

## THE HOUR OF MAN

RECENTLY, in a great mental hospital, I sat with a team of scientists who were selecting patients for lobotomy—a drastic surgical procedure that sometimes desensitizes the afflicted to his affliction by damaging the brain tissue. Before each patient appeared his or her case history was read. Here were stories of broken homes, of jealousy, of natural fear of an economic or social consequence, of people kept ignorant of sex, and, finally, of people subjected to the terror of war. None of these people had organically damaged brains, none was suffering from physical illness. The cleavage between the life their birth had promised them and the life we as society had inflicted upon them had been too great for their emotional resources.

Oddly enough, one of the criteria of selection for lobotomy was that the patient be able to return to a better environment than the one he or she had come from. Only when this was assured would the surgeon ply the knife. That night I saw one man plead with tears in his eyes for an operation that would leave him forever somehow dulled. He wanted his sensitivity diminished until he could stand the world in which he had to live. Better environment, indeed!

Later I watched one of these operations, saw two plugs pulled out of the top of the skull to reveal a pulsing and healthy brain. Then I saw an instrument inserted into that brain, cutting off the center of perception from the center of reaction, as it were, so that a man could be made fit for this world of ours.

The surgeon isn't the villain of this piece. I know him for a sensitive and dedicated man, trained to treat brain injuries rather than inflict them. Society had put him in the spot he was in. He was trying to right its wrongs with his skill. No man whom I know is more careful in his personal life than this surgeon. He would suffer excruciatingly if his

acts did injury to another. He knows that he treats *effects* of a *cause* of which he is a part.

What we have to roughly call society is the villain of the piece. And while only a few hundred people are actually being lobotomized, a few million are in effect temporarily lobotomizing themselves with sedatives and alcohol. Tonight 10 million doses of sleeping medicine will be taken; this year 7.7 billion dollars or more will be spent on alcohol, most of which will be used to make the world bearable to the person who takes it. All this expenditure for a chemical release from life *as it is*. Apparently it takes many hundreds of thousands of drugs and endless millions of gallons of alcohol to protect us from the monstrous existence we have created for ourselves. Under this chemical sheath millions apparently wait for the miracle that will make the world a better place to live.

These people aren't, we say, facing reality. But are any of us? Like the drugged people, we all wait for the miracle that will make us suddenly comfortable in this world. A raise in wages or a cut in prices, or a cut in wages and a rise in prices, depending which side of the fence you are on, seems a solution. Or the house that is just out of reach, or the car that moves illusively out of grasp; a tax cut, or a different administration; "security" or special advantage—all of these things seem solutions. We postpone living until the solution comes; we fight for survival without really knowing what survival is or whether we value it for its innate qualities. In fact we avoid the responsibility of survival as hard as we fight for it.

Of late we have had a tendency to turn nature, both human and general, over to science. Two examples of what science has returned to us are the lobotomy and the atom or H bomb. If these have been adequate to our needs, we then can leave science in charge of our souls and the environment of our souls. There is no need to look into ourselves.

The physicians and research scientists are placed in charge by our consent, and we are along for the ride. Clinical psychologists can screen us and we will fall into our places dosed with stimulants to make us aggressive or sedatives to make us immune, as the case may be.

Avidly we read books on relaxation, on how to sleep, or how to find comfort. Sublimate, these books say, make gold of your suffering. Few of these books tell us, as I think they should, to look into our own centers for a clue to *right action*. Would we personally feel right if we followed a certain course of unapproved conduct? Are the pretenses we are all supporting worth their cost to us in personal suffering? Is society always right? Do we continue to blindly accommodate ourselves to a civilization that has gotten out of hand, or do we make it accommodate itself to our innate capacities and needs? These questions go unanswered.

Each of us feels his or her own suffering or problems to be peculiar to himself. It would be a shock to any congregation that indulges in confession, or to any group of people who visit psychiatrists, if they knew how alike their hidden woes were. A shock and then a blessing.

So far, man seems to be united only in prolonging those very things that make him suffer. He has, in fact, done everything but organize his suffering and submit it to his fellows for a solution. Submit his suffering to his psychiatrist, his pastor, or in letters to a person like me, he often does. But we can offer him little comfort. By the nature of our professions we are forced to encourage further secrecy. And by doing that we are in fact encouraging the greatest underground movement in our country.

