

THE ROMANTIC SPIRIT

MANAS is, we suspect,—after reading a number of attempts at definitions—an expression of the Romantic spirit. It is all right, we have decided, to be a Romantic, so long as you realize what is involved and keep on the look out for necessary exceptions and qualifications. The definition which led us to this conclusion is the following, taken from Beckson and Ganz' *Guide to Literary Terms*:

One of the fundamentals of Romanticism is the belief in the natural goodness of man, the idea that man in a "state of nature" would behave well but is corrupted by civilization. From this belief springs not only the Romantic admiration for the primitive and for the child, but the Romantic faith in the emotions. If man is inherently sinful, reason must restrain his passions; but if he is naturally good, then his emotions can be trusted. They may, indeed, lead him correctly when reason fails. Romantic individualism is reinforced by this belief, for a man may properly express his unique emotional self if its essence is good. . . .

A belief closely linked to natural goodness is that of the perfectibility of man, the idea that moral as well as mechanical progress is possible. Analogous is the Faustian striving after the sublime and the wonderful, that which transcends the mundane. In general, Romantics admire change, flux rather than stasis. Commonly in opposition to the established order, they advocate not only moral change but radical political change as well. The Romantic often sees as his enemy the successful bourgeois, the insensitive Philistine, who has a vested interest in the stable, respectable institutions of society.

Now come the exceptions and qualifications.

First of all is the question of "the natural goodness of man." It seems quite wrong to see only good in individual "natural" man and evil only in the institutions which men create. Obviously, along with the goodness, there is some natural badness in man. If the essence of Romanticism lies in being determined to blame all man's troubles on the big abstraction, "Society,"

we shall have to leave the fraternity. But more reasonably, it seems to us, Romanticism may be taken to mean the essential worth-whileness of the entire human project, and the inherent capacity of human beings to distinguish between the good and the evil in themselves and to learn to give expression to the good.

The fascination of the child and the primitive grows out of the intuition of this potentiality, felt to be present in the untried child and the uncomplicated man.

The Romantic cult of the emotions also needs qualification. Its justification was well put by Emerson: "Nothing great was ever accomplished without enthusiasm." Emerson also said: "Enthusiasm is the leaping lightning, not to be measured by the horse-power of the understanding." For a quotation which brings in the need for qualification, there is this from Bulwer-Lytton: "The prudent man may direct a state; but it is the enthusiast who regenerates it, or ruins." So the question is not one of being for or against emotions, but concerns the kind or level of feeling expressed in a given instance, and what the enthusiasm is about.

The point, here, is that you can always find prudent men, but the enthusiasts with vision are few in number, and the future, you may say, is in their hands.

The foregoing notes on Romanticism were prompted by a letter from a reader which seemed to embody the best of the Romantic spirit, making it appropriate to put together a little preface about this spirit before quoting the letter. Now, the letter, which expresses the enthusiasm of the writer for a passage in some recent reading:

That such a person as I, who have not disciplined my intellect or done the "homework" required to become articulate, should have come by

some alchemy of the spirit into union with the deep meaning expressed, must mean something important. If this happens to me, it must be happening to countless others scattered throughout the whole.

Could it be symbolized by the physical metamorphosis process, in which the individual is compelled to withdraw from the incorporating first (grub) stage, encased in a rigid exterior, in order to pupate. This process we know about. It is, first, a disorganization of the earlier system, followed by a slow reorganization of the original material into a new and very different system. The biology of the change is such that the organism feels a pressure that appears to come from without, but is really a result of its own inward growth. When the pressures become unbearable, something has to give, and then the old, now useless form must be discarded. An utterly new and transmuted form comes forth. But the agony of the transformation is not to be avoided. It is the resurrection process.

To my mind, no civilization that has mothered a culture has ever seemed to represent more than the "grub" stage, and when the transformation is finally over, can we not emerge human in quality? Then we would all share one heritage, be a part of one system that is articulated for all alike.

On the periphery of our present system, where sensation is experienced, entropy has set in. This is the disintegrating aspect of the process. But the human spirit, using the mind may be able to reorganize the "degraded" energy and bring it into relation with a new state of being—the only begotten son.

Here are expressed longings and perceptions felt by many in these days of break-up and change. In religious terms, it is the dream of the Millennium. Socially, it is the vision of Utopia. People habituated to biological modes of thought wonder about the possibility of a radical "mutation" which will establish human life at a fresh level, instituting new values and relationships.

It is practically impossible not to dream in this way. The Oriental metaphysician might urge that these irrepressible longings arise from unconscious memories of lost Nirvanas and intuitive anticipations of paradise to be regained. Less extravagant utopian thinkers might say simply that

the imagining of an ideal society peopled by ideal individuals is a kind of organic or racial memory of past simplicities. Empirically-minded idealists might argue that all we can do is take these feelings as given in subjective experience and make the most of them. What seems important to acknowledge, here, is the inevitability of such longings, and the possibility that they are premonitions of entirely natural processes of human development.

