

# In the Magazines

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A paen to America. Not the usual God bless the status quo and our way of life lyric but a celebration of new possibilities and aroused sensitivities. Words and music by William Pannell Rock, a descendant, in fact, of Francis Scott Key and research assistant at the Center for the Study of Democratic Institutions (*Center Magazine*, November-December, 1971).

"Seven years ago I left the United States, determined to be an alien for the rest of my life. . . .

"The instruments of oppression were (and are) ones to which Americans of a certain temperament—mine, for instance—are particularly sensitive: the stringent rules and regulations governing middle-class white consciousness; the pressure to conform to the image of man according to the revelations of Madison Avenue; the absolutism of the American way of doing things—what I call The Law."

"[Upon returning to the States] I realized that I was simply a trauma without a circumstance: the anomie I was experiencing was only my own variation of America's *Angst*. Everywhere around me I saw the country in the throes of the conflicts I myself experienced. Every element I saw was in some recondite way familiar to me. America is my country: it is my own contemporary reality. It is America that is going through 'heavy changes,' and no American has a map. . . .

"What is utterly unique about America is that dissent—the challenge to moral values, the modification of alternatives, the criticism of cultural standards—is taking place within the context of the American situation as a whole. It is a fact that only America has the basic elasticity to change its cultural structure at this incredible pace, because the margin of revolutionary action, cultural, social, and institutional—that is, freedom—is greater in America than in any other country. . . .

"There is a revolution. And because the changes are not a settling of accounts with the past but with the future, it is also a renaissance. What I see, returning home, is some inscrutable combination of rebellion and revelation. What I see is new, frightening, and magnificent. It is the Great American Rebellion.

"What is a 'rebellion'? It is a revelation consequent upon rebellion, and a rebellion consequent upon revelation. The Rebellion is the traumatic rebellion against The Law and the equally dramatic revelation of possibly new but certainly alternative ways of being human. . . .

"The responses are legion. One is to grab at anything that looks like an absolute. The resulting god-

likeness is the neurotic symptom known to analytic psychology as inflation. It seems as though one is continually besieged by zealots claiming to have *the* answer, *the* elixir, *the* panacea—whether it is ecology, Christianity, Maoism, or any number of assorted esoterica. . . .

"In all the consternation of the Great Rebellion, I see yet another kind of response—one which, I confess, fills me with a strange and new kind of patriotic pride. I see an America beginning to be aware of the sacred where once it saw only the secular, to see through its sensibilities rather than its calculations. I see here and there a new dimension of awareness which has a distinctively Oriental cast, a sense of instinctual self as the authority in all forms of life, and a confidence that this self is what above all is to be lived. . . .

"What I have found upon my return is not only the possibility but the reality of my own patriotism. An American patriot is one who exercises freedom of choice; he is one who chooses what he is by challenging apparent absolutes and discovering alternatives. Since it has become a cultural monolith, America has positively militated against such patriotism. Now, however, with the spontaneous generation of its own cultural alternatives, choice is upon us. . . .

"The most effective patriot not only accepts but participates genuinely in the Rebellion that is now America: 'genuinely' in the sense of 'authentically'—with ever-growing consciousness of its ambiguities, ever more tolerance of the ambiguity of its interpretations. . . .

"I rejoice in America because I see its greatness being contested. I see America rising to the test. And I see America winning."

What follows may be Charles de Gaulle's thoughts on a similar subject. They *are* the words of André Malraux, who has described his latest work (*Chènes qu'on abat*) as "a dialogue, through me, between the General and History, and a communion with the trees, darkness, and snow." These remarks were occasioned by a post-publication interview with Malraux conducted by André Brincourt (of *Figaro Littéraire*) and printed in *Encounter's* December issue:

Brincourt: ". . . It is as though the whole of that conversation at Colombey were overshadowed by the General's apprehension (and your own) of a crisis of civilisation or a crisis of youth. . . .

"Malraux: I think the General shared my own fundamental belief that this crisis has arisen out of the

absence—the unprecedented absence—of supreme values.

