7 Win Awards for Books At Ceremony in New York

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New York, March 9—(AP)—Bernard Malamud, speaking at the National Book Award presentations last night, questioned critics who assert the ascendency of form over theme in the novel.

Addressing 1,000 persons at Philharmonic Hall, this year's fiction award winner quoted Herman Melville's dictum: "To produce a mighty book you must produce a mighty theme."

Noted Malamud: "I cannot welcome a theory of the novel that will ultimately diminish the value of a writer's experience, historical and personal, by limiting its use in fiction."

His winning novel, "The Fixer," has as its theme the story of a handyman in Czarist Russia, who, as a Jew, is accused of the ritual murder of a boy and who develops into a man of great stature by refusing to admit the "crime."

Rarely Heard Voice

There were seven $1,000 winners in six categories.

Oscar Lewis, winner of the award in the category of science, philosophy and religion, said his book, "La Vida," a first-person account by a Puerto Rican mother and her children of their life in New York and San Juan, attempted to provide a deeper understanding of the poor by giving "a voice to people who are rarely heard."

Justin Kaplan, whose "Mr. Clemens and Mark Twain" won the arts and letters prize said:

"He thought of himself as one of the strangest of God's creatures, as a freak of nature or a prodigy on the order of Halley's Comet."

James Merrill, winner of the poetry prize for his "Nights and Days," hailed Marianne Moore, who had also been nominated for the honor. He said "her magical supremacy has, this one time, simply been taken for granted . . ."

The Ideal Reader

Peter Gay, winner of the history and biography award for "The Enlightenment: An Interpretation: The Rise of Modern Paganism," said he had this ideal reader in mind while writing the book:

"A reader who is out of sympathy with the enlightenment and holds certain traditional, mistaken notions about its views of progress, reason or history, and who is persuaded finally by my analysis to adopt . . . my view of the past."

Both Willard Trask and Gregory Rabassa, who received prizes for translations, said they were simply grateful a translation prize had been established.

Trask's award was for translating "History of My Life" by Giacomo Casanova and Rabassa's prize was for "Hopscotch" by Julio Cortazar.

Winners were selected by judges appointed by the National Book Committee. The prize money is provided by trade organizations in the book industry and the National Translation Center at Austin, Tex.

Silencing the Children of Sanchez

Joseph Sommers

To most North Americans, nationalism in Mexico evokes the Mexican Revolution of 1910-40, incarnated by such figures as Zapata and Pancho Villa, the great muralists Orozco, Rivera and Siqueiros, and the image of President Cárdenas in the 1930s expropriating American and British oil holdings and distributing land to former peons.

But nationalism in Latin America has many faces and many ideological bases, depending upon time and place. Radical movements for reform and revolution, directed against Yankee imperialism, have traditionally relied upon popular aspirations for national independence and self-determination. Cárdenas and Castro stand as examples. On the other hand, right-wing dictators like Stroessner of Paraguay, aware of nationalism's appeal, constantly evoke chauvinist sentiments of patriotism, glorifying the national past in order to set up political barriers in the present. Nationalism in Paraguay insulates against "foreign" ideologies and influences, whether they stem from *Das Kapital* or the Alliance for Progress.

A classic instance of reactionary nationalism, complete with openly demagogic anti-*yanquismo*, was the recent attempt to condemn and to ban officially the Spanish translation of Oscar Lewis' *The Children of Sánchez*. The attack upon this widely known study of Mexican poverty provides an index of the contradictory climate now prevailing in post-revolutionary times. Twenty-five years after Cárdenas, dominated by the new and powerful middle class which the revolution spawned, a decidedly less radical Mexico today is experiencing a new set of tensions.

The dramatic circumstances of the case and its wide impact in intellectual circles call for an extended study in depth. In a period of forty-six days in February and March of 1965, the editors of the Fondo de Cultura Económica, who had published the authorized translation of *The Children of Sánchez*, amassed in their files a collection of 583 newspaper articles, commentaries, cartoons and editorials on the controversy. It is to be hoped that Mexican and United States scholars will concern themselves with the broader implications for cultural activity and research. A review here of highlights may serve to challenge the current journalistic trend toward easy generalizations about Latin America.

