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January



A COLUMN OF PERSONAL OPINION

By Rockwell Kent

“WE HOLD THESE TRUTHS” proclaimed in the Declaration of Independence to be “self-evident.” Fought for and won by the American people and guaranteed to them presumably forever by the first article of the Bill of Rights, these truths have for one hundred and seventy-two years been at the root of our achievements and national pride. It is of critical importance in this first month of 1949 to recall them, for it may be that their days as living truths to us are numbered.

First, from the Declaration:

We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the Pursuit of Happiness. That to secure these rights, Governments are instituted among Men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed. That whenever any Form of Government becomes destructive of these ends, it is the Right of the People to alter or abolish it, and to institute new Government, laying its foundation on such principles and organizing its powers in such form, as to them shall seem most likely to effect their Safety and Happiness.

And the First Amendment to our Constitution reads:

Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech or of the press; or the right of the people peace-

ably to assemble and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances.

It is these truths, these basic rights of ours that, by the terms of the indictments of the twelve Communist leaders, go on trial in New York City on January 17th. It is in defense of these truths that the whole American people, regardless of political or religious faith or considerations of self-interest, must rouse themselves to act. It is our lives and destinies that are at stake.

Twenty-one years ago the world was shaken by the trial and execution of two poor men, a cobbler and a fish-peddler, for a hold-up and murder of which they were innocent. The ruthless malignity of the prosecution, the sustained and bitter prejudice of the court, the courage and dignity of the defendants in the face of organized injustice, gave the case a deeply moving human appeal that reached the hearts of tens of millions throughout the world.

The case of the twelve Communists on trial today is different. They are charged with no act of violence, nor incitement to violence. Nothing is alleged to have been committed by them that was inconsistent with the long-recognized and fully publicized principles of the legal political party of which they are members. Yet it is on the charge of having “taught and advocated” these principles that the twelve men are arraigned. And it is as an instrument that has guaranteed Americans the right to speak and teach and advocate that our Bill of Rights is on trial. The conviction of the twelve men will bring them fines and

imprisonment. And to the Bill of Rights it will bring death. Yes: the trial of the twelve Communists is different from the trial of Sacco and Vanzetti. It is the trial of Democracy itself. Wake up, America!

IT IS OBVIOUS that no direct frontal attack could succeed against so deeply entrenched a principle of our Democracy as freedom of speech. Nor is the destruction of that principle the prosecution’s ostensible objective. An Administration aligned with the dictators of finance and industry at home and seriously committed to a foreign policy of aggression that may lead to war is bitterly resentful of the hampering agitational activities of the members of a minority political party—the Communist Party. It intends to silence them; and if, to silence them, its courts must so revise and qualify the meaning of the First Amendment as, in effect, to destroy it as a bulwark of free speech, it is less to be deplored by that Administration and its backers than welcomed as a freeing of reaction’s hands.

Again, wake up, America!

Wake up—not to the need of sympathy for twelve men on trial, nor to the defense of their political principles. Wake up to the realization of the incontrovertible fact that if these men are permitted to be found guilty as charged, freedom of speech in America will have come to an end. Good-bye Democracy.

Good-bye Democracy; Democracy which was born of the *conflict* of ideas; which lives and breathes and has its being in that conflict. Good-bye the yeast and ferment. Good-bye all labor’s rights and living standards. Good-bye the rights of all embarrassing minorities. Good-bye all human rights. Good-bye to a future for America.

These men convicted, and free speech remain? What irony! Sure, we’ll be free to speak—but let us watch our words. And we’ll be free to read—what we’re allowed to. And to think—(God help us if they read our thoughts!)

AMERICANS: the fundamental is-

sue on trial is not the guilt or innocence of twelve men. It is not the right of a particular party to function in our political life. It is not the truth or falsity of the principles it advocates. It is the inviolable integrity of our civil liberties. It is to their defense that we must rouse ourselves. Let Voltaire's words inspire us in this emergency:

"I do not agree with a word that you say, but I will defend to the death your right to say it."

March

"We hold these Truths"



A COLUMN OF PERSONAL OPINION

By Rockwell Kent

I GUESS we have all read of how a jury of the most eminent American poets headed by T. S. Eliot, recent recipient of the Nobel Prize for poetry, solemnly got together and, after due and thoughtful consideration of



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all the poetry produced in America in the year 1948, awarded a great \$1,000 prize to a notorious crackpot in an asylum: one, Ezra Pound.