We have another text embodying the Romantic spirit, which comes from a very different source. *Liberation*, the radical monthly, has been running a lot of material on Cuba in recent months. David Dellinger, one of the editors, has visited Cuba at least twice and contributed long articles on Castro's revolution. Critics have been given space also. The issues of the Cuban revolution have become so complex with overlays of ideological claims and sloganized simplifications that the MANAS editors decided to wait a while before writing anything more about it. Meanwhile, however, there is this letter from a Cuban radical which appears in *Liberation* for April. (Copies at 30 cents available from *Liberation* office, 110 Christopher Street, New York 14, N.Y.) The writer is an anarchist who explains his position of support to Fidel Castro. He says:

I hope you realize that the "State" in Cuba is not the same as in the United States. No matter how good the State is it is always an anonymous monster infringing upon one's individual freedom. Yet, when the State is a criminal father he deserves to be done away with violently or nonviolently, but when the State is a solicitous mother concerned about her children's welfare, a cooperative anarchist like myself has to think twice before he goes into conflict with it. Especially when that motherly state has such powerful enemies as the international elites of Wall Street, Inc., and its mercenaries. . . . To say that Fidel Castro is a Communist puppet is a gross undervaluation of his personality. Dave Dellinger [a *Liberation* editor] has seen him personally and knows what a great humanist he is. As long as people like Castro, Dorticos, Guevara, Almeida, and others, remain in control of the state, I feel our humanism is

safe from corruption. And I am willing to cooperate for unity even if it means keeping to myself my disagreements in regard to means or style. These disagreements, however, have to do with the means and style of a few revolutionists who do not really represent the spirit of our humanism. I disagree with speeches made with slogans rather than thoughts. I disagree with violence and hatred as a style. I disagree with coercion and demagoguery as a means toward social justice. But since neither Fidel nor El "Che" practices these abominable things, I am glad to see them work and sweat side by side with the peasants. And I know that I have no right to be against the Revolution because it is not utopian like my pacifist-anarchist ideas.

You may ask, why not then become a Socialist or a Communist, if you think anarchism is utopian? I do not become a member of an organization because I have my own cooperative anarchist convictions. It is not my fault that most men are so drunken with the patriarchal morality of power and domination that they do not wish to abandon their privileges unless a Socialist or Communist revolution takes them away. I believe that no man ought to be a slave of his labor and an enemy of his gratification, but I realize that the power elites are too strong to be fought with a pamphlet or a soap box. And all I can do as a cooperative anarchist is to hope to reach those who think like me and that we can then all get together and try to live according to our convictions. If the capitalist State or the socialist State withers with the creation of many anarchist cooperatives, so much the better, but I must not think of this aim unless I forget the insurmountable difficulties standing in the way: (1) over-privilege; (2) vested interests; (3) positions of dominance. If we are honest about pacifist anarchism, we must accept the fact that it appeals only to idealists, intellectuals, tramps, and underdogs. No self-respecting shopkeeper, executive or Philistine can ever want to give up his selfish cravings unless he becomes an idealist. And to become an idealist is not an everyday phenomenon. Hence pacifist anarchism is utopian as long as it is a philosophy based on voluntary association and individual decision. But this does not mean that it cannot be practiced on a small scale. Nor does it mean that one cannot get together with people to live for love and freedom instead of power and domination.

If the Cuban government allows private property to exist there is no reason why it would not allow anarchists to get their private property together and organize their communities, schools of living, etc.

Due, perhaps, to the fact that almost nobody except anarchists reads the classics of anarchist literature any more, few people realize the sheer romantic vision of the anarchist ideal. It is the vision which keeps alive all movements which cherish human freedom. The purity of the anarchist ideal is doubtless the reason why it is never realized, but the ideal loses its power when subjected to compromises. The Cuban anarchist quoted above has compromised some of his practice, with what seems an adequate explanation, but not his ideal. He cherishes the hope that his vision of the good society—now attractive only to "idealists, intellectuals, tramps, and underdogs"—will be realized at least by small groups. Then there is the possibility, however remote, that shopkeepers, executives, and Philistines will some day become idealists.

With quotations, we can put together a dialogue contrasting the Communist with the Anarchist point of view. Bakunin speaks first:

Freedom is the absolute right of all adult men and women to seek permission for their action only from their conscience and reason, and to be determined in their actions only by their own will, and consequently to be responsible only to themselves, and then to the society to which they belong, but only insofar as they have made a free decision to belong to it.

Lenin replies:

This absolute freedom is nothing but a bourgeois or anarchist phrase (for ideologically an anarchist is just a bourgeois turned inside out). It is impossible to live in a society and yet be free from it. The freedom of the bourgeois writer, artist or actress is nothing but a self-deceptive (or hypocritically deceiving) dependence upon the money bags, upon bribery, upon patronage.