The translation of *Los Hijos de Sánchez* was published in August, 1964, and sold out almost immediately. A second printing followed, and also disappeared rapidly from the bookstores.

On February 11, 1965, the Executive Committee of the Mexican Geographical and Statistical Society (MGSS) submitted to the Attorney General of the Republic a list of charges, alleging that the publication of Lewis' study was a criminal act. Citing the penal code, the charges referred to sections covering "social dissolution," defamation and offenses against public morality. They called specifically for a judicial investiga-

tion in order to assess proper punishment against the Fondo de Cultura Económica and Oscar Lewis. The MGSS, an old and distinguished society, commands influence in government and political circles which far transcends its apparent concern for geography and statistics. Composed of important figures in government and industry, its program and political positions have consistently supported "official" governmental policies, presumably dedicated to implementing the platform of "institutionalized revolution."

The MGSS officials stated as the basis of their formal charges "the base and obscene language used by the author; the description of improper scenes together with opinions which are slanderous, defamatory and insulting to the people and the government of Mexico." (Translations are my own. Those below from *Los Hijos de Sánchez* are taken from the Spanish translation as quoted in the actual bill of particulars.) Among the specific passages cited as proof of the charges were the following quotes from members of the Sánchez family: "I'd like to have laws here like those of the United States. There wouldn't be as many scoundrels as we have, and there wouldn't be as much out-and-out thievery." "The Mexican people are going under for lack of leadership, lack of manliness, and because of all the filth that you can see. . . . " "I wish we had an American president here in Mexico." A paragraph from Lewis' own introduction, attributing Mexico's political stability to the capacity of its ordinary citizens to withstand poverty and suffering, was also cited, as was his statement that unless means were found to distribute national wealth more equitably, social upheavals would occur sooner or later.

Last spring, when Harold Barnell was planning his trip to Mexico, The Nation *suggested that he visit the neighborhood in Mexico City where the Sánchez family lived when Oscar Lewis studied them. The sketches on these pages are from the portfolio which Mr. Barnell compiled on that assignment.*

Mr. Barnell reports that, although the Mexican Government has tried to do a great deal to improve the situation in the city's slums, the public programs too often do not mesh with the needs of the people. For example, new housing is pushed on an impressive scale, but the rents are too high; a project near the Sánchez area was 80 per cent empty when Barnell visited it. Similarly, municipal markets are not patronized and new schools, which are free but not compulsory do not enroll children who are needed to earn food money.

The Children of Sánchez *is still a chronicle of our times.*

The widespread discussion which followed in all communication media is interesting partly because of what was not discussed. For example, only rarely was there any reference to the central theme of the Lewis book—the profound impact of poverty upon the personalities and lives of an ordinary Mexican urban family. When poverty was mentioned—usually by someone opposing the charges against the book—it was dealt with as a social ill which the government is now eliminating.

The bulk of published opinion on the controversy expressed opposition to the action of the MGSS. It was an opposition springing more from a desire to protect freedom of expression in the abstract than from a realization that hunger and misery are mass phenomena in Mexico, revolutionary achievements and reforms notwithstanding.

A high point in the formation of public reaction to the case against *Los Hijos de Sánchez* was the round-table discussion on March 4 at the National University. Organized to take

place in an auditorium with space for 400, the debate attracted an audience of some 700 students, and yielded a significant insight into student opinion. Lone spokesman for the MGSS was its secretary, Luis Cataño Morlet. The society president, Sr. José Domingo Lavín, scheduled to appear, sent a last-minute message. Under the impression that Oscar Lewis would be present, Lavín refused to share the same platform with such a *delincuente* (roughly, lawbreaker).

The remarks of Cataño Morlet, calculated to appeal to well known anti-gringo sentiments of the university students, failed completely. When he stated that he would not quote defamatory passages from *Los Hijos de Sánchez* because there were women present, he was subjected to catcalls of derision. Attempting to illustrate how some Mexicans sacrifice national pride for U.S. dollars, he then asserted that the *braceros* who go north to work in Texas and California are lacking in patriotism. The response was laughter mixed with hoots of scorn. A student shouted, "They go because they're hungry," and received a round of applause.