Ezra Pound, as we all know, was a Mussolini fascist. And the qualities of heart and mind that found expression in his poetry were such as not only could remain unhorrorified by what the Axis did to countless tens of millions in the world but could lead him to so glory in his allegiance as to broadcast it to the world. He was without a mind and heart. He wrote such stuff as this:

"one tanka entitled shadow babao, or the hawk's wing of no fortune and with a name to come is downright iniquity said J. Adams at 35 instead of 21.65"

And so on ad nauseam.

So much for "Modern Poetry." And now for "Modern Art."

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A FEW MONTHS AGO, "Life" magazine assembled a jury of experts from Europe and America to meet in the very Mecca of that cultural faith, the Museum of Modern Art in New York, to discuss and evaluate it. The proceedings of this forum were, fortunately, public and the jury, constrained to open discussion, treated us to such a display of contradiction in sheer bewilderment as, coming from experts, was heartening in its confirma-

tion of widespread uninformed public opinion. They just couldn't make head or tail of the stuff.

"Great" poetry as exemplified by Ezra Pound is above the heads of all of us but the poets. "Great" art not even the experts could comprehend. The arts, it seems, are like the newest rockets—the higher they get the harder it is to see them, until at last they get clear out of sight and only God knows where they land. Or maybe, in their complete escape from life, they approach death and, like atomic energy and jet propulsion and world-round flight, are to be measured by their power to kill.

As long as mankind has the will to live; as long as the pursuit of happiness shall be mankind's concern; as long as these shall continue to be premised on mutual understanding and brotherhood; in short, as long as life shall endure, we shall seek for arts that, being comprehensible to us, may move us to a deeper appreciation of those values of life which are of common experience. We shall look for arts that

can enrich our understanding and increase our joy in living. And when the Artists, betraying their deep social responsibility to serve these ends, forsake us, it is up to the people, out of their vast reservoir of human resources, to bring into being new arts dedicated to the understanding of us all.

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AMERICA IS FORTUNATE above all countries of the world by reason of the many nationalities that have contributed to its building and whose cultures are as the colors, bright and various, of that great canvas which is America today. Our Order, constituted of many and diverse national groups, is in a sense America in miniature and may serve us as a proving ground for that spirit, and for those activities in support of it, which must imbue the American Way of Life in the high sense in which we conceive of it. If a great peoples culture is essential to a wholesome and happy America it is our opportunity as a brotherhood of the constituent cultures of America to promote it. If America has failed us in the arts; if we can't understand its poetry or its pictures; if we are fed up with its senseless, censored movies; if we don't much like and can't afford its drama; if we like neither the escapism nor the cheap commercialism that is offered us, let us not fail America. Let's give our country what it lacks.

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SO, FOR OUR COUNTRY and ourselves let us, with faith in the human resources of our own Order, develop of ourselves such arts as may be an answer to our people's hearts' desires. Let us, as an island in this vale of fears and growing cultural poverty, make such abundant use of our own resources for happiness that countless thousands more will flock to join us and to share our wealth.



An expression of the national group cultures that the IWO helps to preserve and develop.

April

"We hold these Truths"



A Column of Personal Opinion

By Rockwell Kent

BETTER than "Every hour on the hour," as the Pennsylvania Railroad says it runs its Philadelphia trains, we are nowadays getting over the air every quarter hour snappy little sales talks about the preciousness of the "American Way of Life." There are a great many Americans to whom the American Way of Life, as they understand it, is very precious. But they would like less talk and more dividends—not necessarily dividends of the kind that the propaganda of "private enterprise" would entice them to expect, not wealth so much in terms of cash and things, but wealth in peace of mind, and day to day and year to year security. And this, the sales talk gracefully admits, it can't quite give them.

WHAT IS THE USE of telling the families of the five million now unemployed about the blessings of private enterprise? What comfort do the Negro people get from it? The millions who suffer from underprivilege? The ten of millions that have the foresight to fear depression and another war? The millions who are rotting for need of medical care? The millions whose resources and savings these years of inflation have exhausted and who live in fear of what tomorrow may bring? To all of these, what mockery these sales talks must appear! For things we want and can obtain, for things we *have*, no salesmen are required.