And we socialists expose this hypocrisy, we tear away this false front—not in order to attain a classless art and literature (that will be possible only in a socialist, classless society), but in order to oppose a literature hypocritically free, and in reality allied with the bourgeoisie, a literature truly free, *openly* allied with the proletariat. (*Party Organization and Literature*, 1905.)

Bakunin rejoins:

They [the Marxists] say that such a yoke, the dictatorship of the state, is the inevitable but transitional remedy for achieving the maximum liberation of the people. . . . We answer that any dictatorship can have only one aim: self-perpetuation.

We see that the Cuban anarchist who supports Castro is caught in this dilemma. In a way, he admits Lenin's stricture that the anarchist is an upside-down bourgeois, for he makes the practice of anarchism by small groups dependent upon the continuation of private property in Cuba. But in view of the correctness of Bakunin's final conclusion about dictatorship, what else is he to do?

If we face all the implications of this situation, we see that the issue is really not one of rival ideologies or of political systems, but of the quality of human beings. "To become an idealist is not an everyday phenomenon" sums up the real problem, which is the creation of an environment and an atmosphere of cultural influences hospitable to the spread of idealism.

The Romantic faith is the faith that this is possible.

The need, today, is for statement of the issue in terms that will relate to a new Romantic vision. To help with this, we have still another text, an article in the Spring 1961 *Landscape*, by Peter van Dresser, one of the editors. The title is "The Modern Retreat from Function." Following is Mr. van Dresser's psychological reading of the "blenderized" environment which is rapidly becoming typical of the United States:

. . . in an ideally laid out suburban development, one gets an overwhelming impression of a gay toyland peopled with brightly painted lawn-mowers, baby garden tractors, prefabricated pergolas and aluminum clothes dryers. The toyland picture with the gleaming two-toned ice-cream-sundae-colored automobiles parked beneath the carports. (Their beautiful but obscene engines and members are of course concealed beneath softly-rounded and magically glittering frostings.)

The psychological shock of rough textures is carefully avoided here; walls and floors are dulcet planes of featureless plastic or enamel; lawns are uninterrupted velvet. Only an occasional fireplace chimney of ashlar masonry, or a carefully varnished panel of knotty pine is allowed to symbolize a pioneering heritage.

In this careful cosmetic world there are no gnarled people, no mature or older men and women whose faces, bodies and hands have been formed and indented through direct contact with the brines, caustics and tannins of elder nature. When these people, in response to vestigial urges, penetrate the wilderness briefly on summer vacations, they do so sheltered in their hydromatically propelled perambulators, cared for and distracted by the multitude of gay gadgets such as folding stoves, shirt-pocket radios, collapsible plastic furniture, nourished through the umbilical cord of intricate transport and communications. The Grecian exposure to sun and wind is after all achieved only in carefully selected beaches, resort spots or dude ranches, guaranteed free of chiggers, abrasive gravel and blackflies. Painful effort, sweat other than that which can be quickly removed in the locker room showers, gruelling and permanently disfiguring contacts with the elements—such ingredients are discreetly missing.

More even than in play, this general and tacit evasion of the crudities of our root-contacts with the planet permeates our mode of organization of work. The rough physical tasks are still to be done; foodstuffs and fibers must still be brought forth from the dirt; animals killed and gutted; minerals wrested from rock veins, smelted and forged; massive objects moved, lifted, piled; trees felled and shaped; mountains of refuse disposed of. In the past all these processes, subdivided into a thousand lesser tasks, were undertaken by men—men with muscles, nerves: men who sweated. Uncounted deeds of individual valor, judgment, skill, seasoned with anxiety, effort and pride, formed the network of man's economic relationship to his globe. Men were marked physically, spiritually and mentally by the demands of their occupations—sometimes honorably, sometimes painfully.

In our emerging automated world this intimacy with the physical processes of existence is not in good taste. As on a small scale we conceal the play of vital activities behind euphemic shroudings, so on the larger stage entire regions are segregated to the massive chemurgies of our industry. Broad

pedmonts and prairies are devoted to the dreary but efficient monoculture of cotton, corn, wheat or tobacco; mineralized basins and littorals to the monstrous extraction and smeltings of iron, copper, coal; prodigious intra-metropolitan complexes to wildernesses of interlocking manufactures and processings. In sheer physical extent, such areas overwhelm suburbia; psychologically they are nevertheless subservient to it. The powerful and capable men who operate the great machines here are blighted with its fatally genteel pruderies. Wherever physically or economically possible, their housing developments and shopping centers caricature the dream world of chrome store fronts, picture windows and unctuously curving asphalt motor ways; wives move in a hypnotic orbit of easy-pay-plan color-styled bathrooms and living room suites, of shopping expeditions to the nearest glittering super market and its attendant beautician, seeking, unconsciously, escape from the overwhelming brutality of the technology about them.

