

ARTS & LETTERS

cheesecake. In a famous incident during the 1861 Paris première of Wagner's opera *Tannhäuser*, a group of wealthy young men who arrived too late for the "titillating" ballet portion howled the opera down. Degas apparently shared the general low public regard for ballet: In many of his famous canvases, he lavished as much attention on the spectators and their social doings as on the dancers.

Degas's 1,500 ballet pieces earned him a reputation for misogyny in his own day. As late as 1949, the *Dance Encyclopedia* described him as a "French painter of the impressionist school who painted many unflattering pictures of ballet dancers." According to Harris, it was Degas's refusal to romanticize ballerinas, his interest in their craft and physical training and in their most mundane gestures, that shaped the Victorian image of him as unsympathetic to women.

Harris cautions that Degas, while a realist, was not merely a "documentary" painter. He altered reality to meet his artistic needs; x rays reveal that, in some of his pictures, he painted entirely new characters over old ones that did not suit him. And despite the sometimes strange perspectives and realistic subjects Degas chose, it would be a mistake not to view him as a classicist, "someone for whom the claims of life were thoroughly subordinated to the claims of art."

Indeed, Harris suggests, the backstage world of ballerinas "possessed" Degas in part because, like him, the dancers had to exercise enormous discipline to create something that appears supremely light and graceful. "No art," the painter once said, "was ever less spontaneous than mine. What I do is the result of reflection and study of the great masters; of inspiration, spontaneity, temperament, I know nothing."

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*Czechoslovakia's
Jazz Rebels*

"Hipness at Noon" by Josef Škvorecký, in *The New Republic* (Dec. 17, 1984), P.O. Box 955, Farmingdale, N.Y. 11737-0001.

In 1971, three years after Soviet troops toppled Czechoslovakia's reformist Dubček government, a small band of jazz aficionados asked the Czech Ministry of the Interior for permission to form a jazz musicians' union. Only in a communist society could such an event give birth to new "enemies of the state," writes Škvorecký, author of *The Engineer of Human Souls* and other novels.

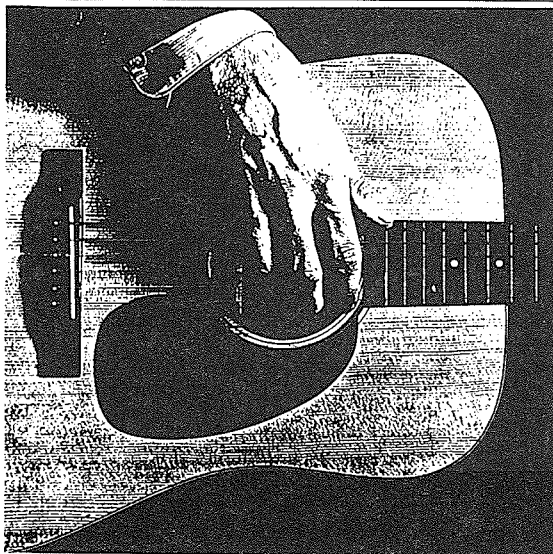
Until rock 'n' roll came along during the 1950s, jazz was strictly beyond the pale in Czechoslovakia. In totalitarian states, any demonstration of mass spontaneity signals danger, Škvorecký says. But "a smokey jazz club [filled] with nostalgic middle-aged men . . . is just a nuisance." So in 1971, a careless Czech Ministry of the Interior directed the petitioning jazz lovers to form a special Jazz Section within the existing Musicians' Union, thus fatefully removing them from its direct con-

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One of the "subversive" journals published by the Jazz Section.



trol. In another bureaucratic faux pas, the Ministry allowed the Jazz Section to pick its own leaders.

Aided by the denizens of what Škvorecký calls the "Gray Zone"—that "conspiracy" of ordinary people who "sin" against the regime without actively opposing it—the Jazz Section became, during the mid-1970s, a "threat" to Czech communism.

The arrival of popular jazz-rock music from the West helped stir official anxiety. As the new music (along with New Wave rock) found its way into the Section-sponsored Prague Jazz Days, crowds at the annual music festival grew ominously large. Finally, a Prague "cultural inspector" shut down the festival to prevent "public disturbances."

Perhaps more worrisome to Czech authorities, the Jazz Section began taking full advantage of a legal loophole allowing membership organizations to publish minimally censored newsletters and pamphlets for their members. The government had restricted the Jazz Section roster to 3,000 souls, but upwards of 100,000 of their friends and associates read its publications. Under the Jazz Section imprint appeared such "dangerous" works as a history of Czech rock music and a book on New York's avant-garde theater. The Gray Zonists in the Musicians' Union, Škvorecký says, were reluctant to crack down on the Jazz Section.

In 1982, the Communist Party orchestrated a campaign of articles and letters to the editor in its weekly *Tribuna* "depicting the pop-and-

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jazz scene in Czechoslovakia as a hotbed of antisocialist conspiracies." A purge was in the making: Dozens of rock and jazz-rock bands have since been forced to break up; Jazz Section chairman Karel Srp has been fired from his job with a printing company and may face 14 years in prison; other Jazz Section leaders face uncertain futures; and the Ministry of the Interior has "curtailed" all activities of the Musicians' Union until union officials dissolve the Jazz Section.

*A 'Shining Path'
In Peru?*

"Why Peasants Rebel: The Case of Peru's Sendero Luminoso" by Cynthia McClintock, in *World Politics* (Oct. 1984), Princeton University Press, 3175 Princeton Pike, Lawrenceville, N.J. 08648.

During the 1970s, Peru's military government carried out the second most sweeping land reform (after Cuba's) in Latin American history. In 1980, civilian rule was restored. Nevertheless, Peru has become the victim of a bizarre and bloody guerrilla movement, the Sendero Luminoso, or "Shining Path."

Founded in 1968 by Abimael Guzman, a professor at a provincial university in Ayacucho, high in the Andes, the Shining Path took up arms in 1980. Its leaders scorn both the Soviet Union and China, and receive no aid from either. The group is responsible for some 2,500 terrorist attacks nationwide—on factories, power plants, embassies—and 615 deaths. It enjoys growing popularity in the mountains around Ayacucho; the number of active terrorists has jumped from just two or three hundred in 1980 to perhaps 3,000 today.

How can the Shining Path's success be explained? No sophisticated theories are needed, says McClintock, a University of Chicago political scientist: The Andes peasants face increasingly dire poverty.

During the agrarian reforms of the 1970s, the estates of the wealthy were turned into peasant farm cooperatives. But most of the estates were located far from the Andes, where the land is dry, stony, and steep, and the potato and grain farms are very small. Overpopulation and soil exhaustion are the problems there. Government policies have also stirred peasant resentment. Fernando Belaunde Terry's administration has hiked interest rates on farm loans, slashed fertilizer subsidies, and cut protective tariffs on imported food. It has boosted public works outlays in the region, but nearly half of the money goes to showcase rural electrification projects.

Widening gaps between rich and poor are common in Latin America, McClintock notes, but in most cases, inequality grows because the gains of the well-off outpace those of the poor. Only in Nicaragua, Panama, and the Peruvian highlands did the poor get poorer during the 1970s. In the Andes, food consumption per capita dropped below 63 percent of the average daily requirement; income now averages \$50 per person annually.

McClintock thinks that Peru's experience contradicts conventional theories about "why peasants rebel." The Andes peasants treading the