The revolt of the nerves and spirit has indeed preceded the revolt of the masses. Right now a fifth column is marching in and out of psychiatrists' offices, taking to drugs or drink, indulging in murder and rapine, destroying the home, and draining off our national resources at a frightening rate. During the recent war the enemy with all his ingenuity could devise no weapon as potent in destroying our manpower as the revolting nerve of our nation. Yet

while we smoke out communists and fascists we hide this more dangerous mass. Each one of us is in fact harboring a subversive being—our own unexpressed self which will spread havoc among us until we bring it to light.

Does the minister know what goes on in his congregation? Does he realize that perhaps half of them are harboring recurring ideas of suicide; that a large percentage suffer from sexual guilts and odd and frightening compulsions; that many of them live constantly with fears they are afraid to speak of to their neighbor? Does he know that many of them have gotten so far from comparing their feelings with others that they mistake the physical feelings that accompany ordinary emotions for serious physical ailments; that they all think they are *different* from their fellows?

While it is easy to accuse others of bringing this condition upon us, the fact probably is that we have brought it upon ourselves. We simply will not pay for that which is not comforting in a superficial sense. But that which is comfortable must describe a different state of being than our own, and we who have sought to know ourselves end up only with the knowledge that we are alone, different and unknown to those around us. Our difference is established in our own minds. All that seems left for us is the bottle, the pills, or perhaps the surgeon's knife.

I have wandered in and out of the mental hospitals of the land, studied the mental hygiene movements, and looked to many organizations for a solution to my own problems and the prevention of an occurrence of those problems in others. In one year I interviewed 1400 alcoholics. I found many noble and dedicated men and women and a legion of sufferers but among them I have found no ready answer.

Here is what I propose we do about it. I'm going to take a tip from Alcoholics Anonymous. When a troubled person writes to me, I am going to, if he wishes, put him in touch with another troubled person. If I were a minister, I would introduce neighbor to neighbor on the basis of their troubles and their lonely suffering. This, I would also do if I were a doctor. I propose no organization, indeed I

am against one. I merely want to see people really get together as neighbors and friends. I don't want them to attempt to heal each other; merely to know each other is enough.

I want to see the radio or television turned off for an hour a week, the paper or magazine laid aside, the car locked safely in its garage, the bridge table folded, the liquor bottle corked, and the sedatives kept tightly in their packages. I want to see production and consumption forgotten for this hour. Politics must be forgotten, national or international. The hour that I propose could be called *The Hour of Man*.

During this hour man could ask himself and his neighbor just what purpose they are seeing on earth, what life is, what a man or woman can rightly ask of life as well as what they must give in return? If that man is working and struggling for what he really wants, is it worth the price he pays in personal suffering? Neighbors should learn to listen intently to neighbors. In only that way will the eye turn inward. In other peoples' souls they could see the undistorted image of their own souls. As they helped others they would help themselves.

Social agencies and the Community Chest have a reason for being, but that reason should never have allowed us to delegate our charity at the expense of our own isolation. Many people are so removed from any genuine feeling of compassion that they think they are having a heart attack when they first experience this feeling. We tell ourselves that if we don't steel ourselves from the suffering of the world, we are laying ourselves open to more woe than we can take. As we sit down to a full table while millions in the world are in a state of semi-starvation we may feel justified in cutting them out of our consciousness. But as we join in a conspiracy to do this we are also cutting ourselves from our own human center.

I tell you that Christianity was devised on no such plan as that we know, and yet we call ourselves a Christian nation. Christ, as I remember it, asked us not only to join in other peoples' suffering, but to also go the second mile with them. The ancient injunction, "Know thyself," only has meaning when

you go along with others far enough to see yourself in them and learn tolerance, fortitude, and restraint.

This is the area, it seems to me, where a possibility of the prevention of most social ills lies. Our social ills are but individual ills magnified and multiplied. Since we have shown no inclination to face them alone as things outside of ourselves, we must know them as things within ourselves and our neighbors. Society isn't an editorial or slogan the individual must strain his soul to live up to; it isn't a labor union or the National Chamber of Commerce; the Church or the local free-thinkers' club. It is the individual himself with his own greed, fear, deviousness, pretense, and diffuse and momentary cravings; or it is the individual himself with his deep desires, his eagerness to love and be loved, his compassion, his spiritual questing, and his love of peace. These are the two sides of man.

