

## "THE WORLD NEXT DOOR"

MOST of the information which reaches the general public concerning the mentally ill is either gloomy, frightening, or shocking. Both the statistical survey type of report and the magazine article expose of conditions in mental hospitals obtain their interest from the morbid side of the subject—the one dealing with the increasing mental and emotional instability in the world, the other describing the helplessness and relative hopelessness of mental patients who have been hospitalized. It would be a mistake, however, to suppose that anything really important about mental illness is learned from such sources. More than one ex-patient of mental hospitals has given clues to the exaltation that may be a part of the experience of the insane person—not *as* an insane person, but as one who has reached to intensities of life and feeling, *through* mental illness, and has been able to record them.

Insanity is, indeed, a window into another world, for a few of those who have passed through this terrible ordeal. Not that insanity is some form of privileged communication with the Cosmos. The loss of balance can never be thought of as desirable in itself. But if the witnesses we speak of can be relied upon, the experience of insanity may induce a state of reflection and self-analysis so intense that certain barriers to profound self-perception may be worn away, and a new and freer individual emerge. It is as though by pain a man is purged of trivial and superficial motives; and in the agony of the mind or soul, a deeper catharsis takes place, creating a kind of Olympian impersonality. There must have been, of course, a rich and sensitive nature to begin with, and the potential will to survive and attain to self-mastery, once that nature is awakened and aroused. Not all mental patients have these qualities. But all mental patients suffer. Even when almost nothing seems left in

them worth caring for, they suffer. And their pain, without the Promethean spark to give it dignity, is the more meaningless and pitiful.

Books by persons who have recovered from mental illness are gradually creating a wonderful literature of the mind, and—we should add—of the will. First should be mentioned Clifford Beers' *A Mind that Found Itself*, which was a pioneering, and successful, effort to bring help and hope to the mentally ill. As a result of Mr. Beers' book, the Society for Mental Hygiene was formed, and a wide audience of readers given insight into the difficulties and tragedies in the lives of people in mental hospitals. A later book was Jane Hillyer's *Reluctantly Told*, another story of recovery from mental aberration. Then, in 1947, Harold Maine published *If a Man Be Mad*. Mr. Maine, who belongs to that rare tribe of heroes who achieve personal greatness by overcoming personal disaster, added to the literature of insanity a much-needed revolutionary drive. Large public institutions such as mental hospitals easily become intensified portraits in little of the society which uses them as a place to put its defective or outcasted members, its misfits, eccentrics and emotional rebels. In these institutions, Mr. Maine found the common social hypocrisy of the time sharply focussed upon the helpless patient. It was, one could say, his outraged sense of justice which restored his sanity. To call his book the story of his recovery would be a pale and tepid description of writing which vulcanizes its significance on the reader's mind.

Finally to be added to this list of books is *The World Next Door* (now available as a Signet book) by Fritz Peters. It is a novel, but a novel of which Dr. Karl Menninger could say, "This book is a magnificent contribution both to the theory and practice of psychiatry." Also the account of a patient who fights his way back to sanity, *The*

*World Next Door* has as much of the stuff of reality as most autobiographical writing on the subject. In fact, it probably is in some sense autobiographical, whatever the nominal form of the book. In one place Peters has a former mental hospital attendant—one who broke up and was himself committed—say to another inmate:

"You look at these men and you'll see everything one time or another. Everything that can happen to them happens here. And you see the real trouble with these places, too. You see why they aren't successful, why so many guys end up in here for life."

"Why?"

"Understanding. Nobody really understands them, everyone is afraid of them here, so they never really see them as people, just ordinary people. The way you'd look at a guy who'd lost his leg or something. The doctors, the attendants, the nurses, the families. . . . They can't project over to us. To them it's an *experience*. That's all. Like if somebody gets knocked down, one of them'll think, 'What the hell is so awful about that?' They never see that maybe for that guy being knocked down is the most terrible thing in the world. . . . That's what happens to all the guys. . . . people don't know where they live, inside, so they're bound to hit it sometime. Especially the bastards that work in these places."

He shook his head thoughtfully. "It's a hell of a thing to say about other men, but look at these attendants for instance. They're men like the rest of us. Nothing wrong with them, and yet after they've been in here for a while, they change. You can see them come in. . . . You see a new guy come in and he's all steamed up. He's come to work here because he wants to do something for the nuts, he wants to *help*, and for a while he's a house on fire, can't do enough, and then it happens to him, too. One day he'll kick a patient and if he goes through that one all right, then he's an attendant good and proper. It's like getting a degree. Guess it's just that too much misery is something you can't take and look at it. You get so that you have to beat it up and strike at it. That's what I did. I hit a poor bastard and I liked it. It made me feel good when I'd done it, and then it knocked me for a loop. I couldn't sleep. I'd hit myself really. I sure did. Here's where I ended up, and I sure found out. You learn to be sadistic after a while, almost like you had to be to stay here. I hate these guys, but I can't always blame them. I know what it's like."