In this environment, no balance of the physical, the intellectual and the esthetic may be expected to evolve. Here, especially, because of the sheer economic pressure towards ever mounting production, labors that demand participation of body and nerve are being reorganized into cerebrally guided, automatically coordinated mechanical processes. . . . We are heirs of a million years of a generally victorious struggle against cold, hunger, difficult terrain, carnivorous cunning; our nervous and glandular balance has evolved under the stress of exertion, effort, endurance. Individuals reared in the complete absence of such stimuli are not apt to be healthy, or sane.

A prudish avoidance or concealment of physical challenge in the world about us is much more apt to result in a pseudo-refinement, a pseudo-spirituality with an accompanying drive toward cruelty and violence in some specialized department of civilization, than it is to result in the development of full-blooded humans capable of the exercise of all the nobler human emotions. "Overcivilized" (i.e., culturally imbalanced) societies of the past are notorious in mass exercises in cruelty—gladiatorial combats, animal baiting, gang slave labor, massacres of prisoners and the like. After the experiences of the last world war and in the face of mounting statistics of mechanical violence in our own cities and highways, can we confidently assert that such a compensation mechanism is not at work in our own society?

This is the other side of the picture—the shiny, rigid surface of the "grub" stage in our cycle of civilization. Mr. van Dresser has some suggestions for the inward transformation, but what interests us here is the diagnosis from a field which has probably surpassed all others in modern times—the applied arts of architecture and industrial design.

Metamorphosis, mutation, regeneration, transformation—call it what you will—we need it badly, and we must hope it is on the way. But for men, for human beings, this sort of change will have to be in some measure a self-conscious change. We need first to recognize that the socialist society of the present is as vulnerable to the weaknesses Mr. van Dresser describes as the capitalist society. Politics has no remedy, and neither has economics. Our trouble is a failure of the romantic vision and a poverty of worthy ends.

REVIEW

INDIVIDUAL CONQUEST IN THE AIR

FATE IS THE HUNTER by Ernest K. Gann (Simon and Schuster, 1961) will capture and hold the attention of every reader who is partial to stories of the air. This is not a novel like Gann's *The High and the Mighty* but a personal narrative based upon the author's rise from barnstorming biplane pilot to captain for a leading airline. The essence of the book, perhaps, is its many-sided approach to the understanding of that mysterious appeal which flight has for so many men. The Preface begins:

This is not a war story—and yet it is. Any tale in which the protagonists are so seriously threatened they may lose their lives demands an enemy capable of destruction.

The difference between what is told here and familiar war is that the designated adversary always remains inhuman, frequently marches in mystery, and rarely takes prisoners. Furthermore, armistice is inconceivable and so is complete victory for either side.

This war continues as you read these words and must prevail so long as man insists on striving for progress.

None of the warriors here involved were forced into battle, a circumstance which removes a certain amount of ugliness and the saddening, hopeless sense of futility normally created when the soldiery is impressed. Here the human combatants have engaged themselves willingly, knowing full well that their blood might stain the field.

Therefore this is the only kind of war which might be considered inspiring.

There is only one phase of flight about which Mr. Gann remains in ignorance. When he confesses, "I know little of military aviation," he is not only admitting to a lack of knowledge but also, we realize as the narrative progresses, to an independent spirit's desire to remain as far away from military operations and psychology as possible. We are not handily trying to represent Mr. Gann as a pacifist, but may be excused for being taken by the following comment, which

originated when the news of Pearl Harbor reached Mr. Gann in Brazil:

Modern war is a sort of muddled chaos in which people who are not naturally heroic are obliged to become so, and those most likely to thrill at the bugle charge are often left fixing the plumbing. . . .

Most war heroes are lost in the gigantic uncontrolled shuffle. If they happen to have a predilection for disagreement and are lucky enough to have found a favorite charger to mount their passions, then some far removed personality with his fingers hopelessly stuck in the flypaper of complications orders the charger sent away to another land where someone fancies it is needed, but it is really not needed at all. This is called logistics. It is sometimes very tiring for those who would be pugnacious.

But we should hardly give the impression that *Fate is the Hunter* constitutes simply the author's social and political commentaries, profound or otherwise. This is an extended logbook covering many years of an interesting pilot's life. Since the writer has an excellent sense of humor we are able, furthermore, to enjoy through his eyes a number of his contemporaries, pilots temperamental or austere, whom we might otherwise not have cared for.

And Gann can readily laugh at himself or confess his wondrous ignorance in various stages of development. Take for example his account of his first opportunity to fly a four-motored transport plane under the watchful eye of an instructor. The initial landing had been remarkably smooth for a beginner, but then—

The second landing has the men in the control tower reaching for their alarm buttons. In fact, it is not a single landing but an endless series of angry collisions between the airplane and earth, each separated by spasms of engine roar as McCabe tries grimly to terminate the steeplechase. The entire exhibition is a resounding tribute to the plane's manufacturers. Incredibly the plane is still in one piece when we eventually traverse the entire airport and execute a final, deliriously drunken bounce into the air again. . . .

