VOLUME XII, NO. 10
MARCH 11, 1959

QUEST FOR IDENTITY

YOU see it on a mass scale in the movies—this fake sense of identity—people engaged in the most trivial of undertakings, yet their faces tense with an expression which says—"You know about *me;* I'm really a deep person with Significance piled on Significance inside me." This is the phoney hipsterism of the movies, which really trades on all the bourgeois virtues after they have been polished up to look like something a little different, or even "transcendental" in a mass sense.

Usually there is nothing there at all—only the stereotype, the mannerisms of people who are supposed to be doing something important—the theatrical cliches providing the special twist that implies the people are really alive. Once in a while you run across a film in which there has been obvious temptation to do a story about a character who has some purpose which relates him to the real needs of his time, but in order to get away with it, the makers of the film feel obliged to throw the story into a sentimental gear, so that it won't really *disturb* anybody. It's practically against the Code of the West to portray genuine identity in the world of today. So, in *The Roots of Heaven,* you have a hero who is against big-game hunting in Africa. What he is really against—or ought to be against, in this epoch, to have a real identity—is modern war and atom-bomb hunting, but this is too "direct" for the mass market of Hollywood films, so instead of a lover of humans the hero is made into a lover of elephants. He fights the good fight for the elephant kingdom. The dialogue writers smuggle in Schweitzer's name, implying that there is a great, secret moral atmosphere about, which ought to benefit us all; and then, in the last scene, a District Ranger—or whatever the French call their outpost administrators in French Equatorial Africa—is caught looking at a magazine which has a lurid cover showing a nuclear explosion, with contents telling what it will do to you. So, as the climax of the tale, the District Ranger, contrary to his instructions, lets the lover of elephants go back to the bush to carry on his quixotic guerrilla campaign against the elephant hunters. (We don't mean to knock this picture, which as Hollywood productions go, is rather good—but it happens to illustrate the kind of filter any sort of contemporary identity must pass through in order to get printed in a movie.)

Without a strong sense of identity, there can be no literature, no drama. For literature and the drama are always about protagonists who are going somewhere, who have something to do. Again, it is an essential part of literature and drama that the protagonist should struggle against obstacles; some kind of battle, sometimes violence, is involved. In the stories of mass entertainment—in the movies, and what we used to call the pulps—all the ingredients are present in cliché form. But in modern serious literature, something else is happening. There you have heroes who are not heroes in search of the struggle which will make them heroes—but they do not find it; they find only senseless conflict as a substitute, and aimless anger, instead of high passion, is their response to the futility they feel.

This, at any rate, is the view taken by Alfred Kazin in finding a common element in England's "angry young men," Tennessee Williams' plays, Norman Mailer's *Deer Park,* and even Kerouac's *On the Road.* The common note is sound and fury, signifying loneliness, and the desperation to which loneliness leads. They can't find the substance of the struggle, so they take the form and rag it, exaggerate it, and pretend that something important is happening. That is, the people in these stories and plays do these things. We may conclude that the writers are saying to us, "You see, these people are let down; they want to be somebody, but they aren't anybody, and it enrages them, making them do dreadful things." But then there is the question, "Are the things they do really dreadful, any more?" How do you decide what is dreadful? Who sets the standards today?

In his *Partisan Review* article, "Psychoanalysis and Literature" *(PR,* Winter, 1959), Alfred Kazin observes:

> Nothing here [in a Norman Mailer article] is taken from the real life of struggle, from life as actual conflict; it is an attempt to impose a dramatic and even noble significance on events that have not genuinely brought it forth. So desperate is Mailer for something to be revolutionary about, as Osborne is, that after telling us contemptuously that modern psychoanalysis merely softens the patient up by adapting him to middle-class society, he says that by contrast, two strong eighteen-year old hoodlums beating in the brains of a candy-store keeper do have courage of a sort, "for one murders not only a weak, fifty-year-old man but an institution as well, one violates private property, one enters into a new relation with the police and introduces a dangerous element into one's life. The hoodlum is therefore daring the unknown, and so no matter how brutal the act, it is not altogether cowardly."