I ask you, "Which side of man is turned up to the light and which side is hidden, smothering, gasping for air? " It seems to me that the answer is obvious. Only when each of us stands up unashamed in our totality can there be prevention of the ills we bemoan. Only when man stands up, open to himself and to his neighbor, will he discover God. And then he will not have to search. God will pass through him as his own shadow does when the sun is at noon. And that is what I mean by an uncontaminated flow of life. *Perhaps this is the way to prevention.*

Only a very naïve man could have written these words, but perhaps it is time to become a little naïve. Our sophisticates are on the analyst's couch and the analysts are looking apprehensively out of the window wondering which passing plane carries *the* bomb.

Topeka, Kansas

HAROLD MAINE

## *Letter from* **CENTRAL EUROPE**

VIENNA.—Austria is a small country, even from the European point of view, but in no sense is it a smaller copy of the larger European States—not even a smaller image of its great brother in the north, Germany. Austria's present political situation is unique. First of all, it is the only country where a *Viermächte-Rat* (Four Powers Council) is still in function. West Germany is ruled by a Government which has been recognized by USA, Great Britain, France and others and refuses to have anything to do with Russia, while the Eastern zone is governed by Soviet appointees. Here, however, the country is nominally governed by freely chosen representatives (including no Communists), with most of the ordinances of the government subject to control or veto by the four "Allies."

These circumstances have obvious results, particularly with regard to Austrian foreign policy and to the relation of the country to present European problems. Since Austria has, more than the clearly divided Germany, the character of an occupied territory, politics has to be conducted more delicately, there being the constant danger of provoking one of the hostile "Allies" to interfere strongly, even if only to annoy another of the occupying powers. For example, Austria cannot officially raise its voice for a United Europe at present, for the reason that the Soviets would probably regard any such declaration as a good reason for separating their zone from the Western parts of Austria, thus creating an unbearable situation for this small country.

The economic aspects of four-power "supervision" include still more peculiarities. Up to World War I, the Austro-Hungarian Empire possessed not only important raw materials, but had a lot of trade and exchange within its boundaries also, as the different parts of the federation produced different articles. What remained to Austria in 1918 resembled a mutilated economic torso, burdened by a capital (Vienna) and institutions which were evolved for a country with quite other dimensions. It was not political convictions but rather the difficult economic position of Austria in the thirties which caused a number of Austrians to begin to sympathize with the German Nazis. ~

Among all the changes which the Germans introduced in Austria, there was at least one which bore a blessing in it: the development of the oil fields at Zistersdorf, the output of which rose from month to month, and which today could—together with the export of electric current (developed from alpine water power with Marshall plan aid)—normalize the economic situation of the country to a great extent. Unfortunately, it does the

contrary. It has made Russia especially interested in Austria. The Soviets have already taken over the production and the fields entirely, together with most of the large factories in their occupation-zone, and, by declaring the grounds on which the wells and works are erected as "extra-territorial," have withdrawn them from Austrian sovereignty. Moreover, although employing numerous Austrian labourers in these establishments, they refuse to pay taxes or social insurance fees. In addition, every quarter the Russians collect a large sum, called "occupation costs," from this country.

Not long ago, the local Communists for the first time introduced the methods of general strike and street-revolts in domestic politics. After the attempt had foundered, some cabinet-members declared before the Austrian Parliament they had ample proof that the Communists were actually supported by Russian authorities in their efforts to overthrow the present democratic system. They testified that Russian military conveyances had been used to take Communists to their assembling-places, and that Soviet commanders had stopped Austrian police who had tried to liberate railway stations and post offices which had been attacked and occupied by Communist storm-troopers. It is impossible, as yet, to say whether the revolt was aimed directly at revolution, or whether it served as a rehearsal, to be repeated in the near future with—as the Communist leaders seem to hope—greater success. However, the Western press saw the significance of the event in the fact that the Russians gave official support to local Communism.

Actually, this incident probably has to be judged from another angle. One has to keep in mind that new price increases had taken place, especially for bread, potatoes and other general provisions. As prices had risen 50 per cent, and wages only 10 per cent, there was widespread uneasiness among working people. Many were ready to strike, hoping that negotiations would bring a solution to their problem. But the interest in striking died out as soon as it became clear that Communism was preparing to use the forces of insurrection for its own purposes. In other words, the labourers and their organisations refrained from an attempt to improve their economic position when they saw the political consequences which might result.

