
PRISM: Political & Rights Issues & Social Movements

1-1-1949

Intellectuals in the fight for peace

Howard Fast

Find similar works at: <https://stars.library.ucf.edu/prism>
University of Central Florida Libraries <http://library.ucf.edu>

This Book is brought to you for free and open access by STARS. It has been accepted for inclusion in PRISM: Political & Rights Issues & Social Movements by an authorized administrator of STARS. For more information, please contact STARS@ucf.edu.

Recommended Citation

Fast, Howard, "Intellectuals in the fight for peace" (1949). *PRISM: Political & Rights Issues & Social Movements*. 487.

<https://stars.library.ucf.edu/prism/487>

*Intellectuals
in the
Fight
for
Peace*



by HOWARD FAST

15

INTELLECTUALS

in the

FIGHT FOR PEACE

by Howard Fast

Masses & Mainstream, Inc. • New York

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

HOWARD FAST, the author of this pamphlet, was a member of the American delegation to the recent World Peace Conference, at Paris. He is one of the foremost novelists in the United States and author of such internationally known works as *Freedom Road*, *The American*, *Clarkton*, and others, which have been translated into many languages and published in millions of copies.

As a leader of the Joint Anti-Fascist Refugee Committee, he is presently under sentence for his courageous refusal to turn over to the notorious Congressional Un-American Committee the names of those who have contributed to, and aided, the work of JAFRA.

Intellectuals in the Fight For Peace

By HOWARD FAST

THERE WAS a time here in America, and not so long ago, when any one of a number of incidents that have taken place in the past few months would have been a rallying call for intellectuals the nation over. I refer to such things as the discharge of three professors from the University of Washington on the grounds that they supported a Communist philosophy; or the crass and deliberate framing of the six Negroes who sit in the Death House at Trenton, New Jersey; or the more recent anti-Communist bill that was passed by both houses of the Maryland legislature; or the disgraceful trial of 12 Communist leaders for thinking and teaching the philosophy of Marxism; or the vindictive imprisonment of three of these defendants by a Federal judge for their refusal to adopt the ethics of Judas Iscariot.

These are only a few examples of a thousand incidents that mark the present wave of oppression in America; and, as I said before, there was a time when every writer, artist or musician worth his salt would have spoken up in tones of contempt and anger. Indeed, fifteen years ago, when this same pattern of fascist terror and intimidation unfolded in Germany, very few American intellectuals remained silent; and a decade ago, when Spain fought for her free life against the fascists, a great and proud chorus of protest and indignation went up from writers, artists, musicians, actors, directors, educators—a protest that was like a roll call of all that was best and most vital in American culture.

Why, one must ask, are so many who spoke up clearly and forthrightly then silent today? What has muted so many voices that once spoke so readily for freedom? What has turned im-

portant artists and important writers into miserable cravens?

These questions must be asked, and these questions must be answered; for time will not be patient with us, and the human race, now and in days to come, will not easily forgive so many American intellectuals for playing the part of silent partners in a crime so enormous and awful as to be almost beyond comprehension. That impending crime is, of course, the driving of the world into a war that would outdo all wars of the past in horror and suffering, and in the devastation it would surely produce.

THE FACT that this war is directed against the Soviet Union and the new democracies is crucial to the whole issue. That, indeed, is the key to the state of mind which prevails in America among intellectuals today.

Fear has been created, and fear has had precisely the result desired by those who created it. Fear without logic, without intelligence, without argumentation—simple, dark, primitive fear has been the aim and the purpose of the war clique since V-J Day. A series of calculated arrests and prosecutions have been used to symbolize the penalties which intellectuals may expect. These were directed against the boldest and most consistent of American intellectuals, men who would not bow to the threat and could therefore be made subject to legal penalty, such men as Albert Maltz, John Howard Lawson, Dalton Trumbo, Dr. Edward K. Barsky, Professor Richard Lyman Bradley, Reverend Howard Melish, Carl Marzani, Leon Josephson and many others.

Legal sentence was passed against them, not all together, of course, but bit by bit as the terror mounted; for the actual punishment of these individuals for defending their Constitutional rights was considered less important than the broadening and deepening of the general miasma of fear. The widely and publicly known experience of intellectuals in Germany, Italy and Japan under fascism provided a whole background; and simply by the introduction of a few initial steps against a few individuals, thousands of other men and women came to see vividly the threat against them-

selves, the visits at night, the beatings, the solitary confinement, the concentration camps and the general hell of mental and physical suffering which fascism inevitably produces.

Thus, the campaign of fear and terror began to have its desired effect, and the intellectual was not the only victim. By these and other tactics, the trade union movement was also betrayed; its leadership, to a large degree, was bought or frightened off; its rank and file was confused and sold out again and again; and thus—for a time—there was no great militant resistance on the part of the working class to which the intellectual could turn for the strength and sustenance he so desperately needed; even though that working class resistance now begins to take shape.

The next step in the campaign of fear was a direct assault upon the Communist Party, the vanguard of the working class. For a whole generation, the American intellectual found the strength and the vigor of his finest moments in the struggles led by the Communist Party of the United States; in modern American literature there is almost no significant name that has not at one point or another been identified with these struggles.

But consider the situation today. Attacked on every side by reaction, facing actual instead of figurative penalties, frightened, confused, bewildered, many American intellectuals flee to cover. In their isolation, in their too frequent dependence on the largess of capitalism, in their vivid ability to create the most horrible elements of atomic war in their minds, they seek what they conceive to be safety.

IN SOME CASES, this concept of safety is turned into silence; like the ostrich, the intellectual pretends that the elements of terror do not exist, that the attack on the Communist Party is simply a formalism and that the rising tide of American fascism will, like all bad dreams, come to an inevitable and natural end.

In other cases, the propaganda of fear had done its work more fully, and the intellectual, driven half-mad by the medieval threat of native fascism, buys his security by turning on the Com-

munists and the Soviet Union, by leaping on the bandwagon of insanity, by *proving* his non-communism with what can only be described as "obscenities against mankind."

In still other cases, the intellectual clings to his principles with a minimum of "anti-communism," and here, indeed, one sees the most pathetic reduction of the human spirit.