But who knows, after all, what insanity is? And, very likely, we know as little about sanity as we do about insanity. A reading of books like this one brings the strong impression that a madman's descent to Avernus may also be an ascent into the self—a desperate quest for the substance of one's being, for that upon which a man can rely and always return to, to find inner balance. Verses written by a woman under psychiatric care, while in the process of recovery, give some intimation of the quality of the inward reflections of one who has a sickness of the mind, knows it, and is struggling against it—

Acceptance of what has to be,  
A muted joy in what I see  
And hear and know and think and feel—  
And living that again seems real.  
When all these, various things I find,  
Perhaps I'll call it peace of mind.

Not all of the mentally ill, of course, reveal such philosophical resources. But insanity is a disease to which those of the most delicately attuned intelligence often seem particularly vulnerable, while others, perhaps, are protected from aberrations by the coarser mold of their intellectual and emotional life. To have flashes of extraordinary lucidity may mean that the challenge of a hazardous inner existence has been met, even though the pressure of times and circumstances proves too great, and the quivering *psyche* takes refuge in an irrational world of dreams. Some great weakness must be admitted, most of all by the sufferer from mental disorder, but in the cases of those who have written these books, the recognition of the weakness has been the means of transforming it into a source of strength. This is the thrilling aspect of the meaning of insanity. Men can and do recreate themselves, even when they seem, to the rest of us, to be only fragmentary men.

While wise doctors of the mind may admit that the world of the insane is largely an unknown world, even to science, there is cause for encouragement in the new attitudes toward the mentally ill. In the *Bulletin of the Menninger*

*Clinic* for September, 1950, Dr. James M. Mott, staff psychiatrist at the Topeka State Hospital, tells about the extraordinary recovery of a woman seventy-two years old, after seventeen years spent in the hospital. Dr. Mott's point is—Should this recovery be regarded as "extraordinary"? It is commonly assumed, he points out, that only custodial care can be given to many mental patients:

There is a long tradition of pessimism regarding the recovery of patients who have been hospitalized more than three years. This pessimistic attitude becomes reinforced by reflection from doctor to relative to patient, and the other way round. Doctors give up trying to help patients, patients give up trying to get well, relatives give up trying to help them get well. The introduction of the new spirit of optimism can sometimes reverse this vicious cycle. We could better assume that all of our patients will get well, and expect exceptions, than to assume that most of them will not get well and be surprised at the exceptions. What is now the exception might conceivably become the rule if we could determine just what therapeutic leaven is needed in each particular case.

The patient in question was admitted to the hospital in 1932, after a homicidal attack on her husband. When Dr. Mott first met her, in 1949, she was subject to various delusions—a condition which apparently had prevailed throughout the term of hospitalization. Dr. Mott applied no "miraculous" techniques, unless kindness and interest and the "optimism" of which he speaks be the tools of miracle. In any event, five months later he was able to discuss with the patient matters relating to her discharge from the hospital. Even while her delusions continued—she "talked" to her son three thousand miles away, at night, from an open window—plans for her discharge were pursued with her. Eventually, her hallucinations stopped, and she controlled herself in speaking of her delusions. After a short parole period, the patient was discharged, in January of this year. She obtained work as a practical nurse and was found eminently satisfactory by her employers. She also wanted to be independent

and had no wish to rely upon her son for financial aid. Dr. Mott sums up:

At present this seventy-two year old woman is working satisfactorily on another case. She shows no evidence of psychosis and indeed seems better adjusted, characterologically, than she was before the illness which led to her hospitalization. The patient has been out of the hospital only six months, and this certainly is not long enough to consider the patient "cured," but in view of seventeen years of continuous closed ward hospital care, it stimulates inquiry into a number of concepts which have been accepted as true for the most part.

Dr. Mott asks about "deterioration" in schizophrenics. When shock treatments or psychosurgery are considered in staff conferences, the theory that schizophrenics "deteriorate" is often taken as an argument for these measures.

How often [he asks] is shock or lobotomy recommended in cases where it is not really indicated, from our knowledge of response to it, on the basis that if we don't do something "the patient will deteriorate"? What really is deterioration? . . .