It is no real news, of course, that Soviets support Communists, but it ought to be noted that the working population of a small country acted as it did. This shows a spiritual firmness which the Communists will not be able to conquer so easily.

CENTRAL EUROPEAN CORRESPONDENT

## *REVIEW*

### THE DEATH OF AN ALTAR BOY

IT seems appropriate to review Willard Motley's *Knock on Any Door* as this 1947 best-seller becomes available from Signet, for the book deserves to be as widely known as possible. Billed as "the shocking story of youth in the slums," it is much more than that—so much more that we would rather earmark Motley's 240,000 words as a contribution to psychology and sociology of greater worth than anything we have seen for a long time.

The tale of an Italian family which moves from relative prosperity to poverty and the wrong side of town has of course been told before; we know by this time that it is possible for a cherubic altar boy like Nick Romano, placed under the influence of a changed environment, wherein he is no longer treated with respect, to be transformed into a criminal. Motley, however, tells this story, not as a visiting sociologist, but as a man who has so lived himself and so understands. He does a better job than Nelson Algren, Irving Schullman, or anyone else you might think of, in letting you feel yourself a part of each one of the characters whose lives wove such a pattern of tragedy. Motley shows us human beings much more like ourselves, and it is always human beings seeming much like ourselves from whom we can learn the most. Here is poetry, and beauty, and simplicity in "criminals"—where it belongs as it belongs everywhere else.

We shall have to admit, however, that this is a partisan novel. Conventional society and conventional penology are the villains; every policeman becomes an enemy of the reader. But the fact that Motley leads us to contempt for conventional society is perhaps not entirely bad, for he succeeds in linking all of the worst things about it together, so that we may understand them together, despise them together, and perhaps someday eradicate them together. Motley writes as an anarchist might write, seeing that the greatest evil of all is the belief that the punishment of *some* men is good for society. And here we are reminded of some writing we have been seeing around in a desk for a

long time, copied from somewhere without authorship noted, and labelled only "an anarchist's letter." A portion of this letter seems appropriate introduction to Motley's story of a boy called Romano, sent to a reform school for a crime he did not commit, moving from resentment to hate, to the killing of a sadistic policeman—and finally to the electric chair at the age of 22:

It is generally thought that men who show "promise" are those who show signs of easy adaptability to our Society. But our Society is a crime, a series of crimes. Our Society is shot through with hypocrisy, with arrogant selfishness, with oppressions of the many by a powerful few. There is a driving *spiritual* need, in a being who has established real integrity, to stand apart from a Society which until now has failed to establish it.

It is not surprising that a popular appeal of the recent war was originally in the slogan, "a fight for freedom." Every act of war ever committed, every form of violence perpetrated by one individual at the expense of another, has been in some obscure way a rationalization of an urge to free oneself from bondage. If the war were for spoils the ostensible motive was greater economic freedom. If it were a type of war known as "revolution," the motive was freedom from oppression. In most individual, or rather personal, instances of violence, the perpetrator desires to find some way of breaking a relationship in which he stood to the other man, or desired to free himself from a psychological complex associated with the other person. Crimes of hatred and revenge may be made to fall in this category. The Violent Act, itself, is the last resort in a struggle to transform psychic involvements in existing conditions into a new and more bearable pattern. And, of course, this last resort is tragic, for the reason that it creates a new and even more tenacious bondage.

How does the animal act? It simply acts without evaluative perspective. There is nothing "wrong" or "evil" about this. For man to act without seeking perspective upon the act is a crime indeed. But when a man's eyes are filled with dust and dirt he seeks freedom in violent ways, striking out in all directions, hurting friends and enemies alike. He hates dirt, yet sees it everywhere. . . .

There is little use in trying to find representative passages to quote from *Knock on Any Door*. Motley defies this sort of selective evaluation. We need the whole thing. He is not the artist of breath-taking

detail, but the artist of broad sweep and integration of complexity. However, one long sequence does stand out as of great strength and merit—the closing pages, having to do with the psychology as well as the circumstances of legal execution. Never before have we felt such power of indictment against capital punishment. One wonders if it is not so, as Motley implies, that the legal death is the most perverted, the most horrible, the most devilish of all the deaths man can impose upon man. For in legal execution there is not even the twisted motive of the concentration camp—hate for the political prisoner. In America, where we profess our dedication to an ideal of "life and liberty" for everyone, *we kill criminals because we believe that vengeance is not only ours, but a necessary part of morality.*

The compelling fascination of Motley's description of events leading to the final rendezvous with death is in the fact that he shows how the death is accompanied by no personal feelings in favor of the execution. Nothing propels but the compulsion of custom. A feeling of horror strikes through the guards and the spectators, to the warden, and down through the prison cells—a feeling that *this cannot be actually happening.* A man is shaved and stripped for death by guards who tremble, who are in acute psychic pain. The machine moves forward inexorably, for "society" has so decreed. But every cog in the machine, without exception, as the final hour approaches, inwardly retches and rebels.