The above, of course, is not to say that thousands and thousands of American intellectuals do not in their minds cling to integrity. For these and for many of those who see security in silence, there is the necessity—and an immediate one—of returning to the struggle. It would be idle and childish to state that the intellectual can alone halt the drive to fascism and war. No one segment of modern society can halt that drive; only a great coalition of all peace-loving men and women, in every area of society, can halt that drive; and without question this coalition must accept the leadership of the working class. But within this coalition, intellectuals have a proud and important role to play, and it would be criminal indeed if they failed to fulfill their obligation to civilization.

For this reason, I address myself to artists, writers, scientists and professionals in America and call upon them to oppose the destruction of their nation and their culture. The time is late, yet the penalty for war and fascism is no small one. The fight is well worth the effort, and it can be won.

EVEN IN TODAY'S America, where the courts have far more than in the past become open and cynical instruments of the Wall Street war clique, where the New York City police murder a Negro every two weeks with impunity, and where the state of Maryland can imprison a Communist, for the "crime" of being a Communist, for twenty years—even in a nation so far along the road to fascism, the skeleton of terror must be erected upon a familiar ideological basis. Fascism must be fitted into what remains of the original principles of American democracy, and the intellectual must have a *rationale* for his surrender of morality. To become a citizen of a beast-state, he must be prepared to assume a beast-

philosophy. Otherwise, he faces madness, and madness would interfere with the "useful" role he can still play in the destruction of his own culture.

This *rationale* of moral surrender can be divided into certain areas, and each of these areas must be carefully examined if the intellectual is not only to resist but strike back. The first is, of course, the drive against the Soviet Union. The second area of operation is the drive against progressive forces at home, particularly against the working class, and its vanguard the Communist Party USA. And interrelated with both is the drive against democratic culture, a philosophical debasement under the leadership of Henry Luce which provides what might be termed the necessary ethical anesthesia.

It should be quite apparent that both of these areas are closely connected, and that work in each means the involvement of the other. It should also be apparent that basic to both areas is the role of the working class, and again that neither of these areas can be separated in a real sense from the working class and its struggle against oppression. However, for the sake of clarity, each area can be examined separately, even though the conclusions drawn will form a unified whole.

THE DRIVE against the Soviet Union is not a new thing. It began in 1917 at the very moment the first Workers' Republic came into existence, and since then it has never ceased, only abated occasionally as during the past war. Again and again, there has been full and careful documentation of rebuttals of anti-Soviet slanders, as for example the book *The Great Conspiracy*, by Michael Sayers and Albert Kahn, and while the falsehoods about the Soviet Union have been intensified, quantitatively and qualitatively, they are none of them in essence new.

One hears today the same tired saws of the slave camps, starving people, artists in uniform, etc.; but what is new is that so many liberal intellectuals no longer resist these canards. It is much as if a lethargy of the mind had set in, an unwillingness to

investigate, discuss, inquire—a condition well described by J. D. Bernal. This scientist, a member of the British Commission on Atomic Energy, writing in the *Modern Quarterly*, states that "it has become even more important to conceal the very nature of capitalism itself, and to equate it with the words 'liberty' and 'democracy.' As a result, the liberal intellectuals who, forty years ago, would have been crying out against flagrant war preparations at home and colonial wars abroad, are now tacitly or openly supporting these policies. They are now able to forget apparently all they believed in a few years back. Socialism and monopoly capitalism have alike become myths. They are unable to recognize any longer the reactionaries and the supporters of every form of fascism at home and abroad with whom they are collaborating.

"The reason is the extremely successful building up of the fear of communism, a fear which has now blinded most intellectuals themselves from even beginning to examine what is actually happening in the countries of the Soviet Union and the new democracies."

Now, if this be true for Great Britain, how much more true it is in America where force and violence play a role still relatively unknown in England! A fairly young man can still remember when Lincoln Steffens said of the Soviet Union: "I have seen the future, and it works." And only five years ago John Erskine, the American novelist, never particularly identified with the Left in America, was able to write with directness and simplicity: "The developments in Russia have confirmed rather than shaken my faith that every one of us is first of all a spirit, a soul. Russia today is an illustration, not of prosperity, but of the human family organized to advance and defend an ideal . . . I believe the astounding unity of the Russian people results from the practice at last of that human democracy which we have long professed—the abolition of race, religious or color prejudice, the granting of equal opportunity, to all, and of honor to every man and woman, according to the use made of opportunity."

Yet today, most American intellectuals are not only afraid to see this future, but unwilling or unable to inquire into the

question of whether or not it works. A sort of clerical fatalism has set in which was exemplified for me by an experience of a friend of mine. A magazine editor, he was approached to ghost-write the biography of one of the latest Russian renegades. This offer he indignantly rejected, as an act of patent dishonesty; yet he sees no dishonesty in his swallowing anti-Soviet canards whole without examination or investigation. When contradictions are pointed out, he shrugs hopelessly at the problem of unravelling truth from untruth.

In the Soviet Union, the greatest achievement in the history of mankind is being realized—the creation of a classless society and a world without suffering, injustice and fear. Against this glorious and humanistic progression, the American ruling class has arrayed a battalion of professional slanderers who are known in the trade as “anti-Sovieteers.” They are, for the most part, cynical and hardened old hacks who have plied their trade for many years and who earn a very good living at it indeed. Some of them, like Eugene Lyons, Isaac Don Levine and William Chamberlain, have national reputations, but they are joined by a host of lesser known professionals. The grist from their mills is always the same; they have been confounded and given the lie endless times; yet, for all of that, many of our intellectuals tend to accept their picture of the Soviet Union. This is the easy way to the *rationale*. For, if one can put one’s conscience at ease by believing the host of anti-Soviet lies, then one can even find a vague righteousness in withdrawing from our own American struggle, and one can nurse this righteousness by connecting every native motion for progress with some secret—and consistently ridiculous—Soviet-inspired plot.

How frequently and how pathetically surrender to fear takes this pattern! But basic to it is the surrender to unreason, the relinquishing of the best tools of the mind, clear inquiry; and following that, as by pattern, an embracing of reaction.