We should remember that this patient, along with hundreds or thousands of others, was considered and labeled incurably insane in the years past and as a result was isolated to such a degree that she knew nothing of stop lights. If we are to discharge our responsibilities to our patients we must not repeat these mistakes—we must encourage contact with the outside world of reality, its progress and changes. Even though they seem incurable, we must consider all our patients potentially reversible and, at the very least, not allow such isolation as occurred in this patient.

Men like Dr. Mott—like Harold Maine, who is teaching a course in psychiatric nursing at the Menninger Clinic in Topeka—are among the real reformers and radicals of our time. They may be hard to find, but they exist.

## *Letter from* **GERMANY**

BERLIN.—Reading *Time* of August 21, one feels compelled to reflect about modern warfare and to compare this "ugly" war in Korea with the Nazi war of 1941-45 in Russia. In both wars, the existence of an extensive partisan movement made the fighting especially gruesome and brought killings on a large scale. But in Korea there is still another problem—agrarian revolution—and to deal with agrarian revolution seems extremely difficult for UN troops.

The Bolsheviks who in former times strove for "proletarian revolution" and "Socialism" have today essentially more modest aims: in reality they have not surpassed so-called "bourgeois society"; they turned out to be only the accomplishees of "bourgeois revolution" in backward countries, insofar as they destroyed the feudal organization in the conquered territories—Soviet Union, Balkans, China, Korea. (There is a big question as to why Bolshevism had to go this way; the answer cannot yet be given.) Anyhow, it is unquestioned that the remaining progressive aspect of the Communists makes it extremely difficult to fight them on this level. Western countries which had their "bourgeois revolution" long before, as the French (1789) and the English (1640-88), never had the need to make a country like the US seem unable (as in China) to promote the long due agrarian reform, because social change in those countries moves only around the given social status quo—any step further seems undesirable and dangerous. Thus, unfortunately, the farmers of Korea side with the Communists to realize their aim of the redivision of land. But by supporting them blindly the Koreans fall prey to the power machine of the modern totalitarian state which immediately robs them of the same freedom of action and possession, held by them only a short time.

Both agrarian revolution and partisan movements make modern war a fight with tooth and nail. Sometimes, also, the speed of today's warfare leads to cruel deeds: the shooting of prisoners, the burning of whole villages, the killing of suspicious civilians who may or may not be partisans. Thus, the technique of modern warfare, which is highly

developed, stands almost in diametric opposition to our cultural standards.

Modern war tends to be "total" war not only in the sense that civilians on both sides are drawn into the battle-line, that all means of social life are sacrificed to its purposes (i.e., art, psychology, etc.), that the whole globe becomes the battlefield, including peaceful South Seas islands, but modern total war even tends to obtain possession and influence of social movements inside the opponent country. Soviet Russia plays the master role in this deceitful game and hopes for the support of workers in Europe, peasants in Asia, and different movements for independence in colonial countries. (Being at the frontier line of Russian influence, however, one sees clearly that the Soviets will not be too successful in these moves; occasional victories last only a short while, because the clash of interests starts at once, as witness Jugoslavia.)

The lasting effect of war, however, is seen in the corruption of autonomous social strivings and movements. It is quite clear, now, that no existing power can further those tendencies to the general progress of mankind. Either those powers are unable to do so or they deceive themselves. Yet hope remains that this discouraging picture will not last forever. It is a question of strength and clairvoyance, as to whether necessary social change on a large scale can be maintained or will be corrupted by the present means. Because social change is not only dependent on human insight, but likewise on forces and events of its own, the picture will alter considerably during our lifetime

GERMAN CORRESPONDENT

## REVIEW

### A HACK WRITER LOOKS AROUND

IF only half of what Philip Wylie says about himself is true, he can hardly mind very much what anyone else says about him. Perhaps he has formed the habit of getting in so many disparaging digs against himself for the laudable reason that he wishes to furnish The Critics no more excuse than necessary for wasting time in pulling him apart. So much time is currently frittered in this way, we must admit, when, after all, a reader's first obligation is to consider the *ideas* of a piece of writing, whether or not the style or idiosyncrasies of the author please him.

A substantial number of Americans still have some memory of Wylie's *Generation of Vipers*, for it gained tremendous circulation. In *Vipers*, Wylie raved and ranted at the useless hypocrisies of conventional society, being incensed almost as much at their futility as at their dishonesty. He sounded like a rebellious schoolboy run amok—as he more or less admits—but like a lot of rebellious schoolboys he hit a great many nails squarely on the head. His exaggerated vituperation against "Momism"—the neurotic worship of a composite female who never allows her children to develop emotional or intellectual independence—was nonetheless compelling. There *are* sentimentally enshrined "Gold Star Mothers" who enjoy the spectacle of themselves suffering the war death of a young man much more than they ever knew how to enjoy the youth himself.