*Is there anything more horrible than being put to death by men who do not wish to kill you, who can see or feel no good which can come of it? You are being killed in the name of Morality, by those who don't believe in it. Being killed in the name of Morality, incidentally, seems the most cruel insanity imaginable. To stand up in front of hate, or any active desire to see you put out of the way, would be terrible enough. But how much more terrible to be killed, instead, by a group of men who, every one, if left to himself, knowing what he has come to know about death, would spare every victim? Every social scientist should study the story of Nick's prison relationships before he takes his final walk to the chair. There are no arguments against capital punishment here and at the same time all the*

arguments ever assembled are told in the attitudes and feelings of the men involved. This is not the tale of one boy who dies prematurely because of environmental conspiracy—to find a Nick Romano you are invited merely to turn down Maxwell Street and "knock on any door"—but the story of all the deaths which respectable society accomplishes. As the defense attorney speaks at the trial, in the Darrow manner:

"Nick Romano was murdered seven years ago! I so charge! I accuse—Society!—of the murder of Nick Romano! And I tell you, too, to leave without illusions. . . ." He went on slowly. "Society . . . you and I . . . all of us . . . the *good* people!—murdered!—Nick Romano! Why is he here before us? *We ordered him here!* We brutalized and murdered him and we made this rendezvous with him seven years ago. . . ."

But lest it be hard to see and feel all of the factors leading to the death of a boy's soul, shall we not look closely at the single simple fact of our deliberate legal murders? Here we shall find focus for regarding the same incredible cultural insensitivity which leaves so many indifferent to the tortured conditions of man during life. Perhaps, some day, after we have learned to erase the psychology of vengeance—the mandate for killing by law and tradition—we shall acquire the capacity to prevent the killing of the aspirations—the souls—of the Nick Romanos.

**COMMENTARY**  
**THE HUMAN UNDERGROUND**

THE December, 1950 number of *International Conciliation* presents "Current Research in International Affairs"—a list of 809 "Works in Progress," occupying 114 pages of small type. After looking at today's headlines, it is natural to wonder about the influence that all these meticulous compilations will have on the destiny of nations—or, if "destiny of nations" be too pompous a phrase, what it will do for the happiness and peace of mind of *any* individual.

It may be unkind to suggest it, but this sort of research seems to resemble the extremely serious activity of an anthill perched, a respectable distance from the crater, on the side of a volcano; where, after each violent eruption, the ants scurry to find a suitable site for a new hill, hastening, like the conscientious workers that they are, to resume their task of chronicling the eruptions.

What about the deeper unrests, the disorders in the human underground, described by Harold Maine in this week's lead? Our research about war and international relations is not merely ineffectual: it is virtually blind, for it deals with only the shallows of human behavior. Perhaps all our history-writing is superficial in that it fails to connect the life of society with the life of the individual. Mr. Maine is another sort of historian. He tells us of the legion of half-broken, half-damned men among and within ourselves, of the human defeats and capitulations which never reach the headlines.

Some day, perhaps, there will be a non-specialized form of human expression capable of comprehending our whole lives—our lives both as we live them and as we would like to live them. Such writing will come, we think, not from the combined efforts of researchers who report to us on the behavior of the nations, but from those who first try to understand human beings as individuals, and then as collectivities.

Harold Maine is the latter kind of specialist—no specialist at all, really—who has studied the human being with the almost unique intensity of acute psychological anguish. His book, *If a Man Be Mad* (Doubleday, 1947), represents the research of desperate necessity, but there is also in it the uncompelled flowering of a profound sympathy of man for man. Mr. Maine is at present Consultant on Alcoholism to the Department of Adult Psychiatry, The Menninger Foundation, Topeka, Kansas, and conducts classes in the Psychiatric Aides School of the Clinic.