Contrasting in intellectual tone were the comments of three spokesmen who defended publication of the book. Ricardo Pozas, anthropologist and university professor, while disagreeing with the Lewis methodology, praised the scope of his endeavor and called for new and more scientific works along the same lines. In one of the few references to subject matter, he asserted that there are population sectors in Mexico subsisting on a much lower economic level than that of the Sánchez family, and cited certain Indian groups. Rosario Castellanos, widely respected novelist, poet and literary critic, read a prepared text which discussed seriously the academic importance of freedom of speech and the press. The broad implications of her comments reflected the concern of many intellectuals. If the Lewis book were banned, the next attack might well be directed at many contemporary novels. In indirect but meaningful terms, the social and historical cast of the novels written by Carlos Fuentes, Juan Rulfo, Sergio Galindo and Rosario Castellanos herself frequently convey a more sweeping indictment of Mexican values and mores than the sharply focused work of Oscar Lewis.

Third speaker for the defense was Francisco López Cámara, professor in the university's School of Political Science. Aside from demolishing the logic, or absence thereof, in the arguments of Cataño Morlet, López Cámara read to the audience a notarized affidavit from a member of the actual Sánchez family. Lewis had been accused in the press both of exploiting the family financially and of distorting their statements. The affidavit, attesting to the author's good faith on both counts, helped dissolve a secondary but inflammatory argument which had made the rounds on the gossip levels.

Student response was overwhelmingly on the side of the free currency of ideas, and against false and emotional pseudo-patriotism. This example of maturity is worth noting, since the uniform image of the Latin American student in the U.S. press is precisely contrary.

On March 29, 1965, charges against Lewis and the publishers were thrown out of court, the attorney general's statement explicitly denying any "subversive" qualities in the book. A salutory precedent for freedom of the press in Mexico was established.

However, analysis of the currents underlying the case, and of the aftermath of this apparently clean-cut victory indicate many unresolved complexities.

At this writing, some eight months after the ruling, there has not been a third edition of *Los Hijos de Sánchez*. Also, it is now definite that the Fondo de Cultura Económica, a government-subsidized institution, will not publish the new edition. A private company, Editorial Joaquín Mortiz, has acquired the rights, thus permitting the government to avoid any further embarrassment.

A project to produce a motion picture based on the Lewis book lies still-

born. In late 1962, plans were announced for the film by Carlo Ponti, the renowned Italian producer, who arrived in Mexico prepared for a major undertaking. Sophia Loren, his wife, was to play a leading role. Carlos Fuentes and Abby Mann were contracted to write the script. When first plans were submitted to the government, which approves all scripts, it became clear that a combination of resistance and bureaucratic entanglement implied a hopeless future. As of now, with producers, writers, technicians and actors scattered in four countries, chances of resuming production are minimal.

Finally, it remains to be seen whether *Pedro Martínez*, the most recent Lewis publication, will see the light of day in Spanish translation. Delving as it does into an example of poverty and frustration in rural Mexico, it touches an even more sensitive political nerve than did *The Children of Sánchez*. Most political observers agree that peasant dissatisfaction is the most grievous problem facing the "institutionalized revolution" today.

One significant question for interested Americans which must arise from a post-mortem analysis of the controversy is the following: if, in the most politically stable country in Latin America, the nation with the most solid achievements and traditions of reform, repression of ideas in the name of nationalism can gain such important support, what are the prospects for meaningful research and exchange of ideas in, say, Brazil, Argentina or Guatemala?

A second question is suggested by the nature of the victory itself. Young Mexican intellectuals apparently reject false new applications of a nationalism which in the past was constructive, but in the present is clearly ambivalent. Recognizing the revolution's validity as a historical phenomenon, they nevertheless scorn the most extreme of its current standard wavers.

