

HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

HISTORIANS and humorists are both gifted with the capacity to lift us out of ourselves, at least for a time, even though we usually forget what the historian tells us, and refuse to take the humorist seriously. Both practice the same art, both being able, in the measure of their genius, to make us see through the eyes of others; hence history has sometimes been honored as the source of social self-consciousness, while humor is said to depend upon the human capacity for impersonality. History which does not bring self-consciousness—a sense of just perspective—is not history, but mere chronicle or nationalist romance, and humor which fails to deflate egotism and to elevate impartiality is not really humor, but only an element of the comic.

Turning, then, to the most popular serious historian of our time—Arnold J. Toynbec—we find him saying:

Our present anxiety about what seems to us to be a postwar threat to the West from Russia is a well-justified anxiety in our belief. At the same time, we must take care not to allow the reversal in the relation between Russia and the West since 1945 to mislead us into forgetting the past in our natural preoccupation with the present. When we look at the encounter between Russia and the West in the historian's instead of the journalist's perspective, we shall see that, over a period of several centuries ending in 1945, the Russians have had the same reason for looking askance at the West that we Westerners feel that we have for looking askance at Russia today. (*Harper's*, March.)

What Mr. Toynbee is getting at is that, while Russia may be the "bad boy" of the past ten years or so, the West, meaning Western civilization, has been a bad boy for all the rest of the world for some four hundred and fifty years. And Russia, as a semi-Asiatic power, has felt the blows of the West all through this period. While Russia lay prostrate and impotent after the Tartar *blitzkrieg* of the thirteenth century, the Western powers

moved in on her and annexed for themselves large areas of White Russia and portions of the Western half of the Ukraine. "It was not until 1945," Prof. Toynbee informs us, "that Russia recaptured the last piece of those huge Russian territories that were taken from her by the Western powers in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries."

Mr. Toynbee is not saying, "They had it coming to them." He is suggesting only that they might *think* they had it coming to them, and that we, if we were Russians, might think so too. As a historian turned moralist, or moralist turned historian, Mr. Toynbee doubtless regards war as folly and conquest as futile, and as both historian and moralist he is bound to recognize that understanding what other people *think* is right and just may be fully as important as *being* right and just, ourselves. This becomes plain as we hear him out:

A Westerner who wants to grapple with this subject must try, for a few minutes, to slip out of his native Western skin and look at the encounter between the world and the West through the eyes of the great non-Western majority of mankind. Different though the non-Western peoples of the world may be from one another in race, language, civilization, and religion, if any Western inquirer asks them their opinion of the West, he will hear them all giving him the same answer: Russians, Moslems, Hindus, Chinese, Japanese, and all the rest. The West, they will tell him, has been the arch-aggressor of modern times, and each will have their own experience of Western aggression to bring up against him. The Russians will remind him that their country has been invaded by Western armies overland in 1941, 1915 1812, 1709, and 1610; the peoples of Africa and Asia will also remind him that Western missionaries, traders, and soldiers from across the sea have been pushing into their countries from the coasts since the fifteenth century. The Asians will also remind him that, within the same period, the Westerners have occupied the lion's share of the world's last vacant lands in the Americas, Australia, New Zealand, and South and East Africa. The

Africans will remind him that they were enslaved and deported across the Atlantic in order to serve the European colonizers of the Americas as living tools to minister to their Western masters' greed for wealth. The descendants of the aboriginal population of North America will remind him that their ancestors were swept aside to make room for the west European intruders and for their African slaves. . . .

In the world's experience of the West . . . over a period of about four and a half centuries . . . the West has been the aggressor on the whole; and, if the tables are being turned on the West by Russia and China today, this is a new chapter of the story which did not begin until after the end of the second world war. The West's alarm and anger at recent acts of Russian and Chinese aggression at the West's expense are evidence that for us Westerners, it is today still a strange experience to be suffering at the hands of the world what the world has been suffering at Western hands for a number of centuries past. . . .

Having outlined the basis in history for majority world attitudes toward the West, Mr. Toynbee proceeds to become very specific about what the West has done to the world, and to Russia in particular, until about 1945. For the facts, readers are referred to *Harper's* for March, where they are set forth with great accuracy and simplicity. Supposing, then, Mr. Toynbee's propositions are wise and just, as they seem to be, what are wise and just men to do about them? There is not much that they can do, overtly, since we suspect that the wise and just men of the West are still quite few in number. Yet they can always try to increase their number, and soak a while in the implications of Prof. Toynbee's facts. Then there is the further step of trying to assume that the Russians will have less reason to plot and scheme against us if we make it plainly evident that we, as Westerners, are through with plotting and scheming against them. We shall probably find it difficult to do this; many will regard it as hazardous as well as difficult. But we are not speaking, here, of what is easy and safe, but of what is wise and just. And we are founding these suggestions on the proposition that the Russians are human beings like ourselves, as subject as we are to anxieties and suspicions; even more

vulnerable to them, perhaps, after 450 years of invasions and conquests from without, than we are, who have always fought our foreign wars on foreign territory. Nor are we persuaded that, in the present, it is no longer possible to be both wise in Mr. Toynbee's terms and safe in the terms of a thoughtful military expert such as, say, Hanson Baldwin, or Liddell Hart.