At the time of writing *Vipers*, though, Wylie had a one-track mind. His sympathy was for the men whose psychological structures were wrecked by the tearful autocracy of female parents, in something of a career of human susceptibility to sentimentalism. *Opus 21*, Wylie's latest, currently available in a Pocket Book edition, distributes his sympathy much more universally. Mr. Wylie really has been trying to find out what is wrong with the neurotic society of our time. He discovered, he says, like many preachers, that he "never met a man or woman I couldn't like"—but he also realized, unlike most preachers, that he never met any man he could like

quite enough. Why? Because, he concludes, there are so many fundamentally wrong societal blocks to the acquirement of mature, healthy personalities. Somehow or other, Wylie manages to be a pretty useful writer, we think, because he highlights so many things which need highlighting. Psychology, for instance. Though Mr. Wylie likes to think of himself as a psychologist, though his admiration for Jung and psychiatrists is hardly concealed, he recognizes a tragic failure of nerve in the Brotherhood. These men skirt the whole question of the "traumatic effects" of religion, and thus are themselves guilty of a two-facedness akin to that of many priests and theologians:

The psychiatrist, the practitioner of certain known principles of human psychology, the physician, is still prone to dodge the central fact of his science. "Psychology," he says, dogmatically identifying his opinion with the science, "does not conflict or interfere with religion. There are areas in which the minister or priest is better equipped to deal than the psychologist. Psychiatry does not attempt to change man's beliefs. And it is not 'all sex'—as is so often claimed. It is not concerned with sex morals, or any moral law."

So, in his time, the churches made old Galileo lie, too. Made him lie to live at all.

And so the same churches in our day cause comparably enlightened men to lie concerning their knowledge—in order that any people may benefit by it at all. In order, truly, to go on living. It is one more expedient dishonor of scientists.

These are not the passages which explain why the publisher can advertise *Opus 21* as "shocking," yet such sentiments may tell us why Wylie feels he has to get so shocking on such subjects as Mom, Prostitution, how Religion Itself is the Original Sin, etc.—he thinks that those who could inspire a measured reevaluation of our conventional attitudes have left the whole business for him to tackle.

*Opus 21* allows friends of Wylie's to claim possession of ample proof that he is a lover of man, a lover of "true morality," and a lover of beauty. While he throws all the churches unceremoniously into the discard, he uses Christ as the symbol of a deep wisdom which a mature man might learn to find within himself. The setting for the reappearance of

Jesus is a fancy, based on the first Atomic Bomb run over Japan, where an unsuspected passenger called "Chris" appears and tries to get the men to turn back:

Sopho (the A Bomb scientist) said disgustedly, "Metaphysics!"

"Light was the symbol I tried to give them," Chris went on gently. "The Cross was the symbol they adopted. The pain of self-sacrifice was obvious to them. The subjective reward incomprehensible. Thus they changed it all. I told them of many mansions. They chose this mansion or that—and scoured each other off the earth, to set one heaven in place of the heaven of those they defeated. Holy wars! Is such a thing conceivable to God as a holy war? The words—the images—the effort is still incomprehended. I said Light. I said Truth. I said Freedom. I meant enlightenment. Yet nearly every church that uses my name is a wall against light and a rampart against enlightenment, using fear, not love, to chain the generations in terror and pain and ignorance." He pointed again. "And now—this is called civilization, and in my name, also! Enlightenment! Knowledge!" He fell silent; but at last, smiled a little. "A few will always know. Francis of Assisi—he guessed. Thomas à Kempis. Most who knew were church heretics in their day—as I was in mine. And what I say is still heresy."

*What have we allowed ourselves to do to man?* This is Wylie's question, and the terms he selects for putting it makes it literally a burning one. He has read Vogt and Osborn, and even, perhaps, *Flight from the City*:

Remove the person from every natural source of his existence. Set him in a city where no useful plants grow and no animals graze—at the end of a steampipe that uses coal mined he knows not where, or oil sucked up ten thousand miles away. A city where no wood is chopped. Detach him, that is to say, from Nature—deprive him of its experiences and every direct sensation of the earth, upon which he depends. Bring even his water in far conduits, with chlorine added, so he will never know a spring's taste.

Set him to work at earning a living without acquaintance of how the whole of any living is made. On the contrary. Let his life's blood derive from some capillary of the flow. Let him take charge—not of house-cleaning, or foodraising, or wood-gathering or fire-keeping, not of cookery or childbirthing or the weaving of fabric—but of the twenty-eighth step in

the manufacture of one size of ball bearings. Call this earning a living.