Many of Mr. Lewis' most outspoken defenders (writers like Juan Rulfo, Carlos Fuentes, Salvador Novo, Rosario Castellanos; academicians such as Daniel Moreno, López Cámara, Emilio Uranga, Victor Flores Olea, Ricardo Pozas, Ramón de Ertze Garimendi, Henrique González Casanova; journalists including Rubén Salazar Mallén, Emmanuel Carballo, Roberto Blanco Moheno, Gastón García Cantú and Jaime García Terrés) are those in Mexico who have deep questions and criticisms concerning the role of the United States in Latin America. Are we as willing to hear and to publish their ideas as they have been to defend the right of a United States scholar to be published in Mexico?

Joseph Sommers, assistant professor of Romance Languages at the University of Washington, is spending a year studying the contemporary Mexican novel under a grant of the Social Science Research Council and the American Council of Learned Societies.

The Good Grief

DEATH, GRIEF AND MOURNING: A Study of Contemporary Society. By Geoffrey Gorer. Doubleday & Co. 205 pp. $4.50.

Jessica Mitford

In recent years the American death industries (to whose door we must all eventually beat a path) have cleverly invented a new and better mousetrap —the concept of "grief therapy." This phrase, with its plausible psychiatric overtones, is used to sell all manner of merchandise at fantastic markups. Grief therapy works like this: the finer and costlier the casket, the more therapeutic for the bereaved. The public "viewing" of the embalmed and restored corpse is a key part of the therapy. Funeral flowers, the florists tell us, are therapeutic. So are elaborate headstones and everlastingly secure vaults, say the monument makers and vault men.

To confer learned authority on these profitable contentions the National Funeral Directors Association has developed a stable of writers and lecturers with dubious titles like "pastoral psychologist" whose task it is to bolster the sagging image of the contemporary American funeral. I heard one of these tell an audience of Midwest college students that a person who is stingy in his purchase of a casket for a deceased relative is likely to be suffering from "anal-regressive tendencies." Books and pamphlets

Jessica Mitford is the author of The American Way of Death *(Simon & Schuster) and* Daughters and Rebels *(Houghton Mifflin).*

sponsored by the trade stress the same idea. Dr. Edgar N. Jackson, whose book *For the Living* was distributed free to 100,000 clergymen by the National Funeral Directors Association, says: "If we make any part of man's experience cheap we cheapen all the rest of it." To the charge that expensive funerals are a waste of money, he answers: "It is like saying that it is a waste of money for a bride to spend all that money on a beautiful white dress that she will never wear again."

Having waded through formidable stacks of similar nonsense while writing *The American Way of Death*, and having found very little in the way of scholarly discourse on bereavement, grief and mourning, I find Geoffrey Gorer's book particularly welcome. While I disagree with his conclusions, it is nevertheless the most thoughtful text I have seen on the subject, written in proper English rather than the jargon of sociology or the terrible lowest-common-denominator prose of the undertakers' grief therapists.

Mr. Gorer descries radical changes in English mourning customs over the last fifty years. He believes that the modern tendency to discard all mourning ritual, combined with English stiff-upper-lipism in the face of personal tragedy, is costing heavily in mental distress and maladaptive behavior of bereaved persons. In his preface to the American edition, he says: "The main theme of the book, the social denial and the individual repudiation of mourning is, I believe, as apposite to the majority of the inhabitants of the United States as it is to the majority of the inhabitants of the United Kingdom."

The chief difference, in fact, between death customs in the two countries seems to center on the funeral itself. "I found no analogue in Britain to the beautifying and rejuvenating of the corpse, and embalming still seems to be a very uncommon practice." Funeral costs in England (he says) are not a problem even to the very poor, those living on old-age pensions or National Assistance: "The display and expense of a 'lovely funeral' seem to be completely things of the past." Unlike in America, where the undertakers have arrogated to themselves the role of guide and counselor to the family in all that concerns the funeral, in England their role is minimal, and Mr. Gorer mentions them only in passing. He does, however, give a rather endearing description of two ex-nurses sent by the undertaker to lay out the body of his brother: "They imparted a somewhat Dickensian tone; they were fat and jolly, and asked in a respectful but cheerful tone, 'Where is the patient?' . . . I gave them a pound for their pains; the leader, pure Sarah Gamp, said 'That for us, duck? Cheers!' and went through the motions of raising a bottle and emptying it into her mouth."