Another kind of awareness of history is needed in weighing the meaning of the Mau Mau outrages in Kenya (British Crown Colony and Protectorate, south of Ethiopia). *Time* for April 20 reports the trial of six Kikuyu tribesmen, charged with fomenting rebellion among the Kenya natives, and of "managing the Mau Mau," the terrorist organization held responsible for the murder of 542 Kikuyu who did not cooperate in the anti-British drive, and nine whites, during the past year. Leader of the Mau Mau, according to *Time*, is Jomo Kenyatta, a man educated by a mission in Kenya, who was sent by his people to London in 1929 to present their grievances to the British government. (He also spent some time in Moscow, which has not added to his popularity among Westerners.) In 1929 he said:

Africans are not hostile to Western civilization as such . . . but they are in an intolerable position when the European invasion destroys the very basis of their old tribal way of life, and yet offers them no place in the new society except as serfs.

On the day when he and the other accused tribesmen were sentenced to seven years' hard labor by a British judge, Kenyatta said: "We have not received justice. . . . None of us would condone the mutilation of human beings. We have families of our own." The judge was not impressed, and told Kenyatta that he "took the fullest advantage of your power over your people and their primitive instincts."

Here are ironies within ironies. Kenyatta's charge against the West seems in principle unanswerable. On the other hand, we have great respect for British justice—even colonial British justice. (A friend from Africa tells us that British

administrators of African colonies always take the word of an African against that of a policeman, other things being equal, in criminal prosecutions.) Supposing the evidence were plain, what else could the judge say? And between these two, both men of conviction, lies the horror of massacres and even atrocities. For many, however, the meticulousness of British law in Kenya, even when set against the Mau Mau outbreaks, will seem irrelevant because of the difficulty of imagining any moral justification for the British being in Africa at all.

With so little knowledge of the facts—except the facts of the broad sweep of history—judgment itself becomes largely irrelevant. Yet we are impressed by the comment of the writer of the *Folio* program notes of the Berkeley (California) radio station, KPFA, on the Mau Mau uprisings, in comparison with the non-violent campaign of South Africans for justice. This writer says:

It's to be expected that in the world's attention, the kukluxing of the Mau Mau in Kenya should symbolize African resistance. Both Allies and Soviets share the Mau Mau faith in the efficacy of violence and counter-violence. But in history's attention, the South African resistance coupled with the Indian independence movement, may be the only one of the many fretful 20th-century revolutions worth recording.

From the non-violent struggle of colonial peoples against the injustice of their white rulers, to the deliberate, thought-out pacifism of young men of the Western democracies may be a far cry. It is one thing to use non-violent resistance when using guns is a practical impossibility, and quite another to resist your own government's decision that guns need to be used. Then, on the other hand, a young pacifist in America or Britain practically never has to face the overt brutality which often confronts a non-violent resister of armed imperialism. So we hesitate to draw comparisons between the two positions. In the abstract, however, the pacifist position is not as "weak" as many imagine. Lately an English

pacifist, Reginald Reynolds, contributed to the British *Peace News* (March 27), organ of the British Peace Pledge Union, an imaginary dialogue between a Tribunal of Conscience and a youth who maintains that he conscientiously wishes to enter the army. If, Mr. Reynolds argues, a conscientious objector must justify his position before a Tribunal, why not, also, the prospective soldier? (The "we-certainly-know-better-than-you" tone of this Tribunal is a pale copy of the way in which Mr. Reynolds has heard conscientious objectors grilled by British tribunals.) The dialogue starts:

Q: You say you wish to join the Army. Do you think that our forces are for defence or aggression?

A: For defence.

Q: What makes you so sure? Have you read any history? Do you think the British Empire was acquired without aggression?

A: I don't know.

Q: That's the trouble. Yet you know what is in the mind of politicians in Britain now—and in America?

A: No.

Q: You don't know? Then why are you so sure their arms are to be used exclusively for defence?

A: I don't know.

Q: Suppose they are to be used for defence, what do you understand by that word?

A: Defending your country.

Q: Were the Germans defending their country when we invaded France and they tried to keep us out?

A: No.

Q: Were they fighting a war of defence against the French resistance movement?

A: No.

