

Paris Review: Train's Dirty Secret

by Tony Papert

Art serves to celebrate the divine within us, the distinctly human but also God-like capacity for intellectual creativity. But most Americans alive today have never experienced art in that sense, and, if the worst is allowed to come to the worst, they never will. Why not?

Ever since the beginning of what LaRouche has dubbed the present "Truman Era," the Truman cycle of history, popular culture, mass culture so-called, has continually plumbed new depths of flatulence and insanity.

But "high culture," the culture of the presumably literate, has ultimately been as bad or worse. Even today, after more than a century, it is still buried in the shadow of the fin-de-siècle of the 1890s. It is still trapped in the suitcase carried all over Europe by the Russian impresario Diaghilev, who had concocted his version of "art for art's sake" in explicit opposition to the humanism of the Russian writer Chernyshevsky.

Around the sun of Diaghilev circled his sometime lover, the dancer and sexual exhibitionist Nijinsky; painters Pablo Picasso and Fernand Leger; composer Igor Stravinsky; and others less renowned today. And Diaghilev "spent immense energy on getting the right people to come to his exhibitions and performances and to meet the performers."

"In 1911, the coronation year of George V, he came to London, where his ballets made as immense an impression as they had in Paris. Osbert Sitwell says that the company's performance of *The Firebird* changed his life. 'Now I knew where I stood. I would be, for so long as I lived, on the side of the arts.' Harold Acton says that for many an artist then young, *Scheherazade* was an inspiration equivalent to that of Gothic architecture for the Romantics, or Quattrocento frescoes for the Pre-Raphaelites. But it was not only esthetes who so reacted. *The Times* in its very first reviews was both enthusiastic and perceptive, seeing, for instance, the superiority of what Diaghilev was doing to what Pavlova did as an impresario of ballet. It said of *Carnaval*: 'It is immensely serious as Art, but never for a moment serious as Life.' This was a distinction that it took much longer to make prevail in literature. In some sense all British artistic life seems to have capitulated to the Ballets Russes immediately. Rupert Brooke said: 'They, if anything can, justify our civilization. I'd give anything to be a ballet-designer.' " [Martin Green, *Children of the Sun*, p. 30]

But within a few years, World War I had plunged Europe into an ocean of slaughter from which it has yet to recover; a

devastation unparalleled since the Thirty Years War; only the immolation of the Soviet Union in World War II offers any more recent comparison. Martin Green, the author I quoted above, tries, British-style, to make all this understandable in two laconic sentences: "On July 1, 1916, an attack began on the Somme front in which 100,000 men were lost, on the Allied side alone, on the first day. It took the Allied armies three months to advance three miles, and England alone lost 500,000 men in those months." It was as though a generation of English men had gone missing "in Flanders field," as the song goes.

It was in these circumstances of dumb hopelessness, that Diaghilev's revolution was made to "prevail in literature" as it already had in music and painting. (One of the bearers of this literary revolution, the British-Russian Vladimir Nabokov, from the same circles as Diaghilev, wrote a savagely mocking biography of the same Chernyshevsky mentioned earlier.)

The poets included the embittered emigré Americans, fascist Ezra Pound and pro-fascist T.S. Eliot, along with the Irish fascist W.B. Yeats, and the British sometime communist W.H. Auden with his disciples Christopher Isherwood and Stephen Spender. This "Dandy" school readily extended itself to Anglophile snobs at Harvard and Yale, and then to American "Dandies" of the old Confederacy, like John Crowe Ransom, along with many Southerners discovered later by the *Paris Review*.

Since then, the canon has been somewhat enlarged. In painting, an entire new genre, "Abstract Expressionism," appeared suddenly and swept all before it. Elsewhere, some boundaries have become fuzzy. But in the main, the definition of "art," or "contemporary art" if you prefer, has remained as it was left us by Diaghilev and his corybants after World War I. Equally important, this is what "art" is for the whole Baby Boomer generation, honeycombed through the key positions in our institutions.

It is as though Diaghilev's little conspiracy with Stravinsky and Picasso, along with his literary followers of slightly later vintage, all of them perfectly preserved in formaldehyde, are still bringing down the house today, just as in 1911.

But how is this even possible?

