

How different the voice of President Roosevelt, who was not afflicted with such holy madness: "There are those who say there is no answer, that this great city and all great cities must hide in dark alleyways and dingy street buildings that disgrace our modern civilization; where disease follows poverty and crime follows both . . . I believe you will take this up as a body, in mutual confidence, and apply your most practical knowledge to this matter of housing our poor."

Or that even greater moment when he said: "I see one-third of a nation ill-housed, ill-clad, ill-nourished. It is not in despair that I paint you that picture. I paint it for you in hope — because the nation, seeing and understanding the injustice of it, proposes to paint it out."

There spoke the voice, as Mr. MacLeish puts it, of "beginners and begetters, changers and challengers, creators and accomplishers." The voice of a people moving with sanity toward a moral objective, not to win strategic advantage in a cold war, but to exalt the dignity of man.

Even so distinguished a lady as Mrs. Eleanor Roosevelt falls victim now and again to the current fevers. "One hundred forty-five persons were injured," she writes of the Peekskill riots; "Fifty busses were stoned, and a number of private cars, many of which did not contain people who had been at this concert, were molested and damaged. This is not the type of thing that we believe in in the United States. If peaceful picketing leads to this, all the pickets do is to give the Communists good material for propaganda . . . I was particularly sorry to hear that one of the busses and a number of cars which were man-handled by a particular group that was not controlled by the police authorities were cars that were returning from the Hyde Park Memorial Library and held on people who had been to the Robeson concert."

Mrs. Roosevelt, who has complained in her column that America's treatment of Negroes provides fuel for Communist propaganda and adds difficulties to her work on the Human Rights Commission of the United Nations, goes on to say that: ". . . if he (Mr. Robeson) wants to give a concert or speak his mind in public, no one should prevent him from doing so."

But this is not enough. She has already made the fatal concession to Mr. De Voto's principle of the "partial virgin." She is "particularly" sorry that visitors to Hyde Park were molested, along with others who had not been to the concert. She disapproves molestation of her friends a little more than of those with whom she is not in agreement. Her friends partake of the nature of innocence, and those with whom she disagrees of guilt, and she is led by her dis-

like to an implicit disavowal of the Bill of Rights. She does not mean it so, but that is what she says.

By saying it she permits Miss Hedda Hopper to crawl into the fatal breach there left unguarded, and tell her readers in the Los Angeles Times: "Paul Robeson will appear at Wrigley Field September 30. I must say he's giving our people plenty of time to heat up a reception." Thus a leading citizen of the world becomes linked—however wide the degree of difference—by careless thinking and a mutual enemy, to a common purveyor of small adulteries.

If the best and noblest among us falls victim to this sacred malady, it is not surprising that lesser men hasten to proclaim their infection. Thus the mayor of Los Angeles, his chief of police indicted for perjury, his leading detectives torn between bribery and extortion, his city overrun with gangsters, announces valid reason for a cleanup:

"Nothing is more welcomed by Communists and the subversive elements of our population than to see mistrust of government, confusion, disturbance, and hoodlums, racketeers and those who make crime their principal business profit, and the public interest suffer."

For a parallel one is obliged to go back to Alphonse Capone eighteen years before the District Court of Appeals wrote his views into law: "Bolshevism is knocking at our gates. We can't afford to let it in. We have got to organize ourselves against it, and put our shoulders to the wheel together and hold fast. We must keep the worker away from red literature and red ruses; we must see that his mind remains healthy."

Sometimes the inflamed grenadiers of the cold war, even though moving toward a common goal, break the line of march to stab a laggard, as when Mr. Arthur M. Schlesinger Jr., defending "The Right to Loathsome Ideas" among university personnel, ran afoul of Mr. Morris Ernst.

From the chilly heights of three years at Harvard, where he holds an associate professorship in the department in which his father occupies the Francis Lee Higginson chair of history, Mr. Schlesinger hurled the epithet "wretched nonentities" at three University of Washington professors who, combining sixty-six years of university teaching in their total experience, had been discharged—two for stating they were Communists, one for saying he had been.

Deploring the fact that the discharged men are "far more powerful in martyrdom than they were in freedom," and denouncing them as "contemptible individuals who have deliberately lived a political lie"—although it was their statement of the truth which proved their undoing—Mr. Schlesinger arrived at the tortuous conclusion that, "No

university administration in its right senses would knowingly hire a Communist . . . But, once given academic tenure, none of these can properly be fired on the basis of beliefs alone short of clear and present danger."

Mr. Ernst, perceiving the flaws of the argument, hastened to point out that the moral right to refuse to hire a scoundrel also carries with it the obligation to fire him, no matter how long he has browsed in the academic pasture. As for Mr. Schlesinger's theory of free speech in relation to clear and present danger, Mr. Ernst developed a totally new concept of speech. He distinguished between free speech as commonly practiced, and "secret speech" as practiced by Communists. The latter variety, he asserted, carries with it no immunities whatever.

Mr. Louis Russell, investigator for the Un-American Activities Committee and an avid reader of *The Daily Worker*, *The People's World*, *Masses* and *Mainstream* and *Political Affairs*, would be perplexed at Mr. Ernst's ideas about the "secrecy" of such speech. But he would agree with his conclusions, as one day Mr. Schlesinger will too, if he hasn't already; for they are all possessed, in only varying degrees, of the same affliction.

Nowhere does the epidemic rage more fiercely than among the publicists and critics and space-rate Cains who infest the half-world of the semi-slick "reviews." No approach may be made to any American work without evaluating it, for better or worse, against its Soviet counterpart, or estimating its effectiveness in the cold war.

Mr. John Gunther is reproved in the pages of the *Saturday Review of Literature* for his own reproof of Mr. Ernest Bevin, who called Premier Stalin and Marshal Tito "thugs." The reviewer of *Behind the Iron Curtain* pointed out that they are thugs, and in times like ours one must call a thug a thug. Mr. Clifton Fadiman, same magazine, worries about something called "the decline of attention," attributing it to "a wholesale displacement away from ideas and abstractions toward things and techniques." And who is to blame? "The movement toward displacement is the result of calculated policy in such police states as the Soviet Union." Mr. Elmer Davis, *Saturday Review* again, in passing on to a larger subject, and without any supporting evidence, refers to the "defenestration" of Mr. Jan Masaryk without a thought in his innocent mind of the death of Mr. James Forrestal. There is scarcely enough toad-meat to go around.

Where amidst this "formidable army of sychophants and delators" can be heard even the whisper of reason? Who in these frightened ranks has ever stopped to ask himself: Is this after all a matter of the intellect, an affair of some philosophic substance, a question not entirely to be resolved by incantation? Has any one of them heard

above the din from Brocken the voice of such a one as Mr. Thomas Mann saying: "I testify, moreover, that to my mind the ignorant and superstitious persecution of the believers in a political and economic doctrine which is, after all, the creation of great minds and great thinkers—I testify that this persecution is not only degrading for the persecutors themselves but also very harmful to the cultural reputation of this country?" No. That voice was not heard. The holy sickness not only maddens its victims; it deafens them as well.

These men who might have been the bravest and best loved, these soldiers of the intellect to whom a troubled people looks for truth, have abandoned the outposts of reason like unfaithful sentries in the night. Hand in hand and chanting tribal hymns they have deserted into the land of Chaos. There they sit in perpetual twilight, confuting folly with unreason, muttering like frightened murshids of the "mystery and menace of the Slavic soul." There they build their fires before the ancient totems and prepare to offer up in living sacrifice the mind of a generation.

\* \* \* \*