## CHILDREN ... and Ourselves

[This is the third of the extracts we have selected for reprinting from Charles Kelsey Gaines' story of ancient Greece, *Gorgo*. As we suggested two weeks ago, our reason for presenting these stories is that we find in them a moral beauty and harmonizing power without which, it seems to us, there can be neither learning nor true "living." Our children need the simple profundity of such teaching as much, but no more, than do we.]

"WHY did you not let them kill the Syrian? " I burst forth. "Oh, I wish they had killed him! And Alcibiades—he let him go, too!"

"Even Alcibiades does not always forget," he said. "Do you think it is doing right to kill people? Tell me just what you really think, son of Hagnon."

"He ought to be killed," I cried, hotly. "Oh, I wish they had trampled on him till he was spattered about like the grapes when they make them into wine!" And I gritted my teeth in sheer fury at the thought of him.

"It is true that he deserves punishment," said Socrates, so soberly that my pulses fell a little. "Do you think that he will not be punished? Is it not a frightful punishment, even now, to be just as he is, with that part of him that cannot die ruined and full of a dreadful poison? Yet if that does not seem to you to be enough, you need not fear lest that be all. Wrong always brings punishment—else it would not be wrong. That is the difference between things that are really wrong, and those things that many think are wrong which are not."

"He ought to be killed," I repeated; and the words still had a good relish.

"Men sometimes make blunders in their killing," he said; "and these, I fear, are very sad mistakes, especially for those who make them. From exile, if it is found to be unjust, a man may be recalled; but when the soul is driven out it cannot be called back. Are you sure, little boy, that you are so wise as to know always just who

ought to be killed? and how he should be killed, and by whom, and when? I myself should fear to say."

"He ought to be killed," I said again, rolling the words on my tongue, but the flavor was not so good. And I went on: "You have killed men, haven't you—in battle, Socrates? "

"I obey the laws of my country. Yes, and I would have killed the Syrian to prevent him from killing you—or bearing you away, which would have been worse—but not otherwise. And if I should say to you, little one, as I said to him, that it is better to die than to kill another, would you too think it foolish, as he did? Would you be so much like him?"

The flavor was all gone now, but I still persisted: "He ought to be killed."

Then Socrates breathed so wearily that I thought he must be tired with carrying me so far; but he did not set me down.

"Little son of Hagnon," he said, "I see that we cannot agree in this; but you are only like all the rest." He continued, but I felt that it was no longer to me that he was speaking: "Many times and in many places have I said this thing with all the skill I knew—that it is never right to do wrong, not even to those who do wrong to us—but they are all like this little child; no one of them ever understood. From words I know well that none will ever learn it; and even if one should proclaim this truth by deeds, and give up his own life before them to those who had wronged him, and should go to his death in perfect patience, seeking only to show them the way, still how few would understand!"

"Why do you talk like that, Socrates?" I breathed it in his ear in that meek whisper which is nearest silence; for I wanted to get close to him again.

"I have reason to fear," said he, "that those who, like Hagnon's son, are wise in this wisdom of killing, will some day decide that I too ought to be



killed, and will thereupon issue instructions to the Eleven to do what is needful for putting to silence a troublesome tongue. And the Eleven will proceed in the usual manner."

"That would be dreadful, Socrates," I cried, almost sobbing. "You shall not say it—" and I laid my hand across his lips. "But you are not in earnest, Socrates; you are laughing. And you know what I meant. It is only people like the Syrian that ought to be killed." And in this I did not yield, not even to him, but kept saying it over and over in my heart, that the Syrian ought to be killed.

At length, as we passed through the darkness of the narrow lanes, with only a streak of black sky sprinkled with stars above us, I again opened my lips.

"The gods kill people," I said.

"Do you know that the gods kill people, little sophist? or do you just say it, not knowing at all?"

"I am not a sophist," I answered, thinking of the Syracusan. "But they sent the plague."

"Do you really know that they sent the plague? If you should thrust your hand among the red coals, would you say that the gods had burned you?" I was silent. "I think it would be more-just," said he, "to say that Themistocles sent the plague, for if we had not had so many ships the plague would not have come to us; or Pericles, for if the city had not been so crowded with people by the war it would not have brought such desolation. But if the gods do kill, they at least make no mistakes."

"But they do make mistakes," I cried. "They let my mother die, when they ought to have saved her. And we all prayed so hard; and she was good."