Kazin has a historical explanation for all this. It is that the world has changed, "and that the solid middle-class virtues on which so many of us depended, so that we could meaningfully oppose them, are no longer believed in seriously enough for opposition to mean anything." In about a page, Kazin lucidly outlines the transition:

> The real tragedy of our time, as Nietzsche correctly foresaw, is a nihilism so total, so pervasive, so defeatist even in the midst of the greatest luxury the world has ever known, that it is no wonder that unimaginative people try to turn back the clock of modern science, to blame Marx and Darwin and Freud for robbing us of the illusion of our omnipotence in the universe. These people are hopeless, yet there is one element of tragic truth in their indictment of the modern spirit: more and more people lack the sense of tradition with which to assimilate the endless shocks and changes of the twentieth century. Just as Marx could not anticipate heirs who would completely lack his culture and tradition, who in the name of his great insights into capitalist society would create a society far more tyrannical and unjust, so Freud, himself so rooted in the Hebraic tradition, the English tradition, the nineteenth-century tradition, the scientific tradition, could not have predicted the destruction of Western civilization at Auschwitz, Maidenek, Belsen. He could not have imagined a psychoanalytically oriented society divorced from the humanistic and moral tradition, a psychiatry that would be used for market research in consumer motivation and even for the manipulation back to "normal" of political deviants. Psychoanalysis has depended so much on the intellectual and literary tradition out of which it arose, and of which it is an essential part, that now this tradition of cultivation and intellectual freedom no longer commands allegiance as it used to, one sees an increasing divergence between writers, who are concerned with the tradition itself, and therefore with Freud's classic insights, and those psychoanalysts who, lacking the needed cultural reference, foolishly and self-indulgently suppose that they are living in the same world of bourgeois morality which made Freud grasp the necessary reactions of repression, guilt and shame.

Kazin's essential point is this:

> If there had been no profound tradition of repression, no moral code to bind us, Don Juan could never have been a hero or Anna Karenina a heroine; there would have been no guilt to suffer and no rebellion to honor. But the great human symbol of contemporary literature, I suggest, is no longer the rebel, since there is no authoritative moral tradition that he can honestly feel limits and hinders his humanity. It is the stranger—who seeks not to destroy the moral order, but to create one that will give back to him the idea of humanity.

Thus, we have had the classical tradition of morals, with its generalized conception of human identity; then we have had its perversions and secularization, followed by rebellion, creating the new identity of the one who would make all things new; and finally, we have now the universal barbarism, the night in which all past moralities are gray and shadowy.

The situation is not as dark as this, of course; we have had Gandhi, we have Schweitzer, and there are others of varying stature and illumination; but the point is that these men have not been able to shape an authentic cultural attitude, complete with symbols, a literature, and all those variations in the arts and even in customs which ineffaceably stamp a time with the sense of meaning from which men—first as children—gain a sense of order and the courage to live.

Our age may be pregnant with the future, but right now it suffers and twitches in anguished indecision. An additional source of anxiety is the intuition that no "contrived" plan for a new cultural inspiration will serve the men of the present. We do not look to the learned doctors for help; we shall not call on the scholars to establish for us a cultural *universitas* that will embody the best wisdom of our age. The best wisdom of our age, we know in our hearts, is not good enough. Somehow, we want a culture in which we tell who we are, not a culture that tells us.

We are the people with split psyches who know how to split atoms—who is going to tell *us* who we are?

Is there anything that should be added to the historical explanation of our dilemma? The trouble with settling for the historical explanation is that it is almost wholly deterministic. It suggests that a man's sense of identity and role is obtained from his cultural environment, or from a rebellious reaction to his environment. In the first case, the idea of meaning is mediated for the individual by his culture. In some measure, at least, he takes it from tradition and the interpreters and expositors of tradition. The rebel is a more independent spirit, but even he allows the past to shape his convictions, since his course is largely defined by what he is *against.*

Today, however, we have no clear idea of what to be either for or against. Hence, as Kazin suggests, the reversion to barbarism—to frenzied exploitation of the sensations and symbols of struggle, in default of a sense of the *meaning* of the struggle.

It is pertinent to ask whether something is going on in man, corresponding to this exhaustion of the meanings found in his environment. Is there any source of feelings of identity and meaning other than our environment?

This is about the most difficult question anyone can ask himself, because it involves the very substance of our identity. An answer practically requires that we state in objective terms conclusions which are essentially subjective in content. What we should like to suggest, here, is that this may be precisely the nature of our struggle. It is unmistakably a fact, for example, that the search for man's identity is becoming a foremost activity of the psychological sciences. That is, those branches of psychology which exhibit the most ferment, the strongest tendency to innovation and discovery, are almost obsessively preoccupied with questions relating to "the self."

It is possible to suggest, on this basis, that the role of man, in this interval of history, is to begin to give an unmediated account of his identity. This would explain the extreme self-consciousness of modern mysticism. Even while psychologists and students of philosophy mine the subjectivisms of the religious philosophies of the past, they maintain a virtually clinical stance, refusing to be "carried away." Yet the preoccupation is insistent. The intuitions of the human spirit are gradually assuming a commanding authority. Former agnostics and positivists write almost reverently of man's feeling for the divine, or they use terms of this general implication, but without traditional emotional content.