Is anybody out to sell air to breathe, water to drink, love as a delightful thing in life? As the automobile salesman urges us to go in debt, or mortgage what we have, to buy his car, so do our salesmen of free enterprise ask that we mortgage our good will toward man to back free enterprise and the Marshall Plan. So has labor been asked to mortgage its future in world peace

for Truman's promises at home. When at last people shall come to live in the full enjoyment of the fruits of their labor there will be no need of salesmen for a way of life. We don't buy blessings we've got.

Surely, this feverish salesmanship betokens fear. With fear so common one might say Democracy is in a fearful state—fear of the people, by the people, and for the people.

JUDGING FROM the number of requests that I have received for statements defining good citizenship, there seems to be a growing concern of what action the American people will eventually take to avert the disasters that are imminent. In reply to one of them from a University I have written the following definition, less with the expectation that it will be accepted as basic to the training of students than as an expression, more or less in a vacuum, of my own concept of good citizenship:

"A few years ago, I was impelled to write to the Congressman of my District in protest to his stand on proposed legislation. He replied that he didn't like the drawing of the figure in a certain illustration of mine. In other words: I should mind my own business and leave politics to him. He was discouraging good citizenship.

Good citizenship, in a nation committed to government by the people, implies an *active* interest in government. And it calls for an intelligent interest. Basic to an intelligent interest is a clear understanding of the great purpose of democratic government—the greatest good for the greatest number—and a willingness to make personal

interests secondary to this public interest.

Good citizenship implies the acceptance of the broad statements of the Declaration of Independence as to the equality of man and the rights of all to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness as fundamental to all legislation and even to the Constitution itself. The deliberate omission, in the Declaration, of the mention of property as a "self-evident" right should be significant to us in the defining of the American Way of Life.

After one hundred and seventy-five years of our existence as a nation, we are still confronted with racial, religious and class prejudices and with widespread underprivilege and economic insecurity. The final and lasting eradication of these evils must be the first concern of good citizens. And toward the eradication every necessary personal sacrifice must be made. And if, toward their eradication, a complete reconstruction of the American economy—even to the abandonment of much or all of private enterprise—may be advisable, the good citizen will face and accept the necessity.

The good citizen will shun violence, and as an everlasting safeguard against violence will work for the preservation and extension of all our precious civil liberties, resisting every attempt at their curtailment by the courts or special privilege. Realizing that successful government by the people depends on education free from prejudice and on unprejudiced information on public happenings, he will be a fearless advocate of academic freedom and of a free press. The good citizen will work to make America a country of good citizens in a world at peace."

June

"We hold these Truths"



A Column of Personal Opinion

My Peace Trip to Paris By ROCKWELL KENT

IT was on the eve of the death of President Roosevelt that, preparing to address the American people, he wrote for all mankind these words:



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"We seek peace—enduring peace. More than an end to war—we want an end to the beginnings of war—yes, an end to this brutal, inhuman and thoroughly impractical method of settling the differences between gov-

ernments. . . . Let me assure you that my hand is the steadier for the work that is to be done, that I move more firmly into the task, knowing that you—millions and millions of you—are joined with me in the resolve to make this work endure."

Those millions—most of them—who stood with Roosevelt then, and millions more, march on inspired with that same resolve.

It was to attend a World Congress For Peace of the representatives of six hundred of these millions that forty of us Americans went to Paris the last week of May. Unhappily, unlike the other delegates assembled there, we were not officially representative of

millions of Americans. Unhappily, unlike the delegates from the new Democracies of eastern Europe, we were without the blessing of our government in what we hoped to do for peace. For going there for peace we were denounced by our press and threatened with reprisals on our return. "Why is it," I wondered, "that all of us who work for what all people want are thus denounced and listed by our government as subversive? Can it be true that they have war in mind?"

We were a well assorted group, we delegates from America. We were men and women of different racial origin, of different religious faiths, of various political affiliations or of none. Yet we came there as accredited spokesmen for no racial group, for no church, for no political party—except one, a small minority who, to their party's honor, spoke for the Communists. It came as a sad reflection that our country, which has risen to be the greatest industrial and financial power in the world, is not a world power where the theme is peace. It is sadly true that our American delegation was not representative of America in the sense, for example, that the delegation from the Soviet Union was representative of the greatness of its people. We were men and women of good heart but we were not,

unhappily, of an importance in the life and accomplishments of our people that could entitle us to rate as peers of the distinguished statesmen, writers, scientists, labor leaders, prelates and war heroes that were the Soviet Union's spokesmen.