Q: Then would it be self defence if we fought to keep our colonies against a Communist invasion or a national rising?

A: Yes, I think so.

Q: But what is the difference between that and what the Germans did in France?

A: I don't know. . . .

Q: You're eighteen. You've read no history. You know nothing about international politics. And yet you are willing to kill anybody you are told to kill for reasons that you don't understand. Is that right?

A: I believe in defending my country. . . .

Q: Suppose you save your country (what's left of it) do you know what it will cost in human lives—ours and those of the so-called enemy?

A: No.

Q: And yet you want to fight, though you don't know either what for, against whom, with what results or even at what cost in human misery!

A: I think liberty is worth great sacrifices.

Q: So do the people of Kenya and other British Colonies.

But the Government you propose to fight for doesn't agree. We'll let that pass. I suppose you don't agree with this Mau Mau terrorism?

A: Of course not.

Q: Is there any other way in which the people could assert their will to be free?

A: There must surely be some peaceful ways. . . .

Q: Oh ! But you haven't thought of *our* using these peaceful ways ourselves, eh?

A: Well, it's different. . . .

Q: I fail to see why, except that we often expect other people to behave better under provocation than we behave ourselves. Do you believe that the Russians would really rape all the women in Britain?

A: I've heard people say so.

Q: Indeed. Have you heard of rape committed by British subjects, ever, by any chance?

A: Yes, sometimes. . . .

Q: Do you really think you can tell what will happen in a war?

A: No.

Q: Or by an attempt to use peaceful means—as you said the people ought to do in Kenya?

A: No.

Q: So if you don't know the results, how do you make up your mind what is right and what is wrong?

A: I do what I'm told to do.

Q: So if you'd been a German it could have been right to obey Hitler and if you were now a Russian it would be right to obey Stalin [Malenkov, Beria?]-yes?

A: You're confusing me.

Q: I'm sorry. I'm only trying to show that you are already confused. Have you ever thought why it is wrong to commit private murder or to steal?

A: No, I just think these things are wrong in themselves.

Q: So it's not a question *there* of obeying anybody?

A: No, it's a matter of conscience.

The Chairman sums up: Clearly the young man admits to a conscience, but he wants also to absolve himself of moral decisions on the pretext of obedience. The application to fight in H.M. Forces is dismissed.

Thus the humorist—although, come to think about it, Mr. Reynolds' imaginary dialogue is not especially funny, unless you can read it without feeling uncomfortable. Its humor, moreover, is dependent upon agreement about the facts of history—the sort of facts related by Prof. Toynbee. These things are not really "arguable" in an ordinary way. At least, other things, more important things, such as the age-old question of ends and means, and the problem of the preciousness of life—not the other fellow's life, but your own—and your "way of life," also, need to be considered at great length, and some decision reached, before a pacifist can make any sense at all to some people, or a believer in just and righteous war make sense to others. Historians and humorists are valuable, mainly, perhaps, not because they help us to settle the questions they write about, but because they lead us on to other questions we have thought about hardly at all.

Letter from **JAPAN**

TOKYO.—"Let Asians fight Asians" is a part of a statement attributed to President Eisenhower in the course of his hectic election campaign last fall. What Mr. Eisenhower had in mind, of course, was that the Free Nations of Asia should be so vitally interested in the preservation of their own freedom that they should be glad to take up arms in its defense. This sentiment has had expression in the United States in the suggestion that Free Asia's vast manpower should be armed and put to use for the Free World.

Under the circumstances of a hot presidential campaign, the American President was doubtless speaking more for domestic consumption than anything else. In a race for votes, he was expressing the view that the American GI's should be called home from Korea and other Asia outposts just as quickly as indigenous troops could be trained and could take over their own defense. This statement also stemmed obviously from the thought that the Soviets were employing satellite troops to fight their battles without a single Russian soldier shedding his blood. Mr. Eisenhower was thus calling attention to the fact that Free Asians properly armed and trained could turn back the North Reds in Indo-China, and the "Huks" in the Philippines.

But the choice of words in expressing this viewpoint was extremely unfortunate and damaging, for the Communists have jumped upon this statement with ill-concealed glee. They could not have wished for a better propaganda weapon. The Red "interpretation" was that the United States would use Asians as mercenaries and pawns for the pursuit of an imperialistic war in Asia, and that Asians would be forced to kill their fellow Asians. It should be apparent how damaging this can sound in a nation which has had its fill of war and wants no more of it, or in a country where the fires of national and racial feeling are burning bright.

Taken as a whole, the statement, "Let Asians fight Asians," is a positive statement which could be made to sound contemptuous of the Asian people. And it is a statement which could be interpreted as presupposing warfare.