It is hard for the intellectual to stop part way along this road. Granting that a contemplative neutrality was once possible

to a creative worker, it is surely not possible today when the forces of the world are divided on so final an issue as peace or a war which will change the life of each and every human being on this earth, regardless of how remote his position. Neutrality is only a way station, a momentary pause wherein the intellectual can say, as does the frightened protagonist in Dalton Trumbo's fine monologue:

“And I know who chose first to stand and fight
Rather than flee the uncontested field
In Germany and Rome and in Madrid.
And while they fell no voice in all the world
Had courage to cry out against their fate
Nor will have here. You are the men who die
Silently in the night, and all alone,
Yielding with blood the highway over which
The mottled beast at last moves on his prey—
His final prey—always and always me . . .
I bow.
I give salute.
I recognize.
But I am not in any near degree
One such as you, nor shall I ever be.
Yet I too dream and hold aspiring high.”

This tribute to the world Communist struggle for freedom by Trumbo's protagonist is not a position, but a farewell in one fashion or another, it is the constant leave-taking of the retreating intellectual, the first of many salves for a tortured soul. An “honest” dishonesty humbly admits the severity of the struggle and passes it on to others with a tribute to courage and consistency; but the “honest” dishonesty soon passes; humility is the quality of the man who stands fast, not of him who runs in fear, and soon the Communist himself becomes for the frightened intellectual “the enemy.”

Nor can this ever be separated from a position in relation to the Soviet Union. If man's struggle for freedom and dignity has any meaning, then it must be expressed in a continuity of action which proposes a clear and scientific goal; otherwise, there is no real struggle, only meaningless and empty phrase-mongering. No price is exacted for talking about freedom, only for acting in such a way as to bring freedom closer; and freedom-mongering, which sets itself against the highest achievement of freedom in all of man's struggle against oppression, the Soviet Union, becomes its very reverse, a support for fascism and associated diseases.

No better proof of this can be brought forth than the existence of an association of intellectuals in New York City which calls itself and its place of residence *Freedom House*. In a truly monumental splendor—for funds are never unavailable for those who *do* reaction's *work*, regardless of what they *say*—this serves as one of the many ports of last call for those who start their retreat from the responsibilities of a conscience. Here are many who started with such fine and wordy tributes as Trumbo's retiring liberal; today, they exist only as an unofficial plot against the Soviet Union and the progressive movement in general.

In the early years of the Soviet Union, many brave men and women, intellectuals, followed the lead of John Reed and Lincoln Steffens; with the rise of the American progressive movement in the 'thirties, this circle grew larger, and at that time almost no American artist of importance or talent failed to acclaim the human grandeur of the first workers' republic. In a very true sense, the Soviet Union was—and is—a laboratory for the development of freedom and dignity, and that was something that could not be hidden so long as hundreds of articulate voices proclaimed the facts. It was no change in the character or theory or social structure of the Soviet Union that caused hundreds of men and women who once supported it and believed in it to run for cover; the change was in themselves and in the social structure of the United States and other countries. The element that produced the change in those who fled was fear—above everything

else, fear; and that fear was the result of the mounting war drive against the Soviet Union. If you were to chart the growth of anti-Soviet war hysteria in America, in 1939 as well as during the three years since V-J Day, you would discover that a similar graph could be made for defections by intellectuals from the progressive movement—and in each case, this was one of the effects deeply desired by reaction.

I have no patience with the arguments of "disillusionment." A sick ego measures all things by itself, so that even the touch of a butterfly's wing will send such a person reeling into insecurity; and intellectuals who delude themselves into believing that "disillusionment" with the achievement of socialism in the Soviet Union is responsible for their defection from the progressive movement here are covering a deeper and more basic reason. It is curious that as those same intellectuals move toward fascism, they express no disillusionment with our native anti-Semitism, our bestial Jim-Crow system, our growing ranks of the unemployed and our callous and cynical shedding of civil liberties.

They have achieved the supreme *rationale*; they have purchased "safety" at the price of their own souls; for they find as they proceed that no part of the struggle for progress here at home can be separated from that world struggle for progress and liberation which the Soviet Union leads—and thus they retain no responsibility in the positive areas of our lives. How thin this "safety" is has been amply demonstrated by the countless graves of Europe's intellectuals, and history has proven that a thoughtful and honest man cannot make his peace with fascism; thus integrity, logic and honesty are all forfeit—for a brief residence in a house of cards.

I SAID EARLIER that there can be no real separation between the drive against the Soviet Union and the drive against the forces of progress here at home; in both cases, the goal is the same, the smashing of trade unions and other progressive organizations, the destruction of civil rights and, sooner or later, the lighting of a

hideous world conflagration. Inevitably, this leads to the destruction of culture; art, like other good things in life, flourishes poorly in prison cells and concentration camps; there can be no art under terror, as fascism has so well proven; and in all the years of fascism and out of all the millions who have lived under its "iron heel," there has been produced *not one single noteworthy work of art* except in opposition to the system.

Art, culture, science can flourish only where no barriers are placed in the way of the citizen's contact with the truth, with the objective reality; which is another way of saying that freedom of expression is basic to art and science. Protest must nourish art so long as people suffer injustice and wrong; for unless there is protest against these things the artist becomes the pimp and the handmaiden of reaction's brutality, even as the scientist does. And as we saw in Germany, the one turns to lampshades of human skin and the other to mass murder. I know that both these cases are extreme, but they nevertheless serve to delineate the cultural ethics of the fascist state.

Of the citizen in the humanistic terms of Marxism, the Soviet novelist Ostrovsky said, "Man's dearest possession is life, and it is given to him to live but once. He must live so as to feel no torturing regrets for years without purpose; so live that dying he can say 'all my life and all my strength were given to the finest cause in all the world—the fight for the liberation of mankind.'"—And Karl Marx himself said: "If one chose to be an ox, one could of course turn one's back on the agonies of mankind and look after one's own skin."

How meaningful this is in terms of the intellectual! The lasting creation of the artist and the scientist is a saga of man against ignorance, man against hunger, disease, superstition, fear; and what a glorious record those who came before us made! Galileo probing for the substance of the cosmos; Ehrlich alone in his laboratory fighting humanity's fight; Hugo striving for the essence of humanistic love; Clemens burning with anger and indignation against the forces that shrivel human souls; Cezanne probing for the true nature of

reality; Gorki drawing nourishment from the hopes and strength of the Russian workers; Dreiser searching for the meaning of the society he inhabited, filled with a mighty compassion for those who walked beside him—and one could go on almost without end, adding to this roster.

The work of these men survived because they were great—and their greatness came largely from their attachment to the people, their hatred of the oppression and injustice of the world they lived in and their longing for a better world.