Give him a town to defend against all other towns and cities, a county to boast of, a state to regard as superior to forty-seven other states, and a nation which anyone can see is the greatest on earth. Teach him never to inquire if his superlatives are adequate for the conditions of his age. Let him live to the full—by odious comparison. Let him say—I am better than you, wherefore you—not I—need all the improvement.

There are many things "wrong" with Wylie. He is an egoist, and at times as superficial and materialistic as egoists can be. But he deserves credit for looking around, and for trying, if only intermittently, to be honest with himself. Wylie is worth thinking about because he is so typical of so much that is second-rate and yet is able to become first-rate, and courageous. Just as you begin to lose sympathy with him, you may run across something like this, which suggests that we can forgive anybody anything if he strives for self-awareness. The reason we can forgive such a person is that he will inevitably be making some significant contributions to the problem of facing difficult truths:

I fancied myself as a teacher.

I was mostly a ham.

What I knew, what I had learned, sought, made sure of, found comfort and understanding in—all this—and the long years I'd spent endeavoring to give it a dignified texture—forever emerged as the overemphasis of a self-enamored tyro reciting Hamlet. The truths were somewhat there. But the voice was the voice of cheap aspirations in a cheap world.

Some people heard my mentors. Yes.

A few, reading my wretched books, saw beyond the antic actor, the attention-compeller, the infantile see-how-I-do, to Freud and Jung and the physicists, to the mathematicians, to the calling world and the crying night ahead, to the ingenuity and inconceivable courage of those whom I ballyhooed.

But others—oh, how rightly—saw me!

Yakkety-yak.

## COMMENTARY

### REVIEW OF REVIEWS

Now and then, someone writes or says to us, "But you don't think *that* is a good book, do you?" Usually we answer, "Well, maybe not," and then try to explain our review policy all over again.

In the first place, we are not in the book business. If readers can get a book we recommend from the library—the way we do, a lot of the time—that's fine. Very few new books are worth owning. We try to make reviews interesting and useful on their own account, regardless of whether people ever get around to reading the book. Sometimes we do encourage readers to buy the book, it being the kind of book which, if the publishers won't send us a copy, we would like to buy for our library. And sometimes we tell about the book so people can be sure to avoid reading it. Often, our reviews are endeavors to suggest the meaning or broad significance of "trends" in popular literature, and by no means an advocacy of the titles which are mentioned.

On occasion, when we think very highly of some parts of some book, we tend to get into a bit of trouble with some of our most "loyal" subscribers. "You *said* it was excellent," they reproach us. The chances are, we didn't say that at all. Take *Opus 21*, for example. There are things about *Opus 21* we don't like very much. But to tell about those things, in the space available, seemed far less important than to tell about what seemed remarkably fine in Mr. Wylie's little "I confess" volume. Further, if you buy *Opus 21*, you won't lose much if you don't like it. It sells for twenty-five cents in the drug stores.

When our approval of some parts of books like *Opus 21* gets us into trouble, we console ourselves by recalling a conversation between two idealistic young men, overheard during the war. These men both supported a cause with high moral pretensions—they were conscientious objectors. Speaking of another of their number

who had been caught at some petty stealing, one of them said, somewhat righteously, "I don't think that Joe belongs with us at all." The other young man replied: "Well, I look at it differently. It makes me feel good to realize that even a man who makes a bad mistake like that can still be enough opposed to war to become a conscientious objector. I take it as evidence that we may be able to get peace without waiting until we all become perfect."

## CHILDREN ... and Ourselves

LIKE conventional religion and conventional psychiatry, conventional Christmas evokes a good deal of the derogatory. Religions can't save men, women, or children by convincing them that they don't need to think, for salvation is always in thinking. Psychiatry and psychoanalysis cannot ultimately save anyone's peace of mind through the doctrine that the experts must be called in to attain it for him, and the tradition of Christmas cannot inspire love and the desire to "give" by emphasis upon the obligations of giving and the pleasures of receiving. But mere iconoclasm in respect to any convention leaves us in a negative frame of mind, and perhaps the best counsel is always to search behind the status quo of *anything* for some important truth or idea.

Religions, whatever their distortions, have given emphasis to the transcendental character of human existence—have been reminders, however crude, that the significance of life lies at least partially beyond the realm of material existence. Similarly does the legend of Christmas offer a point of departure for man's intuitive quest after the Transcendental. Much of Christmas is clearly symbolism, and part of that symbolism may be held to have quite a deal to do with the past and future history of mankind.