For readers of Frances Stonor Saunders' *Who Paid the Piper*, a history of the Congress for Cultural Freedom (CCF), or of the 1967 exposés by *Ramparts* and then by Tom Braden, the answer is unavoidable: Beginning in the early 1950s, an avalanche of U.S. taxpayers' money "covertly" subsidized this particular school, to the exclusion of all else. *EIR* and others have described the long and lavish arts festivals put on in Paris and other war-ruined European cities, but it is equally true, even if it is illegal,—that the "CIA" massively funded its chosen artistic styles in the United States as well. Think of the Museum of Modern Art continually on world tour, courtesy of the CCF, with the works of its chosen abstract expressionist painters; the Boston Symphony Orchestra likewise, with its chosen composers, and so on.



Diaghilev's Ballets Russes of the early 20th Century epitomize the degenerate "culture" promoted by John Train's Paris Review still today.

If writers, painters, or other artists would not dance for Diaghilev's ballet, the networks of subsidized publications and "witting" participants routinely denied them both livelihood and audience. If they persisted anyway, their reputations would be "trashed," by devastating reviews planted simultaneously across multiple publications. This in the Free World, in the name, apparently, of "fighting communism."

Although it is well-known that the "CIA" has always controlled and subsidized *Paris Review*, whose first managing editor was John Train in 1951, this fact is not yet freely admitted, as it is for the CCF. Author Richard Cummings explains this by the circumstance that *Paris Review*, unlike the CCF, is an *ongoing* CIA operation,—i.e., the magazine is still publishing. [www.literaryrevolution.com/mr-cummings-52305.html] Another contributing factor may be that *Paris Review*, despite its name and its off-again, on-again association with the city of Paris, is and always was an American magazine written by and for Americans, whose CIA funding is therefore arguably illegal.

Cummings discloses the CIA subsidy, otherwise obvious from the luxurious entertainments *Paris Review* provides, and the fact that the whole crew of John Train, Peter Matthiessen, George Plimpton, and company were "CIA." The reason I have placed these letters in quotation marks, is that there are two "CIAs." Intelligence, including covert intelligence, is a necessity for our nation, and the great majority of CIA operatives are patriotic Americans. But at the same time, Tory-minded leaders of the New York financial community like John Train, have long employed CIA "cover" to cloak their own, un-American activities with governmental secrecy, im-

munity, and legitimacy.

Confusion between these "two CIAs" has dogged all efforts to explain why so many millions of taxpayer dollars have secretly been dumped into the promotion of the 1890s' fads sometimes called "avant-garde art." Stonor Saunders quotes one confused U.S. intelligence agent's obviously post-hoc explanation that the Communists labelled this art "degenerate,"—therefore we promoted it. So they did, but does that explain anything?

Saunders also notes that the program for promotion of this school of art, shared its CIA command structure with that for the control and promotion of the "non-communist left" (NCL), such as the French Socialist Party-affiliated unions and the British Labor Party faction of Hugh Gaitskell and his descendants. This operation was run from 1955 by Train's close associate James Jesus Angleton, through former Communist leader and double agent Jay Lovestone, who in turn ran honcho Irving Brown. Not only did the subsidized NCL compete with the Communist Parties' influence;

massive presence in the NCL orbit provided advance notice of their intentions, and an ability to control them, should the need arise. But "avant-garde" art? Surely that could be of no help on the docks of Marseilles.

Puzzling over this riddle, Richard Elman wrote, "It's my contention that the CIA not only engaged in a cultural cold war in the abstract and purely pragmatic way, but that they had very definite aims in view, and they had a very definite aesthetic: they stood for High Culture." He is aware of the problem. But the reality is that it was this CIA campaign which created a situation where at the start of the 21st Century, the label "High Culture" would be applied to this detritus of the 1890s.

Although it is not the complete answer, it would be fairer to say, that, not the CIA, but the bankers' CIA, that is, John Train's Wall Street, has given us a fascist culture for the Truman Era just now ending, an era which began with the rehabilitation of old Nazis and other fascists, as "the best anti-communists"; an era that is ending with the threat of a new, if very short-lived, world fascist empire. Compare the following: Like innumerable of her contemporaries, Lynne Ann (Vincent) Cheney, the wife and controller of the Vice President, wrote her Master's thesis on the Irish poet W.B. Yeats, a top exemplar of the artistic school we have been discussing. But how many of them did as she did, and praise Yeats as a "fascist," using precisely that word; and not only as a literary apologist for fascism, but as a man who struggled, albeit unsuccessfully, to form a fascist party in Ireland?

It is this which makes *Paris Review* John Train's dirty secret.