It is not too much to say that there is a secret hearkening to the self among the thoughtful men of our time. That it should be "secret" is doubtless the best part of this development, for no man should wear his heart on his sleeve, as though he were some sort of "spiritual" Behaviorist. Yet wherever there is energy and invention, wherever there is a surge of the humanitarian temper, the voice of the self, despite its diverse vocabulary, is beginning to make itself heard.

"I am that I am" was once an expression attributed only to Jehovah. Before our generation has left the scene, this expression may have become the utterance of a number of self-existent *men.*

Letter from
ENGLAND

LONDON.—The Church of England, as by law established, is a remarkable institution, but one with few remarkable men. One of these, the Rev. Michael Scott, is, at the time of writing, serving a prison sentence. This is the cleric who, single handed, fought for justice to the Hereros tribe right up to the United Nations. He is now imprisoned for refusing to give an undertaking that that he will discontinue his activities in the Direct Action Campaign against nuclear war. This campaign was launched by a march to the atomic research station at Aldermaston. The marchers were just ordinary people, none of whom had ever taken part in any sort of demonstration before. They were, in short, the same sort of men and women who at Swaffam, in Norfolk, have been deliberately trespassing on Royal Air Force property to impede the construction of nuclear weapon launching sites. Most have refused to be bound over and two of those now serving sentences are on hunger strike. These people the Archbishop of Canterbury is reported to have described as "Nobodies trying to be somebodies." Few thoughtful men and women, however, will regard the Rev. Michael Scott, a dedicated man if ever there was one (he flew from Africa to take part in the Swaffam protests), as a "nobody trying to be a somebody."

Now let us see how a very vocal young peer, Lord Altrincham—one who dared to criticize the royal family as Philistine in its attitude to culture, and preoccupation with horse-racing—sees the Church and its Head. Writing in the first number of a magazine launched—how strange a people we are!—by the Olympic-sprinter priest who is now chaplain to a bishop, Lord Altrincham says plainly a number of things that many must have been thinking about the total lack of spiritual leadership by the established church. He is well worth quotation.

Lord Altrincham, a close friend of Michael Scott, says that were he Archbishop of Canterbury he would refuse to attend pompous evening functions, such as lord mayors' banquets, dressed in knee breeches with a braided coat hung with decorations like a Christmas tree. He would make parsons more easily removable from their cures of souls for misbehavior. (At present only the grossest immorality can unseat a priest.) "The present state of the Church of England," he writes, "is surely rather laughable. It resists the authoritarian claims of the papacy, and its clergy get very hot under their dog collars if the Pope propounds some new and highly indigestible dogma. Yet the Anglican Church itself asserts a body of doctrine which no sane man can accept as necessarily true for all men. . . . At the time of Suez I would have done very much more than either of the Archbishops to arouse the conscience of the nation. And when the Notting Hill race riot occurred I would have asked the BBC to give me five or ten minutes at peak viewing time to explain and condemn the iniquity of racialism in all its forms."

How will the Church react to this pungent criticism? It is safe to predict that it will brush the young peer off as just another "nobody trying to be a somebody." The Church has more urgent matters than to defend itself against hypocrisy. Nevertheless, the leaders of the Church are conscious of their slackening hold over such membership as the Church still possesses. For that reason, some time ago, a large fee was paid to an advertising agent to boost the Church. A large fee was also paid to a large advertising agency to boost the Prime Minister. But many people must be asking whether it is a good idea to put a Prime Minister or a Church over by the same publicity techniques as are used to sell margarine and detergents.

The trouble with this country is that virtually the whole of its Press is pledged to the Establishment in all its aspects, ecclesiastical and lay. That is why the imprisonment of a number of courageous spirits, outraged by preparations for the mass destruction of "enemy" populations, has received the minimum of notice in the Press. There exists a virtual boycott of all activities that may be seen as hostile to the complex structure of this aged and decrepit culture.

As I write comes the announcement that the Church has netted £500,000 from a deal in aluminum. That did shock at least a few writers, one of whom, writing in the Liberal *News-Chronicle*, ventured to suggest that for the Church to secure an unearned profit of half a million was somehow immoral.