The Gorer study is based on interviews with several hundred English people who had recently suffered a death in the family. They were closely questioned about their religious beliefs, the duration of their mourning and the forms it took, the effect of bereavement on their health, the behavior of friends and relations toward them during the period of mourning. Religious belief is on the wane in England; only 49 per cent of his sample believed in the afterlife. Of those who do, only the Orthodox Jews and Roman Catholics follow a specified ritual of mourning; Mr. Gorer (himself an atheist) is inclined to think that bereaved persons of these sects fare better because of the concentrated, overt mourning prescribed by traditions of their religion.

The most vivid and moving part of the book is Mr. Gorer's autobiographical introduction, in which he describes his own early experiences with death and mourning, and contrasts the customs as he recalls them fifty years ago with those of today.

In 1915, when he was 10 years old and away at prep school, his father was drowned in the sinking of the *Lusitania*. "I was treated with great kindness, but like an invalid; no demands were made on me, I was indulged, conversation was hushed in my presence." His mother came down to see him, "a tragic, almost frightening figure in the full panoply of widow's weeds and unrelieved black, a crepe veil shrouding her (when it was not lifted) so that she was visibly withdrawn from the world." She continued to wear mourning, modifying it at the proper calendrical moments by shortening the veil or adding a touch of white, for the customary two years: "It would have been unthinkable at that date for a respectable woman to do otherwise."

After World War I, English mourning customs underwent a radical change. Perhaps because all England was in mourning for the war dead, black arm bands and widow's weeds went out of fashion; no longer was the mourner distinguished and set apart by his clothing as a person in a special situation. When Mr. Gorer's brother died in 1961, the widow "did not wear black clothes nor ritualize her mourning in any way; she let herself be, almost literally, eaten up with grief, sinking into a deep and long-lasting depression." The attitude of family friends was one of embarrassed evasion. When Mr. Gorer declined an invitation to a cocktail party, explaining that he was in mourning, the response was "shocked embarrassment, as if I had voiced some appalling obscenity." The widow was treated as though she were a leper. "Only if she acted as though nothing of consequence had happened was she again socially acceptable."

The conclusions that Mr. Gorer draws from these experiences and from the extensive interviews seem to me to be farfetched and unsupported by his own research. For example, he links the campaigns against smoking and against nuclear war to a general tendency to deny the reality of death. To replace the vanished mourning customs of the early part of the century he suggests establishing a secular mourning ritual—something analogous to civil marriage. Such an effort to regiment the behavior of mourners with artificial

Prayer

Give me a death like Buddha's, let me fall
over from eating mushrooms provençal,
a peasant wine pouring down my shirt front,
my last request not a cry but a grunt;
kicking my heels to heaven, may I succumb
tumbling into a rose bush after a love
half my age. Though I'm deposed, my tomb
shall not be empty, may my belly show above
my coffin like a distant hill, my mourners come
as if to pass an hour in the country,
to see the green, that old anarchy.

Stanley Moss

BOOKS & THE ARTS

Outside the Kingdom of the Middle Class

LA VIDA. *By Oscar Lewis. Random House. 669 pp. $10.*

ELMER BENDINER
Mr. Bendiner, writer and editor, is the author of The Bowery Man (*Thomas Nelson*).

To the bigot or the puritan, the desperately poor present no emotional problem. It is clear to them that poverty is the consequence of some character flaw, probably due to an ethnic taint. The liberal, however, often is moved to love—though it sometimes seems like pity—and to a firm conclusion that, given proper diet, housing, playgrounds and schooling, the poor can be qualified to enter the kingdom of middle-class values to which, it is assumed, all humans aspire.

The achievements of the liberals—though eminently praiseworthy in themselves—have not always accomplished the great transformation. It is embarrassing to a reformer to find that new housing projects quickly become skyscraper slums, and that when a trickle of affluence sweeps down to the lowest strata of society it sometimes enables a slum dweller to feed a narcotics habit or buy a Cadillac instead of paying the rent.