On the part of the United States, the view, of course, is that the Communists are certain to carry on their war of aggression against Free Asia, and Asians should naturally take steps to man their own defense. The Reds, for their part, point out that the Americans are bent upon starting a major war with the idea of pitting Asians against Asians. Either way, the prospects are not pleasant for Asians.

Talk of raising a great army of Asians battling on the side of the Free World against the Reds has been heard from time to time. Many American leaders are reported surprised, impatient, or angry that the people of Asia are not more interested in rushing to arm themselves against the threat of the communist aggression which was revealed with such clarity in Korea. There have been suggestions, for instance, that the Japanese should be armed posthaste and sent to the Korean war front. And such proposals have been met with bitter protests from the South Korean Government. Actually, the Japanese people are greatly embarrassed by such suggestions—as well-meaning as they may be. They have no idea of rearming in the near future, much less of sending troops abroad. The traditional fear of Russia is still alive, but as yet not to the extent of fighting communism on the Korean peninsula or elsewhere in Asia. Further, they see no good coming from statements which serve only to keep alive the enmity between the Koreans and the Japanese.

It would be unfortunate if the Japanese reluctance to rearm should be interpreted as an expression of anti-American feeling. Nor must it be taken as displaying a lack of appreciation for all that the United States has done to keep alive and to maintain the Japanese economy in the postwar years. Why, then, are the Japanese people unwilling to go all out toward rearmament?

The Korean war front, for instance, is relatively close to Japan. But there is a feeling of detachment here that the Korean war has nothing to do with Japan (although the Japanese economy is being largely supported by the special procurement orders flowing from the United Nations war efforts and the prospects of peace in Korea brought stock quotations tumbling down). The subject of war itself is unpleasant for many who have suffered grievously in the last war. The fear of getting involved in another war is extremely strong in this country. There is also the feeling that the Communists will not attempt an invasion of Japan so long as the people here do nothing to anger them—such as rearming. Moreover, the idea of a "third force" standing between the two camps in the "cold war" is appealing and is held by a vociferous minority. There is also no desire to get caught up in a dilemma between "cannons and butter." Sympathy with the United Nations war efforts and war aims is apparent in Japan, but not to the extent of jeopardizing the Japanese economy.

One important fact which must not be ignored is that Asians are in no hurry to die for democracy. The memories of the bitter experiences of the colonial period are dying hard. Japan became free of the shackles of colonialism, but her contact with democracy in action, as represented by the Allied Occupation, has raised many questions on democracy as an ideal and in practice. Asians have yet to feel in their hearts that democracy is preferable to other ideologies. Democracy symbolized by an automobile and washing machine for each family is a far, far cry from the poverty in which the great majority of the Asians live.

We fail at present to see the prospects of a vast Asian army being formed to fight on the side of the West against communist aggression. It might be possible in a country such as Japan, which depends so heavily upon economic assistance from the United States, to exert the necessary economic pressures to force

rearmament. But coercion can only lead to resistance. And economic collapse would benefit the Communists who would be eager to capitalize on such a situation. We can only hope that our American and other friends of the Free World will be patient and will display through their policies and actions the superiority of democracy to communism.

JAPANESE CORRESPONDENT

REVIEW

MEN AND MICE HAVE CHANGED

RECENTLY I had occasion to witness a Hollywood revival of John Steinbeck's play *Of Mice and Men*. Although it is only sixteen years old, already the drama has a nostalgic quality and seems to date back to "the good old days" when life was much simpler and pleasanter, though this is patently an illusion, since the days of the thirties were neither simple nor pleasant for many of us.

Wallace Ford, stage and screen star of some years' luster, directed the 1953 Hollywood production. It happened that in 1937 I was in New York and saw Mr. Ford act in the original production of this play. He created the part of George, the cocky, alert, self-reliant ranch hand who is burdened with the care of Lennie, his huge and dim-witted partner.

In 1937, when George and Lennie were reciting their endless dream of acquiring a few acres of their own where they could "live off the fat of the land," this theme of the laborer's desire to be an independent farmer had a powerful appeal. It was depression-time, and the audiences, conscious of breadlines, unemployment, and poverty, even though they personally may have escaped, sympathized with this yearning to flee the noisome cities for the solid verities of the soil. How provocative that less than two decades later the theme seemed strangely dated and outworn, almost as much of an anachronism as Edith Wharton's story of Ethan Frome, the New England farmer who toiled in permanent bondage to his acres.

The reason is, of course, that our country has become more and more industrialized. The trend is so persistent that love of agriculture and the land is no longer valid coin in the current intellectual currency.