ENGLISH CORRESPONDENT

REVIEW
ATTITUDES TOWARD LIFE

WE have not yet attempted a review of Boris Pasternak's *Doctor Zhivago*, nor, perhaps, will we ever feel capable of doing so. The issues involved in criticism of this suddenly famous book are varied and complex. The book has, however, stimulated the best of contemporary critics to provocative analysis, of which some good illustrations appear in the course of an exchange between Lionel Abel and Nicola Chiaromonte in the winter number of *Dissent.*

Mr. Chiaromonte finds a germinal quality in Pasternak's writing, and whether or not the evaluation fits the author of the book, the reviewing evokes considerations essential to a transformation of approach in contemporary writing. As Chiaromonte sees it, Pasternak has broken with two traditions: he presents his characters and the dramatic moments of their lives by way of their fundamental *attitudes*, rather than in terms of the impact of events. Speaking of the characters in *Zhivago*, Chiaromonte writes:

> We know next to nothing of their physical appearance, and psychological motivation is almost absent. They are defined by an attitude to life, instead of by a sequence of revealing insights into their "nature," as Stendhal's or Tolstoy's characters are. Their identity, in other words, is not of a psychological order, but of a moral and intellectual one.
>
> There is a serious reason for this. The time in which these characters live is *out of joint.* By this I am not referring only to war, revolution, the uprooting of individuals from their attachments, their expectations and their very lives—all of the stupendous wildness of the events which is the subject of the book. What I mean is, above all, the final impossibility for such characters (and for the author through them) to conceive of their own identity as a mere sequence of occasions in time—thinking of it in terms of the fundamentally continuous duration—the *durée*—that is the stuff out of which characters are made in the classical novel. What they experience instead is the shattering of this continuity in themselves as well as in the outer world. And, in the disruption of their private lives, the shattering of time itself. Hence, if they wish to maintain their identity, they must stake it on something more intimate than any occasion and more impersonal than their natural selves—a pure quality of being, sustained by an intrinsic accord with universal life.

The only triumph, according to this view, would be a triumph of a consciously directed reaction to distressing circumstances, either psychological or physical. And it seems to us, having "gone to school" for a while to Maxwell Anderson's *Off Broadway*, the Greek approach to drama was often "pure" in this sense. The weight of *Nemesis* was not the hidden heart of the drama—rather heroism, the hidden hope of those who are moved by *Nemesis.* And if Chiaromonte is right, there may be a natural return to portrayal of the hero as a man of attitude rather than as a man of observable success or failure. Certainly, in our time, quite a proportion of the world's population can experience *themselves* only if they are able to establish a conception of psychological destiny—apart and somehow independent of the circumstantial details of their lives over which they have no immediate control. Chiaromonte continues:

> In Pasternak's attempt to lay bare, within the confines of the novel, an individual consciousness that submits to events and is yet detached from them, that is reduced to pure thoughtfulness and yet remains lifelike, the Russian poet shows, among other things, that he is a truly modern writer, well aware that in the novel pure representation no longer interests us.
>
> To sum up, the assumption implicit in Pasternak's creation of characters is that what an individual thinks of the world, not his "nature," is the cause of his acts, and shapes his fate. The external world is ruled by chance, but the relation between man and events is governed by a necessity whose source is man himself. This is an original and profound view that could easily be connected with certain tendencies in modern thought and art.

With this as background, one might turn to Tennessee Williams' *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof.* According to Mr. Williams, the last act of the play was altered to suit the director, Elia Kazan, who wanted to have the author impart some feeling of "forward motion" to the characters. When

Williams finished the new version, he discovered, somewhat to his surprise, that he liked it, finding that he had indeed brought a certain moral order out of chaos. We discern, then, even in the less effective motion picture version, an element of heroism—not trite, but as real, if not more real, than the action of the rest of the play.

The current motion picture, *Roots of Heaven*, featuring Trevor Howard—and incidentally the repetition by Errol Flynn of much of his characterization in *The Sun Also Rises*—appears to be a genuine attempt to define, as Chiaromonte puts it, the man by the attitude. Howard starts an apparently hopeless one-man crusade against the extinction of elephants by "big game hunters" in French Equatorial Africa. The effort is made to portray something of the feeling which may be gradually aroused in men of latent conscience by a dedicated person, so that among both natives and Europeans are those who respond in a manner somewhat similar to the moral awakening caused by Mohandas Gandhi. The issue, of course, is not really the possible extinction of the elephant, but of *ahimsa*, or harmlessness. Faulty in parts and overdone as this production may be, its memory will linger for a while, perhaps because the plot turns on a comparatively "small" cause rather than a great one. It is the sort of cause to which a single individual might conceivably dedicate himself and achieve results. Dramatic efforts of this sort are quite possibly more helpful in clarifying the meaning of "pacifism" than all the "peace pledges" which have ever been signed, for the one who experiences the drama also experiences pacifism as an attitude rather than an act—the act of refusing to bear arms.