Christmas is a name for one variation of a universal legend—a legend of man's intimate connection with the great cycles and seasons of nature. Fifty centuries ago, Krishna, the Christ of ancient India, was thought to have incarnated on earth for the purpose of inspiring men to view life as a wondrous pilgrimage of the soul. In Greek mythology Adonis, Bacchus, Osiris, Apollo, and all the "Sun Gods" were said to have been born at the time of the winter solstice, the 21st of December. The Egyptians, too, had their story of a special time for the incarnation of new spiritual life, and sang hymns to the image of an infant. Gautama Buddha, like Krishna and Jesus of

Nazareth, was said to have been conceived immaculately at an auspicious conjunction of natural cycles. Indeed, there is nothing about the Christian legend of the birth of a Savior that is new; all had been told and believed before in other portions of the globe.

May it not be that the tradition of Christmas is potentially, of itself, a great gift to all the nations and the people of the earth, being a reminder of the fact that the root of all religions may be one and the same? The belief that man may be linked with *all* of Great Nature—the sidereal cycles and the seasons of growth—is a common heritage.

What is the full meaning of the symbolism? Much of it is understandable, if we think of the repeating surges of creative life which follow the sun in its course, for this indicates "brotherhood" in a deifying or enlivening principle—the power of future growth. The symbol of Christmas is the symbol of Brotherhood, but not simply a brotherhood among men; rather a brotherhood extending to include every motion of sentient life. This view implies, too, the hope that we may find more and always more significance in studying ourselves as a part of a larger whole.

The idea of "New Year's resolutions" may be regarded as one of the implications men have derived from watching the course of the sun, which grows ever stronger from the 21st of December until the 21st of June. As the psychological and emotional progress of the human being from infancy to death is cyclical, it may be that moral aspiration at the Christmas solstice fittingly urges a further incarnation of will in realizing a stronger purpose for his own life—just as the legends of the three great saviors, Krishna, Buddha and Christ, are held to have brought an intensification of moral energy to all men.

These considerations seem, unfortunately, to have little to do with children, who give the appearance of receiving all they want from the spirit of generous gift-giving which most families

and communities embody at Christmas time. But the child, too, has his cycles of aspiration, his quest for deeper knowledge, and his ability to understand and to use symbols. Heroism, one of the strongest moving forces of youthful life, illustrates the power of a symbol, for even the youngest. Certainly our children should know that there is more than one Christ, and that the religions formed around all three of the "Christs" we have mentioned are much the same.

To whatever extent Christmas may be made a *truly* universal symbol, to that extent do we enlarge the sympathetic awareness of the young, during the years of unforgettable impressions. Most of all, we may reflect that the more universal our conception of the meaning of Christmas becomes, the easier will it be to evaluate the nature of a true gift. Giving, certainly, is not that of a "present," but, in its largest sense, an effort to hasten a further growth of perception in those for whom we have affection. An increase of happiness always comes from such an increase in breadth of view and thus it is that thoughtfulness in respect of the needs of others is "a present" of subtler worth than all the goods of the world together. Giving in ancient days, apparently more than in the present, *was* a universal matter. The festivities extended beyond the confines of homes and Chambers of Commerce to all men and all creatures. So, now, Christmas might be at once a saying of grace, a benediction, a promise, and the retaking of vows to one's own ideals.

There is no doubt that we have preserved culturally little more than the husks of what was once a wondrous and mysterious time for many peoples of the earth. The "festivities" continue, but like a body with a mechanical heart. Can we do anything about a transformation? Nothing better, perhaps, than to essay something new with our own children, deepening and extending thoughts where custom has allowed them to become shallow and confined.

Many of the ancients must have felt that they could do no less than imitate the gift of the sun in

their own world—an outgoing of creative warmth and energy in all directions. This may be done through a thoughtfulness which considers needs, rather than that which will be most impressive in our giving of gifts; a thoughtfulness which recognizes that none of the gifts, even the best ones, can be more than partial representations of the full meaning of the season.

Coming back to our earlier theme, should we not give some thought to the profundities of religious customs other than our own during the Christmas season? The commercialization of "the Christmas holidays" has not yet blotted out all man's susceptibility to the feeling of universal brotherhood. Christmas may be made an auspicious occasion for something more than mere festivity, and what is truly "educational" be accomplished.

## FRONTIERS

### "Who Are the Marxists?"

A READER quotes from MANAS for November 8, making a comment which seems to have considerable justification. The passage quoted is as follows:

One of the most effective criticisms that has been made of the theories of Karl Marx is that they are basically "reactionary" in character—that is, they were conceived in violent emotional reaction against the distortions and economic and social injustices of the Industrial Revolution, instead of being founded upon a positive social philosophy. This criticism seems not only effective, intellectually, but just, historically, for the Marxists have not done very well as the managers of a modern industrial society. They have understood the problem of human freedom least of all, and while they knew how to stir the emotions of revolt, they failed miserably in the task of reconstruction.