Yet, how many American writers, it must be asked, have not closed their hearts to the longing for a better world? And the sorry pity of it is that they thereby closed the doors of their own talent. Where are the great ones of the 'thirties, the whole school of talented progressive writers who arose out of the unemployed struggles led by the Communist Party—and the great drive to build the C.I.O.? Where are the exciting regional spokesmen who made a new American literature in those years? To read off their names is like reading a roll-call of the dead, but none of them is dead; only the spark of compassion is gone from them. Each of them has built his own wall to keep away from him the pressing life-and-death problems of the times; some have turned, out of their fear and bitterness, to the international Trotskyite conspiracy and thereby become the leading dogs of reaction; others express a cheap and easy cynicism which is milled into potboilers and the big money; others have become pulp hacks, grinding the same old saw, over and over; and still others have died the "creative death" which is the inevitable result of withdrawal from struggle.

Whatever the reasons for the particular sterility of each, as a group they have ceased to struggle against reaction; they have withdrawn from the hopes and the needs and the fears of the masses of the people. Some have turned their pens against their native progressive movement; others devote their writing talents to slandering the Soviet Union; others are simply silent. And what is true of them is true of hundreds of others; in writing, in art, in science, in education, the price of fear, of terror, of oppression is being

exacted by those who force the *rationale* of those who refuse the first duty of intellectuals today—resistance.

THE STRONGEST inhibitor of art is self-censorship; and the American ruling class understand full well that the most valuable censorship is that censorship which they cause to become operative within the intellectual's brain. This saves money; this saves time; this saves effort; and by burning the books quietly before they are set down on paper, one avoids such unpleasant necessities as having to burn them publicly. And once the core of intellectual resistance to the steady rise of intimidation, terror and injustice has been broken, it is quite logical that resistance to censorship should be of the most feeble kind.

While it is true that there has always been a considerable degree of censorship and self-censorship in America—and who knew this better than men like Clemens, Hawthorne and Thoreau?—it has never before reached the proportions we find today. In former times, only part of the writer's or artist's market called for self-censorship; one knew that in writing for the high-paying national magazines, one had to observe a set of rules often stupid and destructive; artists knew that the galleries wanted certain types of painting; dramatists knew that a certain formula was more likely to succeed; and motion picture writers knew that certain taboos must be obeyed. But if one could not sell a story to the *Ladies Home Journal*, one could possibly sell it elsewhere; a good book could always find a publisher; and plays like *Waiting for Lefty* made theatre history.

Today, this is no longer the case. Honesty, directness, integrity, forthrightness and any degree of realism have been interdicted by stigmas which brand the artist a Communist or a "foreign agent." No truthful story about the current oppression can be printed, except in the Left-wing press; dozens of fine books are begging for publication; social painting will hardly be hung, much less sold, and a free exchange of scientific thought is perilously close to high treason. No play which directly challenges the roots of today's terror can find Broadway production; and Hollywood, where it has not

become the overt protagonist of the present reaction, devotes itself to sterile trash, brutality or a castrated rehash of used-over themes.

Within this situation, self-censorship becomes an enormous cloud over the free exercise of American cultural expression. At first the artist asks himself: "Why write a book that cannot be published? Why paint a picture that cannot be sold?" Then, as the terror mounts; and as the ruling class imposes the harsh penalties of jail, investigation or blacklist as the price of free inquiry, the artist has additional reason for self-censorship. He asks himself now: "Why create what will expose me to punishment? Why look for trouble?" And since what has never been born can hardly be examined, he finds in this mental retreat a *rationale* which leaves him not only his security but also a degree of respectability in the progressive scene.

If he works apart from the progressive movement, his aloneness is such that he can hardly be justly condemned. "Why ask me to be a hero?" he will demand, his isolation preventing him from understanding that the demand of mankind today is not for heroes but for people of conscience, integrity and understanding. With scientists and educators and other professionals, bound by wages, the pressure for self-censorship is even greater. Unless they have ties with the working class, the progressive movement in general, or the Communist Party in specific, they must perforce see themselves as lone and rootless victims, exposed to every cruel whim, every senseless, unreasonable persecution of the ruling class. For this very reason, all intellectuals must understand the need for unity with the progressive movement and must be made to see, coldly and clearly, the rich and splendid wealth of creative power that can come only from such unity. It is quite true that by joining themselves actively and consciously with the forces of freedom, they expose themselves to redress; no struggle is without its peril, but also no life is worth the living without struggle and goals and ideals. Man is not made to take his food like an ox in the meadow, castrated, head bowed, the field of his vision limited to a few blades of grass and a few hummocks of dirt; man is a proud and erect creature,

and a million years have gone into the making of him. He cannot surrender this manhood and man-heritage supinely without becoming, once again, a beast in the field.

IT IS VERY MUCH to the point, I think, to put down what a French Communist intellectual wrote on the evening before his death at the hands of a Nazi firing squad: "Let my friends know," he said, "that I have remained faithful to the ideal of life, let my countrymen know that I am going to die so that France may live! For the last time I have looked into my conscience. The result is positive. If I had to begin life over again, I would follow the same road. Tonight more than any other night I believe that my dear friend Paul Vaillant-Couturier was right when he said that 'Communism is the youth of the world' and that it 'prepares for singing tomorrows.' In a little while I am going to prepare for 'singing tomorrows.' I feel myself strong in the face of death. Goodbye, and long live France!"

Whence came this mighty strength of Gabriel Peri, who wrote those words? As a Communist, he himself stated it clearly and explicitly when he wrote: "The fight for Socialism . . . could not be 'on the periphery' of one's main activity. It was *the* main activity; it was destined to be my life." Thereby, he drew his strength from masses of people who saw clearly and with unfettered vision their goals of freedom and human liberation.

In this context, it is quite logical for American reaction to bend every effort to separate the intellectual from the working class and from that organized vanguard of the working class, the Communist Party. None of the countless possibilities of anti-Communist slander is ignored. No bribe is too great. No aspect of morality is allowed to interfere. The approach of reaction to the intellectual is the approach of a drunken lecher toward a whore—for so is the intellectual regarded by those who purchase him—a fistful of dollars in one hand, a brass knuckle on the other. Big business walks in the center with the Church on one side and the Department of Justice on the other; on the one hand, money and the gates of heaven—on the

other hand jail and blacklist and persecution and starvation.