An explanation of why some of the poor behave as they do, and why handouts and social work are inadequate, has now been formulated neatly, concisely, even brilliantly, by anthropologist Oscar Lewis. After extensive field work in Mexico he has turned to the Puerto Rican slum dwellers of San Juan and New York. In his introduction to *La Vida* he presents a compelling thesis. Poverty may be ameliorated or even eliminated, he says, without necessarily modifying the vast and horrible "subculture of poverty"—a way of life that spits at middle-class values.

It is an outlaw subculture as Lewis describes it. Those who live in it are excluded from all the "major institutions of the larger society"—except the jail, the army and the welfare rolls. It is marked by a total lack of inner organization, for here no political parties are meaningful. When it gives rise to gangs, Lewis points out, it may alarm the rest of society but it nevertheless is a sign of comparative health. There is no real childhood in the subculture, for the biological readiness is all that distinguishes men and women from boys and girls. Above all, it is a way of living without a tomorrow. The present moment is all and satisfactions cannot be deferred, for doom sits on every threshold and the individual is helpless and hopeless.

Lewis does not describe this subculture as Puerto Rican or even as the culture of all of the poor. The subculture crosses national and racial lines and grows only in a particular soil. It has not been observed, he points out, among the hideously impoverished low castes of India, nor among the Jews of Eastern Europe, nor in primitive societies, nor, he suspects, in any Socialist country, whatever the state of its economic health.

The subculture mushrooms in the dark shadows of affluence, in a society whose highest expression is in terms of material wealth among people forever denied that wealth. It is a response to frustration.

Yet even when the root cause of the frustration is lifted, when income rises slightly and the housing pinch is relaxed, when cars and TV sets are within grasp, the subculture of poverty persists from generation to generation in a legacy of outlawry and despair.

If ameliorating poverty—unquestionably necessary in itself—does not always eliminate the subculture, what does? Lewis' answer is that the proposition's converse is true. The subculture can be destroyed without abolishing poverty. He cites Cuba as an example where, he says, people are still poor and still live in slums but the culture of poverty is gone. The poor have been incorporated into the mainstream of society; they have been given a sense of participation in history and the refreshing knowledge that there is a tomorrow.

Lewis' concept thus provides a realistic hope. Here is not the promise of salvation through social work or the deferment of hope until some ultimate reorganization of society. He suggests instead that the entire wretched pattern of poverty can be blown away by the winds of a ghetto revolution. Inevitably the reader must see in this concept a clarification of the battle cry of "black power." That potent phrase, read in the light of Lewis' thinking—though he does not refer to it—takes on a meaning that has nothing to do with complex attempts at definition or ultimate blueprints.

Lewis' thesis of the culture of poverty is established in a 50-page introduction which, for this reviewer at least, outweighs the 669 pages of documentation that follow. In getting his data, Lewis pursued the method of his Mexican research. He and his team move into an area armed with tape recorders and a profound sensitivity. A family is selected almost at random. A woman tells her story on tape. Her lovers, children, parents, friends, neighbors, tape their stories, casting oblique lights on the original telling so that incidents are seen from various vantage points à la *Rashomon*. An investigator drops in and chronicles every event in the course of a single day in the family's house.

The result is a mass of tape that must run to countless miles. This is edited down to publishable size, translated and produced as a document. It makes a harrowing book, certainly, but I do not know what it means. It is not needed to support the argument in the introduction and it does not strengthen it.

We are given a picture of abject brutalizing poverty—children giving birth to children in a senseless agony; sex in a thousand forms, minutely described, until the world seems a gigantic, monotonous brothel, underscoring the savage irony of the Spanish euphemism for whoring—La Vida. Lechery and drunkenness are detailed to the last spittle of vomit and the telling stain on the bed sheet. Here is loveless sex performed to a background of shrieks and curses. Here are children watching wild-eyed while their parents clutch each other in love and stab each other in hate.