“For him these values existed in three contexts—the Nation, Catholicism, and a kind of Stoicism. He understood the force of other values . . . ; but he was disconcerted by the absence of values, subversion for its own sake and not for any preconceived end. Nor did he believe that *contestation* would destroy the supreme values, because in his view it was the absence of those values that led to *contestation*. He believed they had been destroyed by the primacy of science. The part played by science in our civilisation is unlike the part it has played in any other, because of its very nature and the colossal power it gives us. Today, for the first time, man can seek to destroy the earth. The 19th century credited science with the possibility, even the near possibility, of an experimental understanding of the world. Science had not yet solved any fundamental problems but would eventually solve them. Our civilisation invented a new supreme value without knowing what part it would play: the value of the future.

“In the event, science has not replaced those supreme values which were the justification of human life, and we know now that it never will. It has no moral implications. And even if truth were its highest value it could not answer the question to which the religions supplied an answer: *que fait l'homme sur la terre*, what is man doing on earth? . . .

“Most civilisations have derived their highest values from religion. When this ceases to be the case we are obliged to answer the question, ‘How do you recognise a supreme value?’ with the words, ‘By the fact that men are ready to die for it.’ There are many ways, all insufficient, of judging a man; but a civilisation depicts itself to the centuries in terms of the sacrifice it prefers. Rome, the most profane and the most arrogant, declares itself in the lofty sacrifice of Regulus. The Christians were prepared to die for Christ and the Stoics for the idea they had conceived of themselves. From their point of view the two ultimate values were Social Justice and the Nation. Both still survive, but a genuine *contestation* invokes neither, even when it has a vaguely leftist tendency. . . .

“Across the centuries a tragic dialogue is for the first time proceeding. ‘*Du fond des âges* (from the depths of the past),’ as the General wrote, the procession of Saints, Heroes, and obscure men who have unshakeably sustained the dignity of mankind is rising from graves all over the world and asking: ‘What are you resolved to sacrifice—and to what?’ And from the ends of the earth, from the universities of California to those of Japan, the purest of the contestants reply: ‘We are resolved to sacrifice everything—to nothing.’

“Very well. But the most utterly Possessed, even of *le Néant* or limbo, will do wrong to confuse sect with religion, or the courage of the Foreign Legion with that of the Stoics. . . .”

*No Comment department.* Hubert Humphrey in the *Progressive* (December, 1971):

“There remains a very great deal to do. But by working together in mutual respect I am sure that we can make new progress in building a just society with liberty, equality, opportunity, security, dignity, leisure, safe parks, and clean air for all.”

What are the terms under which a “Third World Revolution” may be said to have been “won”? Two men, both of them committed to non-violent approaches to social change, are in disagreement here (*Fellowship*, Fall, 1971).

For Alfred Hassler, “The ‘third world revolution’ cannot be won except in the context of a successful ‘one world’ revolution.” “The powerful,” he says, “are not that by accident—they are shrewd and strong, and they have greater monopolies of power than ever before. Because their institutions are complicated they are vulnerable, but that means, first, that there will be a more intense defense of them, and second, if they did collapse, a catastrophe for the third world itself, which is dependent even in its poverty on the markets of the industrialized world.”

The “one world revolution” of which Hassler speaks is “first of all a revolution of attitudes. National or regional revolution can work up to a certain point, whether violent or non-violent, but at that point, unless the revolution has extended to the attitudes and policies of those who actually control the wealth and power of the world, the small revolutions will stop.

“Hence, whatever is done by way of revolution must be consistent with the ultimate objective, and this is what is primarily important of nonviolence; not that it does not kill, or that there is no death connected with it . . . but that it is a means that does not further increase the separation of men but rather brings them together. The trouble with violence is not principally that it kills people, but that it polarizes the division and justifies the counter-violence. Not justifies it in terms of some abstract basis of judgment, but justifies it in the minds and fears of this is what is primarily important of non-violence; brings together. There is no magic in non-violence except for this: that it discloses to the onlooker, or to the antagonist, the humanity of the revolutionary, and robs the antagonist of the moral justification which he needs in his own mind to continue his oppression and violence against the revolutionary himself.”

