

Alternatives to Apathy

***The Revolution of Hope: Toward a Humanized Technology*, by Erich Fromm (Harper & Row, 162 pp. \$5.95), sets forth suggestions whereby the individual can help in achieving a society that will put technique second to human well-being. Ashley Montagu edited "Man and Aggression."**

By ASHLEY MONTAGU

"FOR TO HIM THAT IS JOINED to all the living there is hope." The epigraph from Ecclesiastes (9:4) shines like a beacon through every page of Erich Fromm's new book, *The Revolution of Hope*. Not that the revolution has occurred; but Fromm hopes it will, and hopes that those who read him will be persuaded that hopes can become realities if men will only do what they ought. His book is an eloquent and judicious humanist appeal to action.

The alternatives that face man in these apocalyptic times lead either to a mechanized society, in which man is caught like a helpless cog, and to eventual destruction by thermonuclear war, or to a renaissance of humanism and hope, a society that puts technique not first but second, as a servant of human well-being.

Since these alternatives are not clearly recognized by most people, Fromm has set himself the task of clarifying the issues. He does so eminently well. I cannot think of a better book, or of a better man (unless it be Lewis Mumford) to have written it.

As always, Fromm speaks with deep understanding and compassion. He knows, and makes the reader understand, that the only philosophically tenable position even for a pessimist in a time of crisis is optimism—not the vacuous optimism of those who sit passively by and expect that somehow everything will come out all right in the end, but the kind of optimism based on the belief that if we will do what is required there is a good chance we may yet save the human enterprise and restore it to that humane course of development from which it has so tragically and so self-destructively departed.

Perhaps the most ominous development, as Fromm points out, is that we seem to have lost control over our system, a system which, at an accelerating pace, is carrying us toward destruction. How did it happen? How, at the very height of his conquest of nature, did man become the captive of his own creation? Fromm's answer is the same one Emerson gave over a century ago: "Things are in the saddle, and ride mankind." Fromm puts it this way: "In the one-sided emphasis on technique and

material consumption, man lost touch with himself, with life." The substantiation of this statement constitutes the main burden of Fromm's book. He sets the facts before the reader compellingly, and offers magnificently practical, down-to-earth remedies that can be put into immediate operation by every reader of *The Revolution of Hope*.

People are constantly asking what they can do, meaning that they can, in fact, do nothing. That psychosis is much worse than the apathy, the passivity, on which Fromm comments so ably, for it represents not a negative uninvolvedness but a positive disengagement from the human situation. After reading *The Revolution of Hope* such persons can no longer plead either innocence, ignorance, or impotence. Fromm suggests the formation of regional and local councils, of district or section clubs, and of smaller groups, all designed to disseminate the aim of the movement, which is "to move toward a personal transformation from an alienated person into one of active participation."

These are excellent proposals. Fromm claims no novelty for them, but he does bring to them a new urgency and an informed emphasis. His appeal is to those who are concerned enough to be willing to become involved.

Paradox of Upheaval

***The Portuguese Princess and Other Stories*, by Tibor Déry, translated from the Hungarian by Kathleen Szász (Quadrangle, 224 pp. \$5.95), in the fashion characteristic of the "great old man" of Hungarian letters, couples tragedy with comedy. Tamas Aczel is the author of "Ice Age" and "Ten Years After: The Hungarian Revolution in the Perspective of History."**

By TAMAS ACZEL

TIBOR DÉRY'S NAME MAY BE familiar to Americans who read about the scandal in Hungary over his memoirs, reported last month in *The New York Times*, or they may remember that he was among the Hungarian writers who were imprisoned after the defeat of the 1956 revolt. Western intellectuals were eventually successful in securing his freedom but, although Déry is one of the best living Hungarian writers—indeed, the "great old man" of Hungarian letters—his work is practically unknown in this country. During the last decade, however, England, France, Germany and Italy have come to regard him as a major writer, and the publication of the present collection of short stories, in Kathleen Szász's vivid and remarkably faithful translation, may turn the tide here.

The basic paradox of Déry's life can

be summed up briefly. For having translated and published, in the mid-Thirties, André Gide's famous *Retour de l'URSS*, he was arrested, charged with illegal Communist activities and imprisoned; for having been, in the mid-Fifties, in the vanguard of Hungarian Communist intellectuals that, in a sense, paved the way for the revolution, he was arrested, charged with illegal anti-Communist activities and again imprisoned. Neither of these charges was, of course, true. But they clearly reflect both the complex realities of Eastern Europe in the first part of the century, and the simple truth



that Déry, throughout his long career, as a writer, has always been on the side of the oppressed, the poor, the forgotten, the exploited. Almost inevitably, then, he first found himself face to face with the secret police of Admiral Horthy and, some twenty years later, with that of Party Secretary János Fádár. No wonder. Too much of an individualist to submit totally to the iron discipline of the Party, to which for a long time he himself belonged, Déry was, nevertheless, always a Socialist, a man of truth, justice and compassion who never forgot his obligations towards those in the "lower depths."

They are the people who populate the landscape of Déry's book. It is a strange world—a world turned upside down and existing in a vacuum. But this is only natural. For, paradoxically, both in "Games of the Underworld," a loosely connected series of six stories united only by some of the characters and the basically similar situation—the siege of Budapest in the winter of 1944-45—and in "The Portuguese Princess," a tragicomic masterpiece about children caught yet not at all lost in the maelstrom of war, it is precisely this vacuum that creates the essential and fundamental element of stability: the Germans have already disappeared from the scene and the Russians have not yet appeared on it. The stage, for a moment, is empty; the laws of society, even perhaps of physics, have been suspended; "the houses beneath, in which all human consciousness had become extinct since the beginning of the siege, gazed at the deserted river with their dead eyes"; authority ceased to exist. "The streets were deserted; along Nador Street, in whose distant reaches could be seen the fog-washed dark mass which was the Parliament