"Some might say," he began—but stopped. "I, at least, will not say it,—for I do not think that it is true. I believe in my soul that your mother was all that you think her—as sweet and as

beautiful, almost, as the goddesses who dwell in heaven, and far better than some that the poets sing of. And this question, why the gods permit these things, is the hardest that any ever asked me, or can ask."

"They are cruel." And I spoke with a sense of triumph even in my grief.

"They are wise. Can you not trust something to the gods? We cannot know all their wisdom; though afterward—yet not always—we may see that what they did was best. You wished to sail to Thrace. Athena did not permit you. She was the wiser. . . . When the gods take from us what we very much want, and refuse what we pray for though we fall on our faces before them, we often weep bitterly and grow angry, and think that they are cruel and that we know better than they. And all the while they know best. . . . Can you not trust them—even when you do not understand? O little one, it is hard; it is very hard, sometimes, and almost more than we can bear,—but can you not remember to trust them always?"

"I will try to, Socrates," I said, choking. And still; beneath it all, the same thought was droning in the bottom of my heart—the Syrian ought to be killed.

## FRONTIERS

### Partisans All

THE battleground of the militant struggle of the labor movement is almost gone, swallowed up in the bigness of both the unions and industry, while the warriors of the Class Struggle—the Wobblies, the Anarchists, and the fighting socialists who later became communists have also practically disappeared. The struggle is rapidly becoming history, and romantic history at that.

Louis Adamic's *Dynamite*, the story of violence in the labor movement, allows about a century of drama to these angry champions of labor solidarity, and this seems accurate enough. The twisting and the warping of the lives of human beings in mines and factories began to assume mass proportions something over a hundred years ago. It led to the emergence of the fighting Molly Maguires in the coal mining areas, and started Edward Bellamy out on his lifelong career of protest against economic injustice. And the struggle lasted, as Carey McWilliams relates in *Factories in the Field*, until the great strikes of the 1930's in the fertile valleys of California.

It is not entirely over, of course. For the migrant workers who toil a few months out of the year on the vast farms encompassing thousands of acres in California's San Joaquin, Sacramento, and Imperial Valleys, the problem of getting enough to eat the year round, of finding decent housing, and regular schooling for their children is too much the same as it was ten, twenty or fifty years ago. And labor organizers have been shot at within the past five years, although not so frequently as decades ago. But the over-all picture is no longer the same. Other issues have captured the headlines and the frontiers of the labor-capital controversy have dissolved into the dialectics of national politics. The causes of this change, doubtless, are many, but prominent among them must be the extraordinary growth in the economic power of the State from ownership of about six per cent of the total wealth of the United States in

1902, to more than twenty per cent in 1946—and the evolution of modern war to the point where fear and expectation of war—as well as participation in war—dominate every phase of life.

Perhaps the best evidence of the end of the epoch of militance is that the unsung heroes of the old struggle are slowly gaining a place in the conventional annals of our time. Forgotten figures are appearing in fiction and fictionalized biography, and some kind of attempt is being made to understand why men like the McNamara brothers, who early in the century blew up the Los Angeles *Times* building, did what they did. The facts about Alexander Berkman, the anarchist who shot Henry Clay Frick of the Carnegie Steel Company, about the men who were executed in 1887 for the Haymarket bombing in Chicago, about the great Pullman strike, about Sacco and Vanzetti and about Mooney and Billings, are now of record. Irving Stone, in *Clarence Darrow for the Defense*, and *Stranger in the House*, has helped to open up an entire cycle in the history of the labor movement for the general reader. Adamic's *My America* and *Dynamite* fill out the picture begun by earlier works such as Emma Goldman's *Living my Life* and Steffens' autobiography. Then, more recently, Ralph Chaplin's *Wobbly* put into print the personal recollections of a man who was an active member of the IWW during its most exciting years. And now, Wallace Stegner, a well-known novelist, has added a fictional version of the brief career of Joe Hill, famous IWW song writer and martyr, in his recent book, *The Preacher and the Slave*. There are other books, doubtless, covering the same period and the same events, but these we have read and can recommend as telling the story of labor's angry men with both sympathy and honesty. Writing in his Foreword of the IWW, Stegner says:

It represented the very dissidence of dissent, the rebelliousness of rebellion, and it lived an increasingly violent life, battered at by all the power of industry and industry's local law, from 1905 to the

series of anti-syndicalism trials that broke its back in the twenties. By the time its back was broken many of its founders and leaders were in jail, and had been since 1918, on charges of resisting the draft. Chaplin, Haywood, the Magons, dozens of others, shared the fate of Eugene Debs in those years. And others of the leaders were dead, like Frank Little, whose crippled lynched body swung from a Butte bridge a long time before anyone cut it down. . . .

