dominated proceedings at Ashridge?"

"No. The influence of any one group was in no case proportionate to its country's political power. Each suggestion was weighed on its merits, and some of the best suggestions came from little countries like Chile and Luxemburg."

"What did you learn about your particular problem of first-year university education?"

"Well, at those provincial English universities I visited I noticed few modifications of degree courses as yet, although they were all considering the matter in staff committees and so on. Some had recently recast their B.A. programmes, although there was no uniformity of opinion among them. In Europe I found that some universities were considering it more seriously than others, in Germany and Czechoslovakia particularly they thought that one of the things which allowed Nazism to get such a hold was the fact that too many thinking people tended to stick too narrowly to their own subjects without having a good grasp of general affairs."