It is no wonder then that the betrayal of the people's struggle by intellectuals has progressed from isolated cases into what at times appears to take on the aspects of a mass movement. It is not that the intellectual is weaker or more corrupt than other groupings in society; it is just that he is more alone. Like Faust, when confronted with hard cash for his soul, he recognizes the reality of cash but doubts the soul; and thereby the bargain seems to offer something for nothing; and if once the transaction is completed he should recognize the loss, the creative bereavement, the human heritage that he has given away for "a mess of pottage," how else can he preserve his ego than by turning fiercely upon all the values he has relinquished?

How wonderful it is that every week and every day intellectuals discover that they have been the "dupes" of the Communists! Somehow, when the going is good, when the progressive forces are winning victories, their eyes are closed to this "use" which Communists are supposed to make of them. But when things get tough, when the ruling class bares its teeth and shows the naked and shameless brutality of its oppression, the eyes of many "innocent" souls are opened.

Some of them have been Communist Party members; others only progressives; others only people of vague good will; but one and all, if they give way, their surrender to fear or hard cash is followed by the *rationale*, the *awakening* to the so-called "duplicity" of the Communists. This "duplicity" is, of course, mysterious and unknowable. When the actual issues upon which these intellectuals fought are examined, one finds that the issues express the most pertinent needs of the people—employment and civil liberty and social equality and peace and freedom of speech and expression and support to the Bill of Rights of the Constitution of the United States; but the intellectual has made his *rationale* and he "knows" that the issues are but subterfuges for mysterious and sinister aims of the "Kremlin."

This sort of reasoning—if it can be dignified by the name—would

be seen for the idiocy it represents, were we not now wholly engaged in promulgating the most monstrous idiocy of all time—a war to end, not war, but civilization itself!

It is not very wrong to describe this process as madness; it is a madness that departs from reality, and which expresses itself in its own insane gibberish. No better example of this can be offered than events during the recent *Cultural and Scientific Conference for World Peace*, which was held in New York City under the auspices of the National Council of the Arts, Sciences and Professions. The stated aim of this conference was to discuss peace in a world on the edge of war; so that out of this discussion might come a better and a freer understanding of the elements that make for discord and misunderstanding.

No human being in his right mind could quarrel with such aims or method. Here was a broad and diverse group of persons of outstanding scientific and artistic achievement; only additional information and understanding could come from such public discussion as they proposed.

But, because the Truman Administration and the Wall Street clique were more interested in war than in peace, they attacked the conference on the grounds that it included, among its sponsors, some Communists and many progressives. The small army of intellectual renegades, the frightened, the disaffected, the conscienceless, were put into motion to undermine and denounce the conference. Speaking for Wall Street and against the conference, John Dos Passos, the novelist, said:

"It is hard not to take a certain pride in the courage and tolerance of the American people in allowing their deadly enemies to set up this new sounding board for propaganda in their midst. But pride is largely overlaid by our shame that so many of our fellow citizens have allowed themselves through ignorance or delusion to become dupes and tools of the masters of the Kremlin."

Now the above, I submit, is not only gibberish; it is not only clever and unscrupulous use of catch-words; it is not only a lie in fact and inference—it is a wholly immoral attempt to brand any

voice for peace as a treasonable voice. If Mr. Dos Passos or his masters were sincerely interested in peace, they would not characterize talk of peace as "propaganda," or those who talk of peace as "tools." Here, then, enters the "mysterious" bulwark of the *rationale*. Mr. Dos Passos is not able to prove one word he says; in the past, he has branded practically every demand for social justice as a product of the Kremlin, and every voice for it as a voice of the Kremlin. In a logical society, this would simply ennoble the Kremlin. As I said before, I believe in the good and justice of the Soviet system—but I also believe that certain good things arise in every land. But there is no logic or sanity in the world of John Dos Passos. He shares the language of the madmen, the catch-words, the ominous phrases—*dupes, tools, Kremlin, etc., etc.*, and in so doing he may be performing a task which is necessary to his own conscience. In a book called *Proletarian Literature* which was published in 1935 by International Publishers, Mr. Dos Passos is twice represented. Evidently, he was at that time a "tool" of the Kremlin, but awakened subsequently to the "new light." That is his privilege; but it is also the privilege of intelligent people to doubt the high principles of his crusading fervor in the cause of a third world war, and to suggest that it is fed by a little less than integrity. Like many other self-styled patriots, his concern for his own land must be taken with a grain of salt; and it is worth recalling Richard O. Boyer's apt phrase to the effect that "the poor man's patriotism has ever been the rich man's treason."

Speaking of the same conference, Professor John Dewey, the educator, who has also at various times in the past seen the "new light," said that for Communists to proclaim an interest in intellectual freedom was "unmitigated gall." With this fine and resounding castigation, Professor Dewey damned a conference in the interests of peace and intellectual freedom. This I regard as unmitigated gall on his part. He has proved nothing regarding the Communist attitude toward intellectual freedom; he *has* proved that he himself will use any device—be it even one so cheap and overworked as the "Kremlin" saw—against both peace and intellectual freedom.

In both these cases, and in many others, the intellectual who has given in to fear, weakness or intimidation goes through a process which Isidor Schneider described so well as "snuggling toward authority." It is the essence of humiliation, of subservience, of wretched and contemptible hand-licking. Far—far indeed have these people come from La Passionaria's proud injunction that it is better for a man "to die on his feet than to live on his knees." Actually, the position is prone rather than one of genuflection, and the pledge is somewhat in this fashion, "Ask what you will. I will lie, swear, debase, malign, slander—I will sell those who trusted me—I will grease the road to hell—only believe that I am on your side and that I hate Communists."

By these new definitions of the intellectual horizon, what could one say of Henry David Thoreau, who once wrote of our own United States government:

"Why is it not more apt to anticipate and provide for reform? Why does it not cherish its wise minority? Why does it cry and resist before it is hurt? Why does it not encourage its citizens to be on the alert to point out its faults, and *do* better than it would have them? Why does it always crucify Christ, and excommunicate Copernicus and Luther, and pronounce Washington and Franklin rebels? . . . Under a government which imprisons any man unjustly, the true place for a just man is also a prison."