Not all the good plays come to Southern California, but Arthur Miller's *A View from the Bridge* arrived some time ago and is proving as successful among devotees of good theatre as it deserves. Miller not only writes with deep compassion and understanding—he also brings his characters to such vibrant life that the sense of understanding is Basil, transferable. A *View from the Bridge* is contemporary tragedy, the tragedy of a man who destroys himself when he meets his particular *nemesis.* A minor but not unimportant theme contrasts the true virtue of an old-world conception of honor and responsibility with the confusion of ideals incident to immigrant life in the United States.

European and American standards are manifestly different when it comes to motion picture production, also. This contrast is illustrated by a French movie, *Tempest in the Flesh.* Without sensationalism, the producers and actors of this excellently executed film deal honestly with a subject their American counterparts have never attempted. Moments of beauty and moments of sordidness have alike a fully human touch, and the anguish incident to nymphomania evokes an appropriate sympathy without recourse to conventional attitudes. Again, "forward motion" appears in the inner struggles of the main participants, yet a forward motion that is organic to the agonies portrayed, rather than, which is so often the case in movies, appearing contrived.

COMMENTARY
LATIN AMERICAN QUEST

IT is probably a good thing that only two MANAS writers both happened to see *The Roots of Heaven* at about the same time, and decided to write about it at the same time, or there might have been still another view of the film to print in a single issue! Well, the views may be different, and even in a sense somewhat "opposed," but both conclusions, we think, are worth considering.

An interesting fragment of modern history in connection with the "quest for identity" is found in a study of recent Peruvian poetry, *La Poesía Postmodernista Peruana,* by Luis Monguió, published in 1954 by the University of California Press. The impact of the first world war on the poets of Peru, especially the younger ones, led to a loss of faith in traditional authority and values. "There began," says Monguió, "an era of literary anarchy, of restless search." Ecstatic egoism was an early note (Guillén), recalling but by no means equalling Walt Whitman:

> My blood is the juice of new vineyards.
> I am the flower of the Races.
> Before me, Dionysius.
> Over me, the Supreme Poet:
> Jesus the Nazarene.
> We collaborate in the eternal work,
> And through the centuries, we, the great,
> Extend a helping hand.

The "Nativist" movement marked the inevitable break with European influence. At the outset the poets celebrated those born in America, but of European parentage. Soon after, they sought roots among the Indians, the Incas. Nazario Chaves Aliaga exclaimed, "Indio: Be wine for my cup and blood for my veins!" Then the sense of himself not being wholly Indian makes him say: "Indio: Avenge yourself of all that exists, but without spilling a single drop of blood."

Disappointment that the Indians failed to rise in splendor after centuries of neglect and abuse led to comment in the literary magazines:

> There is no Peruvian nation. There will not be one until the patient Indian race—forgotten by herself and by us—submerges herself in the fecund sea of our Nationality.

But if the Indians would not respond to the poets, there was still the *Mestizo*—the new man of mixed blood, Indian and Spanish. "The Mestizo," it was said, "is the soul that gives life to America."

The next theme was the Social Message, written, Monguió points out, not by proletarian poets, but by men in the professions, often of substantial social and financial position, for and about the proletariat. These writers "felt with the oppressed classes, the laborer, the destitute." They spoke with humanitarian ardor. Vallejo wrote of—

> Anguish of a people with hopes of men
> Of men willing to suffer,
> To fight for all, and to fight
> So that the individual will be a man. . . .

Vallejo longed for the humanization of the entire world:

> This humanity to him meant brotherhood, love, and happiness. It was worth sacrificing the individual physical life for. His idea of death was revolutionary. He saw victory over death, not in an after-life in heaven, but in a better life here on earth for those who remain.

Vallejo cries out in compassion:

> Loved be he who has bedbugs
> He who wears torn shoes in the rain
> . . .
> He who catches his finger in a door,
> He who has no birthdays
> The one who lost his name in a fire,
> The animal, the one who resembles a parrot,
> The one who resembles a man, the poor rich
> The pure destitute, the poor poor!

Monguió's concluding chapter deals with "Pure Poetry"—poetry, that is, which no longer makes propaganda, but is the authentic vision of the individual. It avoids "the disorderly and the vulgar at one extreme, and the fastidious and pretentious at the other. It is a synthesis of emotional expression and feeling, without

boundaries of country or social classes, more universal."

These few words, translated for us by a friend, give evidence of the ferment going on all about us—of the longing and the search for identity of other peoples of the West. Unfortunately, the interpretation of the Latin American cultures to the people of the United States is left to scholars and people with special interests. There is too much narrowly political reporting and not enough leisurely essaywriting about the great countries to the South. Some day, one hopes, we shall have journalists (and publishers to print what they write) who will assimilate and review for us the cultural developments and transformations taking place in these lands. Even in the political area, we are woefully ignorant. How many Americans, for example, have ever heard of Lazero Cardenas, a living ex-president of Mexico who held once during the 1930's, and who, if his biographer can be believed, came very close to being Mexico's Abraham Lincoln?