Steinbeck has his two homeless, itinerant farm laborers speak of an employment agency named "Murray and Ready's" on San Francisco's

skid row, where available jobs were scribbled in chalk on blackboards and unemployed men stood on the curb, rolling cigarettes, smoking and reading the signs, debating the advantages and drawbacks of lumber camps and ranch bunkhouses. Murray and Ready's agency still exists on Howard Street and the throngs of male derelicts still congregate around the scribbled signs. But the nature of the jobs has changed and the dreams of the men who read them have changed too.

These dreams have become more complex and are tinged with the mechanization of the society on whose fringes they exist.

What George and Lennie hoped for was a half dozen acres with a well and a windmill, a shack and a few fruit trees. They envisioned some pigs and chickens, a rabbit hutch and, when they achieved genuine prosperity, a cow. Their garden and the farm animals would feed them and provide a salable surplus for clothes and admission money to ball games and circuses, two forms of recreation which constituted the summit of their cultural aspirations.

"If'n there was a ball game, or a circus come to town, we'd jus' quit and go to 'em," they told each other delightedly. "We'd water the stock and feed the rabbits and take off, jus' like that, without askin' no boss nor nothin'."

The ball game-circus was a symbol of freedom to the pair. It wasn't so much fun watching them as it was the idea of liberty, of being able to do what they wanted, when they wanted.

Today's casual laborers still nourish the same dream of freedom from restraint. But the trappings are different. Mechanical adjuncts enter into the vision. Nowadays their minimum wants would include an old car for transportation into town. They would expect to be hooked on to the county electric lines, to have lights for their shack and power for their tools. They would want a radio and maybe even a television set. Probably

they would have running water, or, if not, at least a gasoline motor to run the pump, windmills being practically a relic of a past era.

Water and power cost much more today, and there are other public services which have gone up, for which George and Lennie would have to pay whether or not they used them—highway taxes, state police, sales tax, gas tax. In order to exist and retain ownership of the land they would necessarily be forced to raise much more than their own food. To do this efficiently would require machinery. That would mean more money, probably bank loans and interest to pay. Soon they would be caught up in a compulsive circle; in order to secure freedom, which is to say leisure, they would be compelled to hire other Georges and Lennies to work for them, to keep the machines going, to pay the taxes and interest.

All these ideas flashed through my mind as I was watching the Steinbeck revival. I had wondered momentarily why it seemed less gripping, less universal in its appeal. But it takes only a few moments' thought to understand the reasons. The economy of mice has not changed much that I know of, and certainly the basic drives and emotions of men remain the same. It is the external conditions under which we live that have undergone drastic modifications.

RIDGELY CUMMINGS

Hollywood, California

COMMENTARY

FAILING DEFINITIONS

IT gets a little dull for all of us to have to be reading and writing about Communism so much of the time. Yet the fact is that people think so much about Communism, or what they think is Communism, that a paper which took no cognizance of it would have little touch with its readers.

Some publications try to do their bit to clear up the confusion. Last month (April) the *Progressive* reprinted from the Madison (Wisc.) *Capital Times* the replies of a hundred people to the question: "What is a Communist?" The answers went all the way from a simple I-don't-know to precise and formal definition such as a dictionary might provide. The May *Progressive* offers two more pages of definitions, sent in by readers. The extremes may be represented by the following:

A Communist is another human being whose apparent thoughts of life's use are so far divergent from ours we cannot fully understand it.

A Communist is a person who advocates government ownership of all land and means of production, who works for a dictatorship over the proletariat to bring this about, and believes that the end justifies the means.

Clarity of definition is a fine thing. Even Senator McCarthy believes that people engaged in hunting down communists should do a little "reading" to find out what they are looking for, and he recently reproved a witness who seemed proud of his ignorance on the subject. But somehow all this "definition" does not seem to help very much. Even if you obtain technically correct descriptions of Communism, with meanings appropriate for a dozen or more levels of discussion, confusion will still remain, since a large part of the functional meaning of Communism is the confusion it produces in the minds of many of those who hear or use the term.

Our own view is that Communism, although involving the socialist humanitarian dream of economic equality and international solidarity, creates fear and confusion because it is a movement born of hate, nurtured by resentment, and powered by the rejection of some men by others. It judges not

only the acts of men, but the men themselves. In these terms, it abandons the rational approach to human problems, and this is felt and feared by people who have almost no knowledge of Communism as a historical movement.

People recoil from irrational forces as they recoil from the horror of insanity. Then, having felt this reaction, they try to explain what they feel in rational terms; but their explanations do not really communicate anything because they do not bring out into the open the deep emotional repugnance that is at the bottom of it all.

Understanding communism, we think, must involve, first, a far-reaching historical appreciation of the forces which drove the founders of the communist movement to rest their hopes for a better world on the power of hate. If it weren't for the sentimentality which attaches to the word "love," we should be inclined to repeat the Buddhist maxim, "Hate ceaseth not by hate, but only by love; this is an old saying," and end the discussion, but this sort of love is much more than a blurring emotion—it is a comprehension of the psychological sources of both good and evil in human beings. We do not see how this kind of knowledge of communism can be possible without an intensive study of European history.