This time I am determined there will be no more bouncing. I will astonish McCabe with the featherlike touch of our wheels.

I have not reckoned with the powerful psychological aftereffect of the previous landings. Now, suddenly, fear of repeating the debacle dominates my reactions. Earth-shy, I level off a good thirty feet above the swiftly passing cinders. Even McCabe is robbed of time to avert the crisis. The DC-2 hesitates as if bewildered by this giddy height and, abandoning all hope, stops flying instantly. Luckily I have kept the wings level, for the descent is as direct as an elevator's. There is no energy left for bouncing. We hit on all three points with a soul-shattering thump.

I am quite defeated. The sound of the landing is still echoing in my ears as I struggle at least to keep the ship rolling in a straight line. The sound was like a very bad accident in a large hotel kitchen.

"That," says McCabe, massaging his back, "was not a landing. It was an arrival."

Much of the book, like the foregoing, is just plain good reading, but we also learn a great deal from Mr. Gann in a way not dissimilar to the disarming instructiveness in matters of aviation accomplished by the late Nevil Shute. We are taken to every country, through every kind of storm, and share in the eccentricities of every type of aircraft save the military. The closest Mr. Gann got to the armed service of his country was when he was ferrying construction material to Goose Bay. This was a former Hudson Bay Company outpost:

Prior to the establishment of the airport the only inland habitation in this region was a Hudson Bay Company Trading Post at Northwest River which served the frugal needs of a few trappers. All else for hundreds of miles about was solitude. To the north and west, the charts openly confessed complete ignorance of tremendous areas, not even bothering with the apology UNEXPLORED.

Yet in this unforgiving wilderness, to which everything of any size had to be brought laboriously by sea, there was now such energy and focus of activity as no trapper could conceive in his most drunken delirium. For Goose Bay was being transformed while the bewildered caribou watched from the forest, and the salmon crowding in the Hamilton River discovered new and unnatural hazards to frustrate their urge to spawn.

There was not to be found a particle of good in any of this. Even the most warlike, the most devout and obnoxious worshipers of everything modern, regretted the intrusion. Everyone who came to Goose Bay was openly ashamed. It was impossible to find any thrill or satisfaction in this rape of the primeval, yet because of a distant and basic hatred between types of their own species, not even the wisest of men could offer an alternative.

COMMENTARY
ANTI-1984

THE reason why Mr. van Dresser's *Landscape* article seemed so important to quote, and at such length, is that he dramatizes brilliantly some of the reasons for changing the focus of modern social criticism. For at least two centuries, the Romantic vision has been largely political in its formulation of the ideal society. This focus worked with constructive effect so long as there were massive injustices that could be identified by political criticism. Today, however, in large areas and thickly populated sections of the earth, political criticism no longer has the same specific targets. The essential human problems now have a different form. Political problems still exist, of course, but in the societies we speak of—the technologically advanced industrial societies—the fundamental issues are not political. It is no coincidence, on this view, but a historically expected development, that lack of social purpose and individual aimlessness are already appearing in Communist societies—Jugoslavia, for example—where the pattern of technological advance and the material image of the good life are similar to those of capitalist societies.

If you read carefully what Mr. van Dresser says, you begin to get a conscious explanation for an uneasiness and distaste that—for most of us, at any rate—has lacked a rational ground. If you take, one by one, the inventors, engineers, and manufacturers who have brought into being the "dulcet planes of the featureless plastic" culture he lays out before the reader, you will find, no doubt, each one of them to be a conscientious, hardworking individual. You may even be one of them yourself. But put all these ingenious developments together, and they *don't work*. That is, the "gracious living" they are all intended to make possible isn't living and it isn't gracious. The total effect is effete and often vulgar in a tiresomely slick way. So, to get some *life* in the living room, you go out and buy a couple of imitation African masks to introduce a vivid note

of barbarism. And then you realize that the masks are phony too, and represent a longing so universal that you can get quite a variety of symbols of barbarism from the injection mold people, who also know how to recognize a good thing.

It isn't just the comedians who are sick. Our Toyland homes in Disturbia are protected by missiles that probably won't work either, and if they *do* work, we'll soon find out what this sort of "protection" means.

Well, what can we do about it?