What a strange and antiquated sound those ringing words have in the America of 1949! Here, in a land which removes textbooks from the public school system because they show pictures of Russian children smiling, which removes employees from government service because they signed a petition for peace, and which imprisons its citizens because they uphold the First Amendment to the Constitution, authority becomes a God. Thereby, *Life* magazine substitutes a new and strange philosophy for Thoreau's proud statement of democracy. The idea of progress, *Life* says editorially, "is only about as old as modern science, stemming from Bacon and Descartes. But it has as firm a grip on the modern world as the expectation of the Judgment Day had on the medieval world. And,

except among the Russian Communists (for Marx swallowed it whole), the idea of progress has nowhere taken deeper root than in America."

With the above, *Life* groups *progress* with such gentle fancies as *Judgment Day*, pointing out that only Russians could be such asses as to accept the thought of ever-continuing progress; that is "Russian Communists." For us in America, there is a different destiny; Americans, to quote *Life* again, must "virtually reverse two of their dearest values; on the one hand, we must recover our sense of awareness of evil, uncertainty and fear; on the other, we must gain a sense of man's occasional greatness (which is quite a different thing from the 'dignity of the common man')."

If it were only Henry Luce calling upon us to look for the "man on the horse," to discard our foolish faith in the greatness of all people, to give up the traditions of democracy and struggle and resistance out of which our nation was born, to no longer call out against tyranny, as Thoreau so eloquently did, that would be alarming enough, considering the power and circulation of the Luce publications; but Luce merely reflects the position taken by the ruling class of the United States. And the many intellectuals who lick his hand and run his errands and wield his hatchets can snuggle no closer to the *authority* he raises as the new God. They write, they talk, they even appear to reason; but inside they are empty; the soul has left them and with that has gone the age-old urge of men to know, to seek, to inquire—to find some day the ladder to the stars.

YET WITHIN this situation, thousands of honest men survive, intellectuals who alone, and by virtue of their singular integrity, fight for the right to retain their grasp on reason and their contact with mankind. Caught in the last spasms of a dying system, they nevertheless grapple with reality. Frequently, they are forced to state publicly the obvious, as Robert M. Coates, critic for the *New Yorker* magazine, did, when he wrote, in the *New York Herald Tribune* letter column on March 24, 1949, "I have never

seen any reason why I should not associate with Communists if their aims happen at the moment to be praiseworthy and to coincide with mine. To my mind, one of the most baleful aspects of our foreign policy for the last few years, and of our internal propaganda as well, has been the growing tendency to support, abroad, any force, however reactionary or fascistic in nature, which will ally itself with us against Russia; and, at home, to label anyone who happens to be pro-peace, as *ipso facto*, pro-Communist, and conversely, anyone pro-war is, so to speak, a right guy."

Now, while one cannot but admire the principles of Mr. Coates—all too rare these days—and the firmness of the ground he selects for himself, one must go on to point out that he stops short of the heart of the struggle. A careful examination of his entire letter, of which I quote only part, shows that he accepts the Communists as allies, but sees no direct threat to himself in the vicious persecution of Communists that takes place today. For the very reason that he enters the struggle alone, he feels that people acting alone are capable of pursuing it, as when he speaks of Communist aims coinciding with his; and there he falls into the trap that one of his colleagues, Mr. E. B. White, accepted some time ago. Then, if you recall, Mr. White faced the rising tide of civil liberty violations with the declaration that he, as a "party of one," would fight back. His statement of principle was excellent and courageous, but his selection of position doomed him to destruction. There can be no "party of one" today; for reaction has closed its ranks and unless the progressives close their ranks too, they will surely go down. It is much the same predicament that our forefathers were in when Ben Franklin advised them that "if we don't hang together, we will all hang separately."

It is not enough for intellectuals to take a principled stand today, either for the sake of the principle or for themselves; *they must take a principled stand for the sake of the whole progressive movement, every part of it, every area of it.* They must understand that every blow directed against the working class, the trade unions, the Negro people, the Jewish people—that every single act of op-

pression is an act against their own personal freedom and their own civil rights.

And most importantly and most centrally, they must come to understand that it does not just happen that the Communist Party is ranged alongside them whenever they enter the arena of freedom's struggle; this presence of the Communist Party at the heart of struggle—*every* struggle on *every* issue that answers the people's needs—is the essence of the nature of the Communist Party.

The Communist Party is not an accident; it did not just happen; it was not created by Moscow as the most infantile of its enemies suggest; it does not take orders from abroad, in the style of a cheap "Hollywood" conspiracy; it is not a secret plot against the government of the United States. Any such ridiculous organization would long ago have dissolved in the wet sand of its own insanity; on the other hand, an organization which survives for generations against every conceivable terror, which grows stronger by the hour, which defends in each land its country's independence, which always leads the struggle against fascism and war, which calls forth the highest and purest patriotism, which inspires its members to deeds of glorious courage and sacrifice—such as mankind never saw before—which gathers to itself millions of workers and farmers as well as the best of civilization's intellectuals, which can find in its own ranks a rollcall of achievement in every art, in every science, that expresses the best of man's progress, which hews undeviatingly to a policy of socialist humanism—such an organization is not a conspiracy but rather the highest and best expression of mankind itself.

That is the Communist Party, and it arose in answer to humanity's needs. It cannot be destroyed unless humanity itself is destroyed; for it is the final expression of man's longing for a good and fruitful life as well as the embodiment of man's scientific knowledge of how such a life can be brought into existence. It is primarily the party of the working class because that class alone possesses in its daily work the organizational form as well as the driving need which will result in complete liberation from oppression; but the Communist Party is also the party of all those who love freedom.

With this in mind, is it not inconceivable that reaction can be fought without fighting for the right of the Communist Party to exist? The rights of Communists are, as Henry A. Wallace said, "the front line of the struggle for civil liberty." And, by virtue of the same, every attack upon the Communists is an attack upon the body of the people. Every attack upon the Communists is an attack upon the labor and progressive movements.

This is something reaction understands full well, and this is the reason why they direct their hottest fury against the Communists. We know, historically, that the advent of fascism in every country where it triumphed was preceded by a wild and cruel crusade against Communists. The two are irreconcilable; if fascism is to succeed, communism must be crushed. And once the Communists are crushed, how much longer has the intellectual before it is his turn? Either he comes next, for the concentration camps, the firing squads, the abattoirs—or he must grovel and abase himself; but in either case, he can no longer create, no longer think, no longer investigate, no longer live the rich, vital life of the mind which is freedom's peculiar privilege—nor, by virtue of the same events, can he feed his family. Bodily slavery inevitably accompanies mental slavery.