Apart from the educational values of knowing about such matters, there is the possibility that a richer understanding of the culture of our neighbors would lessen the sense of crisis in American life. Awareness of what is enduring in human experience has a stabilizing effect on the emotions.

Today, only the colleges and the specialized journals attempt to complete the circuit of such communications. It is ironic that the only popular magazine dealing regularly with other countries is *Holiday*, which is devoted to places we can go to spend our money and enjoy the picturesque environment created for us by "foreigners."

CHILDREN
. . .and Ourselves

"WHAT IS A TRUE UNIVERSITY?"

IT is interesting—though hardly surprising—that the best philosophical criticisms of American higher education should come to light in publications other than those devoted to the teaching profession. As men like Hutchins, Barr and Meiklejohn have long been contending, too much specializing in instruction tends to obscure the goal toward which all instruction should be aimed. The concept of education held by Jefferson, and exemplified by other pioneers of the American tradition, envisioned the development of "free men" by presenting them with enough riches of the mind to enable them to make truly individual evaluations—and, ultimately, political decisions. Only the tools of philosophy, aided by a knowledge of the history of important ideas, it seems, can bring this about. Partisan education, whether conceived as the training of young Americans to oppose young Russians, or contrived to foster the interest of a particular group of educationists, most obviously falls far short of the mark.

Apart from smaller journals with a general propensity for radical criticism, the *Saturday Review* provides one of the best examples of the philosophical criticism of education, by way of occasional distinguished articles on the subject. "What is a True University?" by Archibald MacLeish, former Librarian of Congress and now at Harvard, serves as an excellent case in point. Mr. MacLeish begins by recalling some contentions of Woodrow Wilson, voiced fifty years ago. Wilson argued that the American university "must have a purpose, and that the purpose should be the training of the young for American life, for the nation's service." We hear a good deal about "service" to the nation, today, but Mr. MacLeish shows that our conception of service is very different from what Mr. Wilson had in mind. Wilson felt that the nation would be served best by an improvement in the quantity and quality of philosophical thinking, whereas, today, "service" is given a predominantly technological and military connotation. An educational goal which was once conceived to transcend partisanship has been reshaped for partisan ends. Mr. MacLeish writes:

> The argument for the revolutionary reconstruction of the American system of higher education to provide more specialists in technology and science is an argument based, of course, on the achievements of the Russians. That is, or is assumed to be, strength in appropriation committees and town meetings. We *must* keep up with the Russians; we are damned if we don't. But the trouble is—and it is a trouble university faculties increasingly observe—that we are also damned if we do. To compete with the Russians—particularly to emulate them at the growing edge of our national life where the character of the next generation of Americans will be determined—is to model ourselves on the Russians; and to model ourselves on the Russians is to substitute State for Nation and to accept of our own choice precisely the fate we have been struggling to avoid. The moment the production of specialists becomes the end and aim of American education, at that moment the State has triumphed in America, for specialists can only live in human society, as they live in the societies of the insect world, by composing together a swarm or hive or hill. We have learned, in the tragic failures of our foreign policy, what happens to us when we let Russian initiatives determine our responses. To carry that fatal practice into the shaping of the American future would be final, irretrievable disaster.

Mr. MacLeish apparently still hopes that we are capable of recognizing the sort of education we *should* have, and which the Russians cannot yet be expected to understand. "Our own kind" of education must be education that is an end in itself, and this means that the most significant "service to the nation" which the American college or university can perform is to retain its inherent right to self-determination—directed toward the discovery of broader truths than political verities. Mr. MacLeish continues:

> What is required, if we are falling behind in scientific inventiveness, is not a different kind of education but a better education of our own kind—the kind suitable to our society. And the last thing that will give us a better education of our own kind is an education oriented to satisfy the personnel requirements of a social machine, whether a business corporation or a nation with a capital N. The service

> of the nation may have been an adequate educational goal fifty years ago when nation and community were more or less the same thing, but today, when the old American conception of the human community is one thing and the new American Nation is very rapidly becoming another, "the American University" must define its purpose for itself. It must choose the needs it proposes to satisfy, not on the basis of the Defense Department's priorities, but on the basis of the character of the community, which it is the University's duty to preserve and transmit.