Mr. van Dresser has these proposals:

What is required is the opening up of our productive arrangements to a new intensity and opportunity for personal skill, personal creative mastery of useful processes, personal contact with the basic aliment of life. This implies a reorganization of the technical and economic landscape, a retreat from over-centralization, over-organization and over-mechanization; a re-emphasis of the human scale, a closer symbiosis between the human community, the soil, and the total pattern of indigenous—both living and inorganic—resources. It implies a re-direction of the enormous social energy now consumed by the Frankenstein drive towards endlessly increasing complexity, power, size and fake refinement. Such a shift, one can guess, would result in a society boasting far less applied horsepower but far more applied science, skill and artistry; less plate-glass, plastic and chrome and more lovingly-laid masonry and beautifully worked wood; fewer superhighways but more richly diversified countrysides, towns and cities; less speed and multiplication but greater fruitfulness. Above all, the insensate lust for aggrandizement and technological mercantile conquest which characterizes our culture would diminish before the lure of self-conquest, of internal, personal and community cultivation. But without a renaissance of pride and delight in grasping and manipulating the stubborn but priceless realities of the soil, of rock, of timber; of growth, muscular effort, discomfort and even danger, the glitteringly sterile domination of unrelieved mechanism will crystallize about us into the nightmare environment foreshadowed by a Capek, a Huxley or an Orwell.

Mr. van Dresser seems to be talking about an environment created by artisans with humanist

goals, but actually he is describing in generalized terms the surroundings which human beings of a certain sort would eventually call into being, if those human beings existed or were sufficiently numerous.

Implicit in this ideal are extensive reforms in education, in cultural ideals, and, finally, in the essential preoccupations of the mind—or, in other words, the prevailing philosophy of life. What that philosophy should be, or will become, we have only the barest hints, as yet. What we take note of, here, is the fact that the most constructive criticism we are getting is now coming from thoughtful specialists. Some weeks ago (in *MANAS* for April 19, in the article, "The World's Work"), it was suggested that the specialists who deal with the actual fabric of some phase of modern life are in closer touch with the true problems of modern man than most of the moralists and *all* of the political thinkers. The statement was this:

It is, therefore, the men who speak out of the intensity of personal experience, yet show a grasp of human affairs and problems beyond the immediate area of that experience, who can command our attention, these days. They have the maturity of seasoned specialists. This maturity is the product of a non-specialized sense of proportion and a general regard for the welfare of the human race.

Mr. van Dresser provides an excellent example of this maturity and sense of proportion. But what the specialist cannot do is take action beyond the scope of his specialty. Nor can he do very much *within* his specialty, so long as his undertakings lack popular support.

It remains for the non-specialized individuals throughout the land to recognize, develop, and apply in as many directions as they can the insights which the best intelligence of our time is now supplying. It is also important, of course, to give what support one can to organs of expression such as *Landscape* (published three times a year, \$2.50 by subscription, single copies \$1, Box 2149, Santa Fe, New Mexico). Without *Landscape*, a paper undoubtedly kept in being by its publishers

as a labor of love, men like Mr. van Dresser would have no forum.

CHILDREN

. . . and Ourselves

GROUND'S FOR OBJECTION—AND ACTIVE YOUTH

BERTRAND RUSSELL'S review of Herman Kahn's *On Thermonuclear War*, in the April 3 *New Republic*, should make it easy for everyone to understand why people go on "peace walks." The attitude of many of the experts seems to be that a nuclear war is so much a matter of historical inevitability that the most sensible thing to do is to calculate what will happen afterwards.

Lord Russell combines his review of Mr. Kahn's book with a report on a somewhat similar evaluation of the weapons race written in Moscow by one Major General Talenski. From the viewpoint of "scientific objectivity," both accounts seem to be very similar, which explains the following remark from Russell: "While reading their [Kahn's and Talenski's] pronouncements, I imagined myself a member of one of the newly emancipated nations and I was considerably disquieted by the thoughts which the two pronouncements were likely to generate in such a reader." Lord Russell continues:

Mr. Kahn concedes that we cannot tell what would happen in such a war and that the world would perhaps never recover, but he makes somewhat unconvincing attempts to persuade the reader that war would not be as catastrophic as many of us think. He believes that the genetic effects will only produce 10 million defective children, and he believes that the number of deaths in a thermonuclear war can be immensely reduced by the provision of shelters in cities, on which he urges the US Government to spend \$30 billion. Given this amount of expenditure, he offers us somewhat pallid consolation: he says that, if the US can get through the first three months and adequately decontaminate the workers, there will be a reasonable chance of survival, but he is not at all confident that these conditions will be fulfilled. He attempts to arrive at arithmetical estimates of the degree of damage which the US Government ought to find, what he amusingly calls, "acceptable." His limits, however, are somewhat wide and vague. He

says that 200 million deaths would be "acceptable," but not 2 billion.

Apparently there are a growing number of people who can't stomach looking at the future in this fashion. In an article called "Stirrings on the Campus," Peter Schrag, of Amherst College, reports that the "silent generation" of our college campuses is being stirred by the political prospects of the future. Mr. Schrag explains:

When John Kennedy said "What good are ideas unless you make use of them?" he was speaking for a lot of college students and when he announced the Peace Corps the response was automatic *because it made the life of the college student immediately relevant to the problems of the world*, and not merely a symbol of a "good deal" called education.