As I write this, eleven leaders of the Communist Party are on trial. The indictment against them charges that Marxism-Leninism, a world outlook, a philosophy, is a conspiracy to overthrow the government by force and violence, and as such punishable by ten years' imprisonment. Can any intellectual ignore this? Can any intellectual fail to understand that this indictment is directed at himself? Can any intellectual believe that the dark cloak of fascism will leave him a little light, a little air, a little freedom? If he thinks that, he is wrong, woefully wrong.

IN THE PRECEDING pages, I have attempted to examine and illustrate the process of *rationale* the intellectual undergoes before the pressure of the twin drives of war and fascism. I have tried to summarize at least a portion of the toll taken from both his conscience and his morality, a toll underwritten by an avalanche of

insinuated and actual threats, of terror, of bribery—all of it adding up to a monstrous and cruel process of intimidation. Beneath this constant pounding, with notable courageous exceptions, he has surrendered all or part of a very precious heritage, a heritage of liberty and democracy many centuries old. To this splendid heritage, which includes all of past civilization's contribution to the dignity and freedom of man, he owed his own peculiar splendor as a rational and thoughtful investigator; and it was his own great fortune that life had singled him out to bestow upon him that larger share of a culture which will some day be the possession of all men. That he has not used this trust well may be laid, to a large degree, to the very nature of our society; but that in itself cannot excuse him. No man is free from responsibility, and no man can surrender his soul with impunity. More is betrayed than his own self; he partakes of a sin against those who will come after him as well as those who came before him. When he betrays his own gift of reason to create a spurious and dishonorable *rationale*, he abets the degradation of all culture.

ONE CANNOT discuss the drive toward war and fascism without taking note of the systematic degradation of culture that inevitably accompanies it. This is a process of negation, of withdrawal, of anti-rational *rationale*. It is very well described by the French critic, Roger Garaudy, when he says:

"It is characteristic of the ideology of a decaying class not to be able to conceive of agreement between man and the universe. The contradictions of the system are opposed to the conscious mastery of the forces of nature. The world appears hostile to a society paralyzed by its inner disorder."

And, as if in answer to this and in confirmation of it, the poet, T. S. Eliot, deity and prophet for these intellectuals who have already completed the whole of the *rationale* and discovered the "safe harbor" of their schizophrenic "normalcy," invites his fellows to live "not in movement but abstention from movement."

Even as nature abhors a vacuum, so is a society without some sort of culture impossible. If a civilized culture is withdrawn, a

brute culture replaces it. "Abstention from movement," as Mr. Eliot so neatly phrases it, is a carefully calculated result of the drive toward war and fascism of the ruling class; it is the selected fate of the intellectual who surrenders; but the ruling class itself has no intention of abstaining from motion. They proceed to create a culture in their image, and sufficient intellectuals remain in motion—of a new sort, it is true—to carry out their desires. The exceedingly "sensitive" may prefer the ivory tower of Mr. Eliot; but it is surprising how much "delicate sensitivity" will take, once fear is removed and the cash price raised.

"Delicate sensitivity" will even become aggressive, if sufficiently backed by the arms and forces of a police state—as witness the antics of those cultured and delicately sensitive aesthetes of such high-level organs as *The Partisan Review* and the *Antioch Review*. In pursuit of *beauty*, as they see *beauty*, they not only renounce but defile mankind, making a mockery of all that is good and wise and noble and brave in the human spirit. Taking their cue from the abysmal and wicked anti-humanism of a man like Robert Bridges, one time poet laureate of Great Britain, they move on from there. In his "Testament of Beauty," with a flourish of fancy language, Bridges wrote:

"And of war she [Beauty] would say: it ranketh
with those things
that are like unto virtue, but not virtue itself;
rather, in conscience of spiritual beauty, a vice
that needeth expert horsemanship to curb, yet being
native in the sinew of selfhood, the life of things. . . ."

And so forth and so on—and thus does the scholar, with sufficient brown shirts at his back, discover the new allure of the "beauty" of violent death; once he has saved his own hide and removed himself sufficiently from the people who struggle and suffer and do most of the dying. In the same mood, the creatures of the *Partisan Review*, at the height of the last war, prated of "socially

empty anti-fascism" and bemoaned the fact that "to further complicate the situation, war cannot be declared on Russia." Their *rationale* led them to moan cynically that "there is not the slightest scrap of evidence or theory to show that the masses are able to accomplish their own revolution or retain control of it." And having disposed of that, they joined *Life* in sneering at that "Russian" concept, "the optimism of progress."

FROM THIS sad disillusionment at the hopes and aspirations of ordinary, and therefore "hopelessly stupid," human beings, they come to their affirmation, the elevation of death as "beauty."

They, of course, are at the top of the intellectual dung heap. Wrapped in petty neurosis, which they cherish, they do their work in narrow circles; but their philosophy of brutalized mysticism and their complete rejection of humanism finds a more vulgar and overt counterpart on every layer of American civilization. Out of a Hollywood "cleansed" of social sense, pours a veritable flood of cheap, badly-done films which exalt brutality, pornography and mediocrity. The "tough guy" who beats his women becomes a national hero; the private eye, apex of calculated inhumanity, American style, becomes the superman of our time. The Church moves in and rewrites history, and what is already empty becomes still emptier, if that be possible.

Comic books circulate in the hundreds of millions; best-sellers, incredibly poorly written sexual stimulation, boosted by giant book clubs, begin to drive serious literature from the publishing scene. Radio grinds out its endless soap opera and television adds a new dimension to trash.

So does a new culture emerge, as the artist turns himself first into a whore and then into a pimp. The critic, who works for a wage, dumps his uncomfortable standards and exalts these miserable limitations of a rapidly vanishing art. This is safe; it pays; and who is the loser?

The point is that we, not only as intellectuals, but as citizens of our great and lovely land, are the losers. It is dangerous today

to be a patriot, to love America unashamedly, for that too has been earmarked as "Russian."

Must we surrender all that is bright and splendid in our past? Is this great country, to which as children we pledged "to crown thy good with brotherhood," to be relegated to the shameful darkness of fascism and subsequently to the hell that fascism creates? And are we, as intellectuals, to empty our minds, our hearts and our souls of all that is decent and generous and real, so that the madness of a John Rankin, the philistinism of a Harry Truman and the medievalism of a Henry Luce may become the cultural signature of a "new America"?