In a review of Arthur Larson's *What Are We For?* (Feb. 7 *Saturday Review),* Stuart Chase approves Larson's sentiments along the same lines when he writes: "We should encourage every tendency from whatever source and under whatever label which brings nearer the kind of world that all men want. We should—hold your hat—welcome sound technical aid to underdeveloped nations, no matter from *which side* of the Iron Curtain it comes! It helps mankind. We should promote negotiation on all levels, the rule of law, the World Court, a stronger United Nations. We should work unremittingly for people-to-people understanding—exchange of scientists, *tourismo,* international geophysical years, friendly competition in the arts and sports. Let us take 5,000 Russian freshmen into our colleges, not five." This is the broader view of which Mr. MacLeish speaks, though a view that has been difficult for professors and university administrators to maintain against the combined onslaught of huge government subsidies for the training of experts and the witch-hunting engendered during the McCarthy era.

Failure to educate for a global view, as Mr. MacLeish puts it, is precisely the cause of the famous South American indignities visited upon our Vice President. The provincialism of American policy abroad has turned many peoples against us. A mating of Arab Mohammedanism and Russian Communism is incongruous enough but, according to MacLeish and others, shortsightedness in U.S. foreign policy was directly responsible for this odd combination. McCarthyism is supposedly pretty well defunct, yet when thoughtful representatives of foreign governments read about the recent legislative attacks on the Supreme Court for its defense of freedom, they may be pardoned for doubting that the word "freedom" is much more than an empty shibboleth in this country. We have, as MacLeish suggests, become "an increasingly materialistic people, increasingly committed to the *status quo,* and therefore we are a fair target for the kind of propaganda that can most easily inflame the suspicions of impoverished peoples newly come to freedom."

It is a strange era indeed in which the true traditionalists in America's thought appear as the most useful radicals, but this is what has happened. Men like Hutchins, Barr, Meiklejohn, and MacLeish—yes, and one may legitimately include that rich man's radical, Cyrus Eaton—are suspect to many "American First" partisans because they reflect attitudes which may be found in the Federalist papers.

Mr. MacLeish concludes "What is a True University?" with the following paragraph:

> This recovery of our own tradition—this preservation of our own values only education can achieve. If "the American University" is truly to serve the nation it must truly serve the nation as the nation was conceived. And it must not hesitate in that understanding to oppose demands upon it by those who put another kind of Nation first. It must make its own decision, fix its own object, with the great tradition it alone can evaluate in mind. "The final synthesis of learning," Woodrow Wilson said, "is in philosophy. You shall most clearly judge the spirit of a university if you judge it by the philosophy it teaches; and the philosophy of conduct is what every wise man should wish to derive. . .The philosophy that informs American university education and which can influence so powerfully the conduct, the action of the American people must be a philosophy that the universities choose for themselves because they are universities and because they are American.

FRONTIERS

"The Responsibility of Peoples`'

A CORRESPONDENT writes to object to statements made in "What Are We Arguing About?"—the leading article in MANAS for Jan. 28. This reader says:

> I must take issue with your claim that the American people can be held responsible for the "mass man," for conformity, while, you say, the Russian people cannot be so held responsible. I disagree profoundly. Nothing except fear prevents the Russian people from rising up and overthrowing their repressive and controlling government. They can do it with force (which has been done before), whereas the American people (theoretically) can do it with the ballot.
>
> It must be admitted that all such proposals are theoretical. Actually, very different conditions prevail in Russia and the United States. In the U.S., a controlled press (controlled by moneyed persons interested in maintaining the *status quo),* movies, radio, TV, magazines, schools, and various and sundry churches and organizations are all engaged in spreading propaganda for Capitalism and free enterprise as the only decent and possible way of having a civilization worthy of the word. The American people are brain-washed quite as thoroughly as the Russian people. The method may be subtler, but it is just as effective. You yourself agree with this when you seem to place your hope in a mere 85,000 people out of the millions of voters, which is hardly an argument for placing the blame on the American people *en mass*e. If any segment is to be held responsible for events, it is the professional brain-washer, both here and over there.

The question of responsibility for the human condition is probably the oldest question in the world. Probably no judgments on this subject can be more than relatively true. If we could know precisely why any man is where he is, and what he seems to be, we should doubtless have the answer to all mysteries.

But it is surely possible to discern the general direction in which the truth may lie. For example, our correspondent, in comparing the Russian and the American people with respect to who or what controls their destinies, proposes that the Russians are "held in line" by fear of punishment, while the Americans, he suggests, are *seduced* into obedience by the persuasive techniques of propaganda.

While a man can blame a tyrant for trying to control his behavior by threatening his life, he can hardly make a similar complaint against his seducer, when it is fairly obvious that he enjoys being seduced—or obvious, at least, that he thinks he enjoys it. A man can free himself of the debasements of seduction by choosing another way of life. Why doesn't he do it?