Glenn Smiley concurs with Hassler that it is not enough to take power from those who have it and transfer it to those who do not in the interest of social justice. But, Smiley asserts, that “does not seem to keep it from being the name of the game, whether it be for Buddhists in Vietnam or for politically oriented groups in other parts of the world. The non-violent revolutionaries in Latin America that I know

are working for a more authentic revolution, which they seek to bring about first outside the structures of power, often through parallel institutions."

But leaders in the non-violent struggle are insisting "that reconciliation must come to pass between equals but not by force. They insist on the primacy of justice as a condition of reconciliation. But they also say that we cannot be reconciled as exploiter and exploited, master and slave, empire and colony. To them, an understanding of this aspect of Gandhian thought is easy, since they share with him a common colonial and imperial experience, with the attendant deprivation. . . .

"[The] assumption that change cannot occur until the rich and the powerful consent—the typically North American view—is something that the non-violent movement in Latin America would vehemently deny. They do not believe that the poor and the oppressed must or should wait for the goodwill of the powerful.

"Change, of course, would be easier if there were cooperation from the North, but if need be, they say, we will oppose them, making the oppressed suffer twice, since this is the price that must be paid for liberation. Independence must be sought ahead of interdependence, for this kind of reconciliation would be unreal and meaningless. To many this means a return to the ideals of Bolivar and Sucre, the liberators, who paved the way, they believe, to eventual hemispheric unification. . . .

"Justice thus must come before peace to the Latin American, but the revolutionaries that I have worked with there are aware of the dimensions or the implications of the struggle. That is why they have chosen non-violence as their revolutionary means."

A note of qualified optimism from *The Nation* (Editorial, January 3, 1972):

"This is a critical moment for the United Nations. It is critical not only in the sense that its impotency to halt a clearly foreseeable war has once again been demonstrated. We knew of that weakness before, but circumstances are different now, so the demonstration is more damaging. China is in the U.N. Apologists can no longer say that the organization is not truly representative of the world situation. With a new Secretary-General, Kurt Waldheim, the U.N. has an opportunity to move ahead. U Thant had

his virtues, but strong leadership when it was needed was not one of them. On the basis of remarks he made on accepting his new post, and because he is an experienced diplomat from Central Europe, Mr. Waldheim should give the organization the new and forceful leadership it desperately needs. With great power relationships now in flux, the U.N. may be able to play a stronger role in world affairs. It had better.

"On the positive side, something has recently been added that has long been needed. Every delegate to the U.N. has an individual personal responsibility; likewise every member of the secretariat carries that moral burden. These responsibilities have rarely been demonstrated. . . .

"Against this background, Bhutto's angry, eloquent blast at the Security Council meeting was precisely right. One does not have to agree with the patriotic basis of his protest; *The Nation* does not. The crimes of the West Pakistanis brought on the crimes of the Bengalis. Yet one must applaud his attack on national representatives in the Security Council for their inability, as individuals, to rise to the occasion. Not one of them found means to say *something* as a human being. Even if collectively they could do nothing, were they obliged to find no words to deplore what was happening; to weep, even? Bhutto gave them what they needed, an injection of truth.

"And not Bhutto alone. The resignation of Charles C. Diggs from the U.S. delegation was another instance of truth speaking to power. Diggs, a black member of Congress from Michigan, left in protest against the 'stifling hypocrisy' of the Nixon Administration's policy toward black Africa. George Bush, the U.S. chief delegate, of course deplored Diggs's action. It may have come as a surprise; Diggs is a moderate-to conservative American Negro of bourgeois background. What he did is the more effective. He spoke the plain truth—that we are a partner of Portugal against subject peoples in Africa. . . .

"Such actions are important. How much better it would have been if Adlai Stevenson had resigned with harsh words on any one of the several occasions when he was humiliated at the U.N.—notably at the Bay of Pigs crisis. Institutions do not reform themselves; only people can do that. If the U.N. is to survive—and with all its weaknesses it would be a calamity if it does not—men must exercise their responsibilities as men, not as robots with national labels."

PAMPHILUS