What we started out to suggest, here, however, is that the problems of the world have altered since the middle of the nineteenth century, and the "hate" of the original communist movement is more of an artificially revived memory than a current emotion. Communist anger against "capitalism" has become stylized. Conceivably, this "hate" will die a natural death, if non-communists will let it. So far as we can see, such hate is today an anachronism which hides from view the far more tangible problems of our time.

CHILDREN ... and Ourselves

A READER who happens to be a student at Black Mountain College in North Carolina recently reminded us by his presence that this unique educational experiment should not be forgotten. Black Mountain is an effort at achieving an ideal of constructive informality in college study. Cooperative living arrangements bring faculty and students together, and learning and association are organically related.

The inspiration for the foundation of *this* college, at least, was a rebellion, rather than a desire to impress the younger generation with *states quo* values. John Rice, a former Rhodes Scholar teaching at Rollins College in the early '30's, was finally dismissed for persistent criticism of the educational policies pursued at Rollins. That his criticisms were sound is attested by the fact that fifteen students, among them the president of the student body, quit with Rice. So did several instructors and professors. Fired by a zeal that had been long in building, this group undertook an entirely new approach to collegiate instruction. Acquiring an unused summer resort building on a lease basis, the Rice devotees established a college of their own—with a teaching staff of nine and a student body of nineteen. The group really went at the business of building an educational environment free of obstructive paraphernalia, having to donate manual labor for improvement of the premises, while the teachers were allowed no more than seven dollars a month for clothes and incidentals.

Some of John Rice's own words convey the intellectual and ethical tone predominating. Writing for *Harper's* in 1937, he focussed his concerns in this statement:

Everywhere the chief distinction of man, imagination, is neglected. The question, then, is: how are you to train the imagination?—or, more important still: is it possible to train the imagination? An enormous question, but I think it can be answered. I believe that we here in Black Mountain—not I, as

you know, but all of us, students and faculty—have reached the threshold of the answer. We're trying, with increasing (though, off and on, faltering) success to teach method as against content. Our emphasis is on process as against results. To us, the way of handling facts is more important than facts themselves. Facts change, while the method of handling them—provided the method is life's own free, dynamic method which evidently works on the principle that nothing is permanent save change—remains the same; and so, if stability or order is what is wanted in this world (and I take it that it is), it can only be got by putting facts, results, the alleged content of life in the past in second place, and placing stress on the way of handling facts now and in the future, on the method, the process of life. . . . This is an awkward, involved way of stating it, for the thing is so new to us who are engaged in school education that even we here in Black Mountain have not found adequate verbal expression for it: but I hope you see what I mean. . . . What I am trying to articulate here, is as I say, new to us; but this idea of method, of process, of imagination as against "facts," static concepts, and concrete results is really not new. It is, indeed, very old. It has been for a long time a fierce little flame leaping out of the minds and *feelings* of a small section of humanity, the artists: by which, of course, I don't mean only painters, but artists of all kinds, including (in fact, especially) those who are not painters, sculptors, writers, musicians or anything else of the sort, but who have the artistic approach or attitude to life as a whole and to everything in life; whose values are qualitative as opposed to quantitative. . . . The human race has tried out everyone else, priest, soldier, politician, technologist: but their working characteristic is generally not imagination, but lack of imagination. We must now turn to the 'queer' people, who have always been laughed at by the earthborn; who, indeed *are* 'queer,' but only because they are divorced from the main processes of life and have little, if anything to do with life as it goes on, and must stay apart, in their garrets and ivory towers, because we don't want them, or act as though we don't want them. Actually, whether we know it or not, we *do* want them—we want artists, poets in the Greek sense of 'makers' or 'creators,' artists who are at the same time philosophers and scientists: and above all, teachers. We must go out and find them in their lonely places, where their desperate genius frets, sickens, and turns neurotic, and bring them into the center of life, and say to them, "Here, look at this botch. Do something with it. Make something out of it. And don't be soft with us. Consider us your material. Use us. Don't let

yourselves ever again be called 'gentle poets.' What we need is 'tough poets'." . . .

The foregoing was used by Louis Adamic to highlight an inspired exposition of the Black Mountain concept in *My America*—a discussion so thought-provoking, by the way, that it not only merits reading by every educator and parent, but also perennial rereading. (For those unable to obtain the Adamic book, an article here in MANAS for Feb. 1, 1950, supplies another discussion of Black Mountain with further quotations from Rice.)