Here is the comment:

I presume you refer to Russia. While no-authority on Marx, I do know that Stalinism is not Marxism by any stretch of the imagination. Stalinism is anathema to Trotskyists, Wobblies, and members of the Socialist Labor Party. When you use the term, what do you mean? What is a Marxist?

Marxism may be a material philosophy and a profound one—or you would not be reluctant to deal with Karl Marx and his ideas in MANAS. But that it is a materialist philosophy does not make it less valid.

...

There are at least two or three problems or issues raised in this communication. First, let us admit that the implied identification of the present rulers of Russia as "Marxists" may legitimately be questioned. It is quite fair to argue that the Stalinists in power in the Soviet Union represent a departure from Marxism rather than its fulfillment. This view has been thoroughly presented by Leon Trotsky—most effectively, perhaps, in his pamphlet, *Stalinism and Bolshevism* (Pioneer Publishers, New York, 1937). As Trotsky says:

To deduce Stalinism from Bolshevism or from Marxism is the same as to deduce, in a larger sense, counter-revolution from revolution. Liberal-

conservative and later reformist thinking has always been characterized by this cliché. Due to the class structure of society, revolutions have always produced counter-revolutions. Does this not indicate, asks the logician, that there is some inner flaw in the revolutionary method? However, neither the liberals nor reformists have succeeded, as yet, in inventing a more "economical" method. But if it is not easy to rationalize the living historic process, it is not at all difficult to give a rational interpretation of the alternation of its waves and thus by pure logic to deduce Stalinism from "state socialism," fascism from Marxism, reaction from revolution, in a word, the antithesis from the thesis.

As a man who was convinced of the merit of his case, Trotsky did not fail to state the issue clearly. Is there "some flaw in the revolutionary method"? If it can be shown that there is, and that the "flaw" is basic, then we have reason enough for arguing that the tyranny of the present-day Communist rule of Russia, while not a part of Marxist doctrine, may be a *consequence* of Marxist doctrine when aggressively applied. At about the time Trotsky published this pamphlet, Benjamin Stolberg reviewed Trotsky's book; *The Revolution Betrayed*, in the *Nation* (April 10, 1937). As the question of why revolutions have always produced counter-revolutions is basic, not only to an evaluation of Trotsky's career, but also in respect to nearly all Western theories of revolution, including the Marxist theory, Stolberg's commentary is of particular value:

Here the greatest of living Marxists fails, as Engels and Lenin failed before him, to solve the Marxian dilemma, which is: How can revolution avoid a Thermidorean end? How can a revolutionary dictatorship keep from evolving into a privileged bureaucracy? Why do the Robespierres and the Saint Justs, the Lenins and the Trotskys lose to a directory or an apparatus; and finally to bourgeois or proletarian Caesarism? Why did even our American Revolution, though its base was partially laid in seventeenth century England and though it enjoyed the whole nineteenth century as an expanding frontier of democracy, gradually grow into a Thermidorean reaction? . . .

Of course, the conventional answer is that a Thermidor introduces and develops political and cultural reaction for the sake of social and economic

exploitation. But that is not the point. The riddle is: Why is revolution unable to prevent it? Why is Trotsky, who is undoubtedly the inheritor of Lenin's ends, now in Mexico? And why is Stalin, the logical epigone of Lenin's means, in the Kremlin? Why does the left always make the revolution and the right always write the constitution ?

Will the historian of centuries hence blame Stalin's cruelties and totalitarian methods upon the doctrinal weaknesses of Karl Marx in the matter of what is to happen *after* the Revolution? Will there be justice in such blame? Some justice, at least, although how much must be left to the perspective of the future.

On the other hand, would this sort of calling Marx to account be the same as blaming the enormities of the Medieval Church, the crimes of the Inquisition, upon Jesus of Nazareth? Can Gautama Buddha be held responsible for the Buddhist priests who gave Japanese military men instruction in psychological disciplines?

These are questions of tremendous import and can hardly be met by arguments from history. We raise them principally to show the consequences of a rigid interpretation of historical "influence," in a *post hoc, propter hoc* fashion, and as a sort of apology for the unqualified implication that the Stalinists are Marxists, in the MANAS article.