When the House Committee on Un-American Activities was picketed in San Francisco in 1960, the Committee produced a motion picture of the ensuing riot called *Operation Abolition* which purports to show the connection between "hard core Communists" and student "Communist dupes." If the connection was made, then undergraduates are involved at the heart of what is known as the Communist conspiracy. If the connection was not made, then students are the victims of political demagoguery. In either case, they have been made "political." The reaction of student audiences who have seen the film is anything but apathetic.

Mort Sahl quipped that a conservative is one who believes that nothing should be done for the first time. That applies to the campus. The Goldwater groups, the fans of Ayn Rand did not appear until liberal organizations had been started. The students who are defending the House Un-American Activities Committee did not make a move until others had petitioned for its abolition. In each case the "conservatives" were *responding* to the liberals.

When *Time* cited a new Harvard publication called *Advance* as an example of reviving conservatism, the *Harvard Alumni Bulletin* printed the following letter from an undergraduate:

If one were forced to categorize, the obvious conclusion based on the evidence of the past two years would be the exact opposite of the conclusions reached by *Time*. There has been a marked liberal revival here. Emerging spontaneously during this

period have been student groups to fight the loyalty oath provision of the National Defense Education Act, to support Southern Negro sit-in demonstrators, to urge nuclear disarmament, and to facilitate the establishment of a national peace corps. While the distinction between, and legitimate definition of, the words "liberal" and "conservative" are somewhat in dispute these days, it can fairly be said that the above-mentioned positions are those taken by prominent liberals, in the common American definition of the term. It is these groups which have captured the imagination of the activist elements here. They have signed petitions, picketed, written letters to Congressmen, visited State Department officials, held mass demonstrations, sponsored lectures and seminars, and kept themselves on the front pages with almost monotonous regularity in recent months.

And then there are the peace walks, concerning which we really should obtain an account for MANAS readers from a participant. However, Wade Thompson offers some interesting sidelights on the appeal of peace walks and student demonstrations, under the not-altogether euphemistic title "Peace Walks Are Good for You" (*Nation*, April 29). Mr. Thompson, who teaches at Brown University—generally considered a conservative setting—undertook to help organize an Easter "march." The point of his report is that, when you come right down to it, the interesting and the romantic things are not happening any longer in the environs of the armed forces, but to and with the persons who are opposing the continuation of military thinking. Here is Mr. Thompson's story:

Well the crowd was not impressive in size, but certainly impressive in other ways. Peace marchers are extraordinarily mild and tolerant people. Some of them are deeply religious, others are almost anti-religious (my own pacifism is purely mathematical: one world minus one world leaves no world); but they all seem to feel that violence must be met by nonviolence, and that our enemies are practically as human as we are. Before we started our walk, I had planned to give a little speech on the propriety of passivity, but I found it totally unnecessary. "We'll take our licking and go on," said one powerful young man—and that ended that.

Moreover, peace marchers are surprisingly various. If you think all Americans look alike, you

should have seen the motley crew that I managed to collect: one lawyer on crutches, one baby carriage, I don't know how many Quaker bonnets, a couple of college professors, one jailbird, a minister from Rockville, a sexy young thing from New York, one advertiser who figured he would lose his machine-gun account, two painters who had just sold paintings, a juggler and a slew of Democrats.

The popular myth that anyone who undertakes to organize a peace walk will be heckled to death, may be exaggerated. I personally have initiated other public exhibitions of a faintly unpopular nature, and I have frequently been heckled—especially by phone. But this time I did not receive a single phone call, even though the newspaper gave us front-page headlines.

Finally, peace marches are bracing. They purify the blood, cleanse the spleen. They make you feel like a human being. Moreover, they remind you what lousy condition you're in. If you're too fat—and who isn't—what better way to get rid of the fat? Let's have sit-ups for peace, push-ups for peace, hundred-yard dashes for peace. That way we can get our bodies into almost as good condition as we hope our souls are in.

Well, let's stir things up a little more! As Thompson says, "One world minus one world leaves no world."

FRONTIERS The State of the Nation

THE *Nation* for May 13 has a review by Anatol Rapoport of two books by Lewis F. Richardson, both concerned with the application of mathematics to a study of the causes of war and the probability of war. The books are posthumously published. One is called *Arms and Insecurity*, the other, *Statistics of Deadly Quarrels*, both issued by The Boxwood Press and Quadrangle Books. Mr. Richardson, according to the reviewer, spent half his life studying war as "a quasi-deterministic phenomenon." He was a physicist and a Quaker and did this work with a deep concern for the future of the human race. The reviewer remarks:

The qualification "quasi" bespeaks the fact that Richardson's outlook never passed over into fatalism. "The equations," he wrote, "are merely descriptions of what people would do if they did not stop to think." He believed that man did have the power to rid himself of the affliction of war, but only if he understood the nature of its dynamics. This belief is in harmony with any scientist's belief in the power conferred by science. Nature can be controlled only if her laws are understood.