Will they rest easily in their graves, those great ones who not only gave us gifts of beauty and truth, but exacted a pledge too, those like Whitman and Emerson and Thoreau and Clemens and Melville and Hawthorne and Freneau and Paine and Stowe and London and Harte and Reed and Lindsay and Frank Norris and Dreiser, those like Samuel Adams and Jefferson and Jackson and Lincoln and Douglass and Altgeld and Sylvis and Parsons and Debs and Haywood and, so lately that it seems only yesterday, Roosevelt?

See how late is it! Already Leon Josephson, the lawyer, has served a year in prison for upholding the Constitution, and Carl Marzani, the film director, has begun a three years' sentence, punishment for the curious crime of—as it is charged—making false statements to a government worker. Dalton Trumbo, Albert Maltz, John Howard Lawson, Herbert Biberman, Ring Lardner, Jr., Alvah Bessie, Lester Cole, Samuel Ornitz, Adrian Scott and Edward Dmytryk have been sentenced each to a year in prison, again for the curious crime of upholding their Constitutional rights, but more exactly for writing and working according to the dictates of their conscience. The great surgeon, Dr. Edward K. Barsky, is sentenced to six months in prison for anti-fascism, along with two other doctors, two lawyers, an educator, a writer, two trade union leaders, a housewife and a businessman. The educator, Richard Lyman Bradley, was head of the Department of German at New York University, but he was suspended for his anti-fascism, even as the gifted composer, Hanns

Eisler, was arrested, hounded and finally exiled from America for the same crime.

For joining with the Progressive Party, the following were driven out of not one university, but eight separate seats of the so-called "higher learning: Professors George Parker, Clarence R. Athearn, James Barfoot, Leonard Chosen, Charles G. Davis, Daniel D. Ashkenes, Don West, Luther K. McNair, Curtiss D. MacDougall and Clyde Miller. George T. Frantzis and Eleanor R. Dushane, secondary school teachers, were dismissed for Progressive Party activity; three professors at the University of Washington were suspended as accused Communists, while a fourth, in Oregon, was removed from his position for suggesting in a letter to a magazine that the Soviet agronomist, Lysenko, might be correct in his theories. I, myself, await the summons to enter prison and begin serving a sentence passed upon me for the crime of anti-fascism, and from the "intellectuals" of Freedom House, there has come a demand that Jo Davidson, the gifted and internationally known sculptor, be forced to register as a foreign agent.

Numerous employees have been removed from Federal service because they confessed to the crime of reading the works of Theodore Dreiser, Lion Feuchtwanger and Howard Fast. In Staten Island, an elementary school teacher, with eighteen years' service behind her, takes her own life in an agony of fear after an angry grilling by the school loyalty board, and in Washington, D. C., a teacher is investigated by the Un-American Committee because she told her students that Russians have a public health service.

Pages and pages could be filled with documented accounts of this awful madness, this government and big business sponsored attack on the minds and the dignity of men in the name of "loyalty." The pace of it increases, even as now, while I write, eleven men sit on trial, facing ten years' imprisonment for the crime of advocating the teaching of dialectical materialism and, in the course of the shameful trial, principle after principle of American democracy is being ruthlessly destroyed.

How late it is! How bitter and awful it is for an American to

write of his own native land in terms that were all too familiar a decade ago, when Nazi Germany was burning the books and defiling the conscience of mankind.

That is why I address myself to you—to American intellectuals—to stand up and resist! To join with the growing progressive forces and turn away this dark horror that is descending upon us! To unite so that the good light of our civilization may be kept burning, and so that night will not come upon our homeland!

It is late but it is not too late. War can be avoided. The world need not be a cinder, a black field of atom-seared desolation. Our children need not perish in awful agony; our homes need not go down in rubble. If we come together, if we refuse to allow those who hate and betray America to divide us, we can yet play a great and proud part in this struggle. We can make future generations our debtors instead of our accusers; and we can raise up out of the affirmation of our struggle a richer and better culture than any our country knew in the past. It is not easy, but such things were never easy and it was not without reason that Tom Paine said, so early in the fight for American freedom:

“Tyranny, like hell, is not easily conquered; yet we have this consolation with us, that the harder the conflict, the more glorious the triumph. What we obtain too cheap, we esteem too lightly; 'tis dearness only that gives everything its value. Heaven knows how to put a proper price upon its goods; and it would be strange indeed, if so celestial an article as FREEDOM should not be highly rated.”

So the gauntlet is cast to us, as it was cast to our ancestors so often before. We must not fail; we cannot fail. From every land on earth, from factories in Europe, peasant huts in China, from war suffering Greece and Israel reborn, from Turkey in its silent oppression, from South Africa in its agony, from India and awakening Asia, from old Britain and new Russia the eyes of millions are turned toward us, asking us where is that ancient freedom which was once such a glorious song on American lips.

What are we to answer them? I ask that of you, my fellow Ameri-

can intellectuals, in this critical hour. Do we speak and act, loud and clear, in anger and defiance, or do we go down in bitter shame and cowardice?

If we act, if we join with the progressive movement, if we oppose every infringement on our civil rights, if we fight on each issue, each injustice—if we build, along with the workers, a mighty peace movement, there is life and hope and the rich joy of unfettered creation; if we fail to act, there is only the road to hell that Germany, Italy and Japan once travelled.

If you haven't read

NOTES FROM THE GALLOWS

By **JULIUS FUCHIK**

Let us remind you . . .

- That here is the magnificent and inspiring story of a Czech Communist's struggle against fascism during the occupation of his country, his imprisonment, torture and execution.
- That Howard Fast says of the book: ". . . a unique, exalting, terrifying study of man put to the highest test, a document of the inestimable worth of the human spirit liberated from the dross of ignorance, fear and superstition, and a covenant between the Communist Party and the human race."
- That you owe it to yourself to read this book now!

Price: 60 cents

Coming — A MASSES & MAINSTREAM PAMPHLET

Behind the Ivy Curtain

COLD WAR ON THE CAMPUS

By **SAMUEL SILLEN**

The trustification of higher education by Wall Street monopoly pays off dividends in wholesale firings of university professors and the imposition of thought control on the campus.

Price: 10 cents

NEW CENTURY PUBLISHERS

832 Broadway

New York 3, N. Y.