Why does Lewis give us this? Is the Rios family meant to be "typical" and, if so, of what? Certainly, it is not a "typical" Puerto Rican family, and Lewis denies any suggestion that he intended it to be so. It may be typical of the particular slum in which Lewis worked but is not the whole concept of a "typical" family unscientific?

And if the Rios family is not typical of anything, then I do not know what this "slice of life" is meant to convey. Is it even a valid portrait of this one family? What criteria did Lewis use to sift out the details he excluded? Did he leave out the humdrum talk of clothes and weather and school and jobs? If so, then the day-in-day-out cacophony is misleading. Stripped of amenities even a family in Suburbia can reveal a gaping hell of

obsessions and frustrations although, admittedly, these would find less horrendous manifestations.

But suppose that the material is indeed edited so that all that was excluded was only more of the same. Do we have here a faithful portrait of the Rios family? Is it possible to know a person by listening to a tape recording of his autobiography, supplemented by other taped autobiographies? I doubt it.

The art of knowing a person demands an ability to pierce the self-pretense which uses language to disguise rather than to reveal.

It is true that in these pages the compassionate reader may reassure himself that victims can be attractive people and achieve a kind of tragic dignity even though what they do appalls the senses. But he is left with a curiously incomplete picture, with raw material which cries for meaningful structure. Those with a taste for people and for life may wish that a novelist—without a tape recorder—would take up where Oscar Lewis left off. An artist who goes to that slum that stands between the sea and the walls of San Juan may one day give us the fuller truth that can be had only in fiction.

Last Chance for Democracy

OVERTAKEN BY EVENTS: The Dominican Crisis from the Fall of Trujillo to the Civil War. *By John Bartlow Martin. Doubleday & Co. 821 pp. $7.95.*

WILLIAM A. WILLIAMS
Mr. Williams is currently on leave from the University of Wisconsin, where he teaches history. He is the author of The United States, Cuba and Castro (*Monthly Review Press*).

This is a detailed and movingly candid account, from the inside near the top, of American relations with the Dominican Republic from the fall of Trujillo in 1961 through the coup against Juan Bosch, and on to the suppression of the popular uprising of 1965 by American military intervention.

Every citizen seriously concerned about his country and its foreign policy should take or make the time to read this book. An effort is required, primarily because the reader has to confront and consider some of the principal issues on his own. Ambassador Martin is telling us many things about which he does not speak directly, or even intentionally; and one has the feeling that he began to make his own serious confrontations only in the course of his writing.

The Ambassador argues that good American intentions and basically sound American policy were overtaken by events, and quotes President Kennedy to make his point: "We did the best we could." In that context, Martin places major emphasis on the limits of American power. But it says a great deal for his perceptiveness and honesty, however, that the evidence he presents suggests precisely the opposite. Suggests, that is, that the effective use of America's vast power to implement a poor American policy defeated America's good intentions by forcing events to conform to a fundamentally mistaken and unsound conception of reality.

One clear indication of this pattern comes in the way that all the protagonists reveal an almost complete disregard of history. History is not magic; it does not supply answers to our problems. But it can make us aware of what has been going on before (and as) we make the scene, and thereby enables us to orient ourselves and provide a basis for using our intelligence to realize our ideals. It can, that is, unless our perception is clouded by a priori conceptions, and unless our intelligence is grinding along in the rut of making yesterday sufficient unto tomorrow.

Martin uses about one-tenth of his book to survey Dominican history. His theme is how a long, slow, painful movement toward effective self-government was seriously interrupted by American intervention between 1916 and 1924, and then by the Trujillo dictatorship. He describes the results, as of 1961, in these terms: "The Republic was a sick, destroyed nation, to be viewed as one ravaged by a thirty-years war, even one to be occupied and reconstituted."

It might reasonably be expected, on the basis of that kind of analysis, that American leaders would approach the Dominican situation with a willingness to take a long-range view, a recognition that many, many difficulties would arise before the country recovered its self-confidence and mounted a sustained effort to realize its potential, and a realization that vast aid would be required if the United States decided to become involved in the process.

What happened instead was a euphoric flip over what Martin repeatedly describes as the "matchless opportunity," or the "chance to do things that few people ever have." That kind of wildly romantic