We shall not go any further in a discussion of these books, except to repeat the observation of Mr. Rapoport: "It is opportune that Richardson's work appeared simultaneously with Herman Kahn's *On Thermonuclear War*. If Richardson's books were read as widely as Kahn's, they might serve as a good antidote."

Here, we should like to call attention, once again, to the importance of the *Nation* as a magazine which is probably doing more than any other single publication in the United States to make people "stop and think." This issue—May 13—of the *Nation* is filled with articles providing full support to Lewis Mumford's charge in 1946 to the managers of our society: "Gentlemen, You Are Mad." The piece by Carl Dreher, "Why Our Missiles Lag," is a frightening examination of the built-in inefficiencies of the free enterprise and

profit system, when charged with the complex enterprise of national defense. Mr. Dreher is an engineer turned writer who has contributed numerous articles to the *Nation* on the social and political implications of the technological arms race. His present article is a review of a recent book, *The Crisis We Face: Automation and the Cold War*, by George Steele and Paul Kircher, in which the authors examine in some detail what they consider to be the reasons for the weaknesses of the technological armament of the United States. While a pacifist may take some wry satisfaction in the disclosure that the instrumentalities of the aircraft of the Strategic Air Command and the Atlas and Titan ballistic missiles "are poorly engineered, unnecessarily complex and incapable of reliable performance under combat conditions"; that inadequate launching facilities for the Polaris and Minutemen solid-fueled missiles may make these weapons ineffective; and that the missiles carried by the Polaris submarine cannot be maintained at sea, so that after months without maintenance they "may be of less use than a firecracker as a means of deterring the enemy," the spectacle of a once-great nation deceiving itself, not only by its reliance upon massive destructive power, but also by reliance on mechanisms of destruction that probably will not work, is depressing in the extreme. Mr. Dreher's own comment is that of a man who no longer has any doubt about his opinion. He writes:

My own feeling is that for all its spectacular features and a great deal of genuine creativity, in its "defense" aspect the missile and space program is a gigantic fraud. The American people have been sold a bill of goods. Waste, hack engineering, and hypercomplexity will continue to be tolerated because they provide employment and what is even more persuasive, profits for the great corporations engaged in their patriotic labors, the sincerity of which is attested by the price-fixing which was going on and will recur as soon as the cop is around the corner. . . .

Steele and Kircher comfort themselves in a spiritual way. This is their peroration: "If we lose [the nuclear war] and die we are still much better off

than the Communists. Forlorn atheists, the world is all they have. We have eternity."

Not all will share their confidence. A species capable of thought (and believing in God) that can contemplate the extermination of millions of its members over differences as trivial as those which exist between communism and capitalism as currently practiced, deserve only the oblivion for which it appears to be headed.

A few notes are not enough to establish the impact of this article, which should be read in full.

Another piece in the May 13 *Nation* is more encouraging. Writing on "A Revolt Against Shelters," Mary M. Grooms, a Rochester (N.Y.) housewife, tells how a group of aroused citizens discouraged the voters of a suburban (the Greece) school district from including in the district's building program a provision for fallout shelters. Mrs. Grooms concludes:

At this point everyone, on both sides, is trying to figure out why the vote went as it did. . . . local newspapers blossomed with letters from forum members opposing the shelter, forum members . . . distributed reprints of Gov. Meyner's article in *Coronet*, "Bomb Shelters Will Not Save Us," and contacted several Protestant ministers; . . . there were long reports in the newspapers. . . .

Perhaps these last-minute efforts were successful. Perhaps people are just more opposed to Civil Defense and fallout shelters than we had supposed. . . . At any rate, the parents in Greece [School District] drew a line on the arms race and said, "No further. You can't make us vote for our own children's burial vaults." Those who believe the American people can be herded like cattle should take note.

One of the most intelligent comments we have seen on the Cuban situation appears in the first editorial in this issue of the *Nation*. It says:

The President has honorably accepted full responsibility for the ill-fated, ill-advised, invasion fiasco; but he should go one step further and accept the challenge of the reliability of his intelligence sources. To this end, let him send a commission of distinguished Americans to Cuba. Let the members examine Cuba from tip to tip. Let them report their findings not only to the President (whose primary

reliance must still be on official sources), but directly to the public.

The *Nation* proceeds to list candidates for this commission, including university presidents, nationally known and respected publishers and editors, industrialists, financiers, labor leaders, jurists, religious figures, and some Latin American specialists. It is difficult to imagine a more sensible proposal, or one that could do as much to restore sanity to a tensely emotional and confused situation.

It seems reasonable to say that if the *Nation* could multiply its circulation by ten, its careful studies of national policy and searching analyses of national folly might become the means of creating a genuinely informed electorate. Those who have formed the habit of relying on the daily newspapers and the mass media news magazines for the facts of current events are living in a dream world of slogans and façades. A single issue of the *Nation* will make this plain. An annual subscription is \$8, single copies, 25 cents. The address of the *Nation* is 333 Sixth Avenue, New York 14, N.Y.