But what of the Marxist philosophy, which our correspondent suggests, though materialistic, is nevertheless profound? Basically, Materialism is a theory of *causation* which ignores or neglects the power of moral intelligence. We find the classical expression of Marx's materialism in the propositions laid down in the Introduction to his *Criticism of Political Economy*, published in 1859. Among these propositions are the following:

(2) Conditions of production, taken as a whole, constitute the economic structure of society—this is the material basis on which a superstructure of laws and political institutions is raised and to which certain forms of political consciousness correspond.

(3) The political and intellectual life of a society is determined by the mode of production, as necessitated by the wants of material life.

(4) It is not men's consciousness that determines the forms of experience, but, on the contrary, the social forms of life that determine the consciousness.

These claims as to the nature of the historical process have been widely criticized—as, for example, by Karl Federn, in *The Materialistic Conception of History* (Macmillan, London, 1939)—but the important point, here, is to suggest that such assumptions as to primary causation in history place individual man at a serious discount. In fact, the "objective morality" of present-day Marxists—including, in this case, the Stalinist pseudo-Marxists—is quite evidently based upon propositions of this sort. A revolution founded upon them may find justification for absolute ruthlessness in the struggle for power—for how can any consideration be shown to minorities—the "wreckers" and "counter-revolutionists"—who oppose the program that is intended to *change* "the social forms of life" so that all other aspects of human existence may be bettered? Lenin applied the ruthlessness implicit in the Marxist doctrine, but he applied it—rightly or wrongly—as a Marxist theoretician. His successors preserved only the ruthlessness. As Trotsky wrote in *Stalinism and Bolshevism*:

The ["ideology" of the] Stalinist bureaucracy, . . . is thoroughly permeated with police subjectivism, its practice is the empiricism of crude violence. In keeping with its essential interests the caste of usurpers is hostile to any theory: it can give an account of its social role neither to itself nor to anyone else. Stalin revises Marx and Lenin not with the theoretician's pen but with the heel of the G.P.U.

However, those who remember the brutal suppression of the Kronstadt rebellion in 1921, and Lenin's imprisonment of the anarchists, as "brigands," as he explained to Emma Goldman, may point out that even before Stalin rose to power, the ruthlessness existed, and was justified by the Marxist theory of revolution.

It is traditional, of course, in criticizing Marx, to recall that the "State" was supposed to "wither away," and that Marx had little further to say concerning what the revolutionists should do *after* they had gained power. Marx was himself sensitive about this, as his *Critique of the Gotha Program* makes plain. He there defends himself against Bakunin's charge that he wanted to establish an authoritarian State, by asserting that he is opposed to the State in itself, and that he looks forward to a society formed by voluntary association. Justice compels the observation, made by Dwight Macdonald, that "There is indeed a potential toward Statism in Marxism, but it lies not in Marx's values, but . . . in his historical method of thinking about those values. . . . Marx consistently criticized Statism from the standpoint of human liberation."

But if the values of Marx were contradicted by the methods he elsewhere adopted, what then? Could any radical group, it may be asked, implement a Marxist revolution without doing violence to Marxist values? And when the values are gone, what would be left, beyond the ruthless opportunism of, say, a Stalinist clique? These are questions which every advocate of revolutionary violence ought to brood upon, profoundly, and for a long time.

Now, as to our "reluctance" to deal with Karl Marx and his ideas in MANAS. First of all, Marx was a man whose influence was extraordinarily mixed. Seldom has anyone with Marx's intellectual power also possessed so great a measure of abstract compassion joined with unabstract bitterness. He has often been likened to a Hebrew prophet of modern times, calling the architects of the Industrial Revolution to account for their callous indifference to human welfare. There can be no doubt that Marx stirs his readers with a passion to purge the earth of economic injustice, while his utopian dream of a classless society touches the constructive side of the imagination. In a sense, Marx was a great reformer, and he was undoubtedly a "man with

ideas." But the impetus to reform set in motion by Marx has bathed the world in blood and added amply to the destruction and the inhumanity which already existed in his time. Marx shaped the aggressive social criticism of his own generation, and for generations to come, but in doing so he created the forms of bitter partisanship, maturing class hatreds with an apparent "moral" justification, coloring the natural sympathy of man for man with the lurid glow of fanaticism, and hardening the hearts and minds of the conservative opposition into precisely the unyielding reaction of which it was accused.

Marx's analytical brilliance is undeniable. There is little constructive value, however, in an understanding which sours even as it comprehends. If we accept this sort of understanding without casting away the emotional acids which are its medium, we compound the tragedy of mankind by supposing that a mixture of nihilism and economic technology can bring about the millennium. Finally, Marx participated in the same delusion as that worshipped by the capitalistic "enemy"—the belief that man is an economic animal, and little more. Marx, one could say, sought to lop off the ugliest branches of the tree of materialism, but he left its roots untouched.