What has happened to Black Mountain since 1933? Perhaps rather proudly, this particular college admitted itself to be of little use to the war effort of '42 to '45: B.M.C. was not supposed to be for technicians, nor devoted to any kind of regimentation, either. The draft took away most of the male population, though, leaving only one or two, and for the first and only time in Black Mountain history girls outnumbered boys. The top enrollment in Black Mountain's best years has, we understand, reached a little over one-hundred, and now, after Rice's departure, two administrative changes subsequently having taken place, a measure of confusion has resulted; there are only between thirty and forty students presently attending.

The B.M.C. catalogs of the last few years illustrate the tremendous difficulties which are apt to be encountered by any brave experimenters who undertake to compete with orthodox institutions. For one thing, it is hard to acquire a well-rounded faculty, and certain departments of learning are bound to be slighted. Only those who agree with Rice that learning is much less a matter of memorization of detail than an activation of the critical and imaginative faculties, can consider Black Mountain as amounting to much of anything. There are those who do so feel, though, and, as an *idea*, Black Mountain is still an alive proposition.

Our subscriber has provided us with an informal paper entitled "Black Mountain and U.S.

Education," first presented as an address to faculty members by Charles Olson, teacher of literature. In this discussion, of 1950 origin, Mr. Olson begins by explaining his deletion of the word "college" or "university" from his title:

I purposely drop the word "college" from the title of this place of education in order that it may be seen for what it is and, so seen, be understood for its proper relevance to education in these States. I can make the point best by drawing attention to a "sister" institute which came into being one year ahead of Black Mountain: the Institute for Advanced Studies at Princeton (the IAS held its first year 1932-33, BMC started fall, 1933). For that Institute is the exact inverse of this one: it was richly endowed (\$5,000,000 was the original capital); and it was founded, as its first bulletins stated, as "a paradise for scholars." Black Mt. has had no endowment, is still self-owned & operated, has no "Board of Trustees" and at present seems to have no wish to have even the "Rector" it had for some years. On top of that, it is a punishing place for its "faculty," and is, in whatever paradisiacal aspects it has, a paradise for students, not for scholars (John Rice actually used the word "hell" to describe what every human being who enters this cyclotron has to go through, the place is so small, and the eyes of all others are so fiercely thrown into the depths of each person as he seeks to go about his business of "learning").

Yet these contrasts between these two "institutions" of learning seem to me only to enforce a like principle lying at the root of each. It is clear, for example, actually stated, that the IAS was founded to function *outside*, or beyond, education as it then existed in the States. Bulletin 9 of the IAS states: "An institute entirely free from all degree-giving obligations and designed to offer informal opportunities, without routine, to a carefully chosen faculty who would surround themselves with a group of selected younger men who had given promise of scholarly and scientific development. The Institute discarded both undergraduate departments on the ground that these already existed in abundance; the real need was felt to lie in the field beyond the graduate school."

I do not think I need to labor, to anyone at all familiar with Black Mountain from the outset, how many of the above terms also characterize this college, in fact so characterize it that, three months ago, the Committee on Academic Freedom reporting

to the Columbia 200th Anniversary, called Black Mountain "unique" in American education.

One of the most impressive things about Black Mountain is the opportunity it offers students who wish to study and think unencumbered by requirements for credits or degrees. Those who *wish* degrees can get them, and a certain number of students do "graduate." But there are others who come without any desire to acquire these external marks of status, and who pursue their studies for as long and in whatever ways seem best to them. Faculty members who are in harmony with Rice's earliest intentions consider themselves as counselors and friends to the students rather than as "instructors," and the best of these, we understand, are much more concerned with asking students pertinent questions than in answering queries categorically. These characteristics alone would seem to justify Mr. Olson's comparison between BMC and Princeton's Institute for Advanced Studies. Philosophically, the desire to "get beyond" the prevailing context in any field in order to encourage fresh perspectives, or to develop a widened capacity for synthesis between isolated departments of knowledge, is certainly a worthy ideal, to say the least. Mr. Olson closes his remarks with the following, which needs no comment:

If the universe has to be seen today as the continuously changing result of the influence that each of its parts exerts upon all the rest of its parts, then such movements {as Black Mountain} have to be faced up to by the leadership of the society, at least that part of it which claims to be devoted to learning.

FRONTIERS

Benefactors of Great Wealth

A SPRIGHTLY paragraph in *Fortnight* (March 30), California newsmagazine, reports that Congressman Donald Jackson, chairman of a subcommittee of the UnAmerican Activities Committee, asserted on the floor of the House that the Ford Foundation—giant philanthropic enterprise which owns 90 per cent of the Ford Motor Company—has made "a 15-million-dollar grant to finance an investigation of Congress and its investigating committees." Rowan Gaither, President of the Foundation, quickly denied this statement, which had reference to the Fund for the Republic. Mr. Gaither replied: "We appropriated 15 millions to the Fund for the Republic, an independent organization with the stated purpose 'to support activities directed toward elimination of restrictions on freedom of thought, inquiry, and expression in the United States.' . . ."