They were militant in a period when militancy meant floggings, jail, bloodshed. They fought fire with fire, dynamite with dynamite. Police, newspapers, the middle-class citizenry, were all against them. Organizers disappeared, were run out of town, flogged through gauntlets, threatened with death. Towns passed laws against their speaking on street corners, and the word went out so that every loose Wobbly in five hundred miles grabbed the next freight, intent on climbing up on a soapbox long enough to get himself arrested. They jammed the jails, wore out the police, used up the city funds, and they kept on coming till the authorities buckled or they themselves were overwhelmed. . . .

The IWW was a fighting faith. Its members were the shock troops of labor. Its weakness was that it really liked a fight better than it liked planning, negotiations, politicking. It won victories and attracted thousands of new members and let them drift away again for lack of a concrete program, . . . But in the best American tradition, it took its orders from no one, was ripped by internal quarrels of policy, and fought the battles that were most immediate and most concrete. . . .

It existed for the prime purpose of making the first breaches in the resistance of entrenched industry so that the later organizations could widen and deepen them. Its greatest single contribution was the production of martyrs.

They may have been martyrs, but they were hardly accepted as such in their own generation. The thing that impresses the present-day reader of these books is the ferocity with which typical members of the middle class regarded the IWW's and even less violent champions of the working man, such as Eugene V. Debs. The respectable citizen had far more compassion for common thieves and swindlers than for the principled rebels of the working class. The reason for this is obvious: the fighting radical exhibited a stubborn

contempt for the "law and order" which the great majority of citizens believed to be the source of their security. The radicals were self-reliant men—far more so than the average member of the community—and their self-assertion added insult to injury. The question, in reviewing the history of this period, is not so much whether the radicals were "wrong" in their methods, as whether the rest of the community was justified in hating them with almost blind vindictiveness. A sane and fearless man, without himself believing in violence, would rather have honored them for their courage and defended them against persecution, and this is what a very few sane and fearless men did do—Clarence Darrow, for one.

Too many people dislike "unpleasantness" more than they love justice, and fear independence of spirit more than they respect the integrity which leads to independent action. Unfortunately, the violence practiced by the Wobblies was easily made into an excuse for ignoring or minimizing the injustices which they fought, while their courage was forgotten as hunters forget the courage of a cornered animal when they overpower him. Yet it is this courage which is the very lifeblood of freedom. What about a society which alienates and drives to the radical fringes the men who foster in themselves an uncomplicated and uncompromising zeal for justice and freedom as they understand it?

The one thing you cannot do with the Wobblies and other militant radicals of their time is to adopt a patronizing attitude toward either them or their history. You can shoot a maddened and fighting revolutionist, you can trap him and execute him or railroad him and lock him up, but you cannot patronize him and make it stick. And it was this, perhaps, that the respectable people disliked most of all. They couldn't look the radicals in the eye, so they hired the Pinkertons and the goon squads to do the dirty work and perverted the wheels of justice to the task of suppressing these minor rebellions.

The violence, no doubt, was a terrible mistake, just as the partisanship and violence of the "authorities" which provoked and then suppressed the outbreaks of militant labor were a terrible mistake. But was it simply the violence, as was claimed, which made men hate and fear the Wobblies, or was it an inner uneasiness, a feeling that the Wobblies might abolish the caste distinction between working man and employer and break down the traditional means of perpetuating economic injustice? And how can we say, today, that we really disapprove of violence, while the shadow of atomic ruin still hangs over the Pacific, with guns still booming in Korea, and with thousands of highly paid technicians stretching their imaginations toward new and more catastrophic forms of violence to be used in the future? But *that*, someone may say, is "official" violence like the violence used against the Wobblies. And that, it seems, is supposed to end the argument. But the Wobblies used violence because they had—or thought they had—nothing else to use. Today, on a world-wide scale, official violence is possible only for those who are wealthy and powerful enough to have everything else to use, but will not do so. No, we can hardly plead that it was their violence which made men hate the Wobblies. Not so long as we imprison, persecute and even kill—in the name of order, authority, and security—the few unviolent men of our time who protest by other means the injustices and follies of the world.