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**Autor:** Clarke, Philip  
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corresponded to the value of the prescribed medicine although his own concoction only cost 39 francs to produce, and for the difference gave a voucher to his customer enabling him to buy his wondrous cure.

The witnesses who appeared in court brought rather contradictory testimonies. Many had seen their condition worsen dramatically. But for one or two the miracle chemist had been a gift from God. One man who had been practically condemned after five years of sanatorium and ministrated to by a priest says that after a short cure of the chemist's medicine he had regained perfect health and asserted that he owed his life to him.

However, the law remains the law and it is forbidden to sell secret medicine against tuberculosis. The 61-year-old chemist was sentenced after lengthy deliberations to a month's imprisonment with remission for two years, a 500 francs fine plus legal costs.

## THE LIFE AND WORK OF MAX FRISCH

(continued from page 2)

writers are expressing a sense of metaphysical anguish at the absurdity of the condition of man, not by means of rational discourse, but by openly abandoning dramatic conventions—attempting a unity between basic assumptions and the dramatic form, Frisch “wavers” between this and a more conventional approach, retaining certain of the alienation effects so obvious in other plays of his. The basis in observable normality is much more obvious than in, Ionesco or Adamov, for example; nevertheless nowhere near so recognisable as in the actions of the Andorran characters.

Labelled a “didactic play without a lesson” *Biedermann und Die Brandstifter* tells the cautionary tale of a highly respectable bourgeois manufacturer of hair lotion, whose house is invaded by a trio of distinctly shady characters. Biedermann is well aware that his home town has recently been the scene of a series of fires that have been the work of men who have sought shelter in various houses, on the grounds that they are homeless. He soon suspects that his guests are arsonists, but even when they openly stack drums of petrol in his attic, fix fuses and detonators in front of his eyes, he believes they will not set fire to his house if he can only make friends with them.

Biedermann, who is shown as heartless and brutal, sees himself as a good natured, affable man who can charm anybody—which is his undoing.

Eisenring is one of the two incendiaries who are depicted as being victims of the social order, are destructive for the sake of it and who enjoy the feeling of power from seeing things burn. The third, however, is an intellectual who believes he is working for some abstract principle. When the fuses are about to be lit, having discovered they are not interested in his ideological rationalisations, he splits with his two companions and warns Biedermann. The latter does not take this warning either, and obligingly hands them matches to light the fire that burns himself, his wife, house and the whole town.

The civilisation that is being destroyed is one in which most people believe not in God but in the fire brigade. And throughout the play the fire brigade, in mock Greek chorus style addressing the audience and the

characters in burlesque verse, continually comments on the situation and affirms its readiness to intervene. Needless to say, it does not until the fire is well under way. In the “After-piece”, Biedermann and his wife are in hell, where Satan and Beelzebub, revealed as the incendiaries, refuse to conduct a hell for people like Biedermann, and after negotiations with Heaven are threatening a strike.

## Where Frisch and Brecht depart

As usual with Frisch, the political connotations are disputable and almost universal. According to Banziger, the situation is based on that of President Benes of Czechoslovakia, who took the Communists into his government although he knew they were determined to destroy the country's independence.

Frisch's following of Brecht amounted to a stylistic inheritance and a fascination with commitment, but whereas Brecht's work uses characters to demonstrate very obviously the social iniquities, Frisch's liberalism has to consider the personal predicament. The radical punch is missing, and today, a play like *Andorra* can appear too non-committal and equivocal.

Undoubtedly, for one of his generation and nationality, Frisch's liberalism and moral sincerity are inseparable, and the value of a true concern with the individual in society, such as Frisch holds, cannot be questioned as we enter a “sociological” age and realise that the problem may be solved violently and irrevocably in the near future.

(The author of this article is a student of psychology at Bedford College. He has staged “*Andorra*” and is presently the President of the University of London Union.)

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