Doubtless Mr. Gaither was in order in correcting the Congressman. With or without fifteen million dollars to help it along, the Fund for the Republic is likely to suffer ample criticism, and to accept the label plastered on it by Rep. Jackson would hardly ease the course of public relations for the Fund. Yet what, after all, is wrong with investigating "investigators"? Congressmen, we were led to believe in high school civics, are public servants, charged with, among other things, the wise expenditure of the country's financial resources accumulated through taxes paid by the people. Surely private citizens have not only the right but the duty to keep track of what Congressmen do, and how well they do it. If public spirited citizens like the Fords are willing to put a lot of money at the disposal of men like Paul Hoffman and Robert Hutchins; and if men like Paul Hoffman and Robert Hutchins should choose to use some of that money to study the behavior of Congress, especially its investigating committees, in the interest of "freedom of thought, inquiry, and expression in the United States," then why should anyone object?

Large commercial enterprises spend fabulous sums every year to maintain in Washington men who not only "watch" Congressional committees but also do their best to influence the decisions of legislators. "Lobbying," we are told, is an old democratic custom, and if the taxpayers sometimes suffer from the effects of lobbying, they can always hire lobbyists of their own. Some taxpayers do, of course. Organizations like the American Civil Liberties Union and the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom have representatives in Washington to report to their members and to present to legislators the policies which are designed to preserve peace and freedom. But such organizations have tiny budgets.

We do not mean to suggest that the Fund for the Republic will have lobbyists in Washington. We don't know much about its projected activities. But the simple fact that a large foundation has seen fit to establish a Fund for watching over the liberties of the individual citizen is so unique, and so genuinely philanthropic, that we think that, instead of looking narrowly at this appropriation, Mr. Jackson ought to shout for joy. Could there, actually, be any better evidence of the difference between totalitarianism, either socialist or nationalist, and what we may here call, in this case admiringly, the "American way"?

It is probably too soon to tell, but such incidents suggest that the Ford Foundation may eventually grow into an extraordinary reproach to nearly all previous foundations with similar purposes. Those who wonder just what the Ford Foundation has been trying to do, will find in the *Reporter* for March 17 an excellent article on this subject by Holmes Welch. So far, at any rate, the trustees seem to have avoided the pitfalls which have reduced previous efforts of this sort to pliant embellishments of *status quo* thinking. The Ford Foundation's major intent is to serve the broad fields of world peace, democratic practice, economic health, education, and research in human behavior. These are the five "areas for

action" of the Foundation. Past experience in foundation work shows how easy it is for such aims to become sidetracked. As long ago as 1923, Sherman Miles (who served in the American Peace Commission in Central Europe after World War I) contributed to the *North American Review* (March, 1923) an article on foundations for peace. One such organization, which had announced as its primary objective "the thorough and scientific investigation and study of the causes of war," spent half a million dollars during the first eleven years of its existence, employing historians and researchers who produced twenty-four pamphlets and ten books. The pamphlets were merely descriptive studies of World War I, and nine of the books dealt "with the general subjects of industry; commerce and finance; with casualties in war and military pensions; with existing tariff policies and with conscription in Japan; but none of these subjects are studied as possible causes of war." The one exception was an essay on two minor Balkan wars. Major Miles observed:

When one considers all the blood that has been shed in war and all that has been written and said about it, it seems strange indeed that the germ-essence of the thing should boil down to that one anonymous volume, recounting the dull stories of two almost forgotten wars. And as for the economic studies, the one thing about them that strikes a soldier is that they throw no light on the causes or prevention of war, but that they would be most useful guides to any government *while waging* war.

Holmes Welch, while telling the story of the Ford Foundation, takes time out to relate how the august trustees of the Rockefeller Foundation were led astray. In 1933, these gentlemen resolved to place more emphasis on Man, and less on Matter. This got them into medical research on radioactive isotopes, and in time they built a beautiful new cyclotron the University of California. In 1941, Dr. Ernest Lawrence, in charge of the cyclotron project, asked for more money, but would not say what for. Having great faith in science, the trustees gave him the money, and four years later were favored with this

explanation from Dr. Lawrence: "At long last I have the very real pleasure of [telling] you . . . something of the vital part played by the Rockefeller Foundation in the development of the atomic bomb."

Thus foundations, like the rest of us, have their moral problems and dilemmas. To date, however, the Ford Foundation, operating with a minimum of inhibitions, and in an experimental mood, has set going a wide variety of constructive projects. The explanation seems to lie in the sort of men who are administering the Foundation policies.