Well, you can say that the propagandists are cleverer than he is, that he is vulnerable to their appeals. It is possible to say this, and it may be true, but you can't predicate a violent revolution on a claim of this sort. Such a revolution would be conducted by the clever people who are for the Right against the clever people who are not for the Right. It would be, in short, the replacement of an exploiting paternalism with a benevolent paternalism. This is all right, if you think that getting a reformed kind of paternalism is worth a bloody revolution, but our view is that no paternalism of any sort can sponsor a free society.

Further, while our correspondent seems to think that a bloody revolution is still a possibility, there is much evidence against this view. The power of the national State is incredibly strong. Violence may win in a country like Cuba, but it could not win in Hungary. We very much doubt that it is still possible in either Russia or the United States. In fact, we share with Everett Dean Martin (*Farewell to Revolution*) the opinion that violent revolution is a futile and fruitless undertaking, in modern times.

Our correspondent says that nothing except "fear" prevents the Russian people from making an uprising. It seems to us that only the men in Russian concentration camps are entitled to make this sort of judgment. It is one thing to challenge the power of an authoritarian State, and quite another to refuse to accept the premises of the "controlled press" and the other agencies of seduction in the United States.

In an absolute and subjective sense, a man is always "free" to resist. But in a discussion of the comparative merits of two social and political systems, it seems a bit extreme to reduce the systems

to equality by arguing that they would be the same if one of them ruled over a population of heroes and martyrs.

Our correspondent says that the American people "are brain-washed quite as thoroughly as the Russian people." This makes us wonder what an *un*-brain-washed man has to say, these days. The proposition, as put, sounds as though we would all be truth-loving and truth-understanding people if it weren't for the Machiavellians who manage our lives, either by fear or seduction. Is this the fact?

People have different ideas of what truth is, but the ones we have come across who seem to have a tenacious grip on at least some of the truth are not people inclined to blame either governments or propagandists for their troubles.

Actually, there are all sorts of social experiments being carried on in the world today, pursued by people who want to live under a kind of authority which is different from the national State. There are the Communities of Work in France and other European countries where, allowing for common human imperfections, extraordinary achievements in cooperation and sharing have been realized within the past ten or twelve years. There are groups like the Bruderhof communities which welcome like-minded people. Men and families are quite free to join such groups, if they are so minded.

Someone may say that this is all very well, but what about the rest of the people, who don't fancy such odd and possibly sectarian undertakings? Well, what about them? What do they want? Do you know? Does anybody know? What they want can probably be expressed in general terms, but when you get down to the conditions under which what they want is possible, you precipitate all sorts of arguments. Whose "fault" is this? The brain-washers? Or is it, possibly, that most of us are not quite grown up enough to know what we want, much less how to get it? And is it really fair to blame this condition on governments, which have a lot to answer for without holding them responsible for all human immaturities?

Of course, if you take the view that the people who *do* know what ought to be done should act in behalf of the others who haven't yet figured things out, then you need to go study Nikolai Lenin and the other revolutionists who thought they were smart enough to figure out a complete program of government and culture for other people. You can have that kind of revolution, if you honestly believe that, along with politics and morals, physics, biology, art, literature, and music ought to be regulated by commissars who know the truth about Everything.

The unhappy fact seems to be that tyrannical governments, on the one hand, and hidden and not-so-hidden persuaders, on the other, fill a vacuum in the psycho-social life of a mass society. It seems likely that we shall always have one or the other, until we learn to fill this vacuum ourselves.

Who else will fill it? True leaders of the people? This sounds a bit like Plato's Guardians.

While we are waiting for this problem to be solved, we might as well do what we can to fill the vacuum ourselves. It is obvious that the people of a free society must have learned how to be a free people. How do they get to be free? One thing we have learned from recent history: they don't get to be free by entrusting their future to a revolutionary élite. A thing which, it seems, we have yet to learn, is that people who have the qualities which make for freedom are usually pretty independent of seductive influences. They tend to live their own lives, even under adverse conditions. In fact, it is their determination and habit of living their own lives which, as time passes, begin to create the actual conditions of freedom. Ultimately, the environment adapts itself to the orbits of people who act in a free spirit.

There is no freedom without responsibility. Men who develop responsibility have a real moral claim on freedom, and a good chance of getting it. Our point is that there is plenty of freedom, now, in the United States, for the people who want it and are willing to work to get it. The fact that it can be had without blowing out the brains of the Bad People may be unromantic, and it may shift responsibility to individuals, but isn't that what we say we are—responsible individuals?