DAY after day we sat and listened—listened and learned. We listened, deeply moved, to the story of destruction, suffering and death which was the background, or the premise, of the strong determination upon peace of the people who had known the devastation and the horrors of war. We listened with tears in our eyes to the mother of Zoya telling us quietly of her daughter's childhood, fervent patriotism and triumphant martyrdom. We heard a hero of the Soviet Union speak of the Veterans' determination that war should not occur again and wished that we had had a like spokesman there for our American Legion. For an hour-and-three-quarters we heard that veteran Socialist of Italy, Pietro Nenni, plead for peace and collective security for peace against the Atlantic Pact for war. For almost two hours we listened to Konni Zilliacus, British Laborite. Was Britain to become another Malta, an international air base and—like Malta—a colony?

Denouncing the Atlantic Pact he called our politicians madmen. Was he too charitable? Alexander Fadeyev reminded us Americans of our feverish war preparations, of our military penetration of foreign countries, our encirclement of the Soviet Union with air bases. That encirclement, against the provocative danger of which even our own John Foster Dulles, no friend of the Soviet Union, has warned us. We, as Americans, translated Russian fears and anger into what would be our own emotions had the Soviet Union virtually taken over the government and resources of Mexico, built bomber bases on the Rio Grande, annexed the West Indies and fortified them, imposed a "Zhukov Plan" on South America and signed up the Argentine, Brazil and Canada, with all of Europe, in a war pact for "defense." "I am no pacifist," I thought. "If that should happen here I would stump America to rouse our people to awareness of the threat of war."

We listened, we Americans, to harsh words spoken of our Government. And we learned that whatever respect there may remain in the world abroad for the American people in their potential decency, few people anywhere respect our Government. "Is ours a government of the people?" we might have

asked ourselves. "Do we deserve the Truman government and not deserve the world's good will?"

Eugenia Cotton, speaking for eighty million women of the International Federation of Democratic Women's Clubs, quoting a member of that Government of ours—our Congressman Cannon—as saying that Moscow and other Russian cities must be attacked from bases under the Atlantic Pact. To this, she said, the mothers of the world would reply, "Never will we allow our children to fight for the interests of the American trusts."

And Toledano warned of the impending American crisis and spoke with courage and hope of the anti-imperialist struggles of the peoples of South America. Our own Du Bois, speaking against the background of the sufferings of his own people in America, warned of oppressors of the colonial peoples of the world. A representative of the people of China, Kue. Mo-Yo, spoke proudly of his people's victory and, for the Chinese delegation, presented a peace banner which read, "Peace loving forces throughout the world, Unite!"

HOUR after hour, day after day, the spokesmen for the people of more than seventy nations of the world ad-



Pietro Nenni, Socialist leader, and a delegate from Italy speaks to the Conference.

dressed us, their words being translated in five languages over earphones. Le Clair for the fifteen million people of the General Federation of Labor of France; Abusch for millions of Germans; O. John Rogge for the liberals of America; the Metropolitan Nikolai for all Christians over all the world; and Ilya Ehrenburg spoke movingly of war's menace to the world's culture. A young American observer said to me afterwards, "He was like a bull reciting great poetry." And Robeson,

our Paul Robeson, spoke and sang. And the ovation accorded him reminded me that however inadequate our American delegation as a whole was in representing the greatest in American genius, we had in Paul not only one of the great world figures of today but of all living men the world over the most beloved.

For six days these spokesmen for six-hundred million people met and spoke and listened and, at last, resolved. Pursuant to a resolution proposed by our own Brother Boleslaw Gebert (one-time President of the Polonia Society, IWO, and now Secretary of the Central Commission of Trade Unions of Poland and an Assistant General Secretary of the World Federation of Trade Unions), there was established a permanent committee of the World Congress For Peace. To that Committee is entrusted the promotion, for the millions and millions of us the world over, of the resolve of which President Roosevelt wrote in his last words.

Roosevelt continued in that last address which he had planned:

"The only limit to our realization of tomorrow will be our doubts of today. Let us move forward with strong and active faith."

As though in echo of that, as though in pledge to realize his will, the Manifesto of the World Congress for Peace concluded with these words:

"Courage and confidence in the struggle for peace! We knew how to unite. We knew how to agree. We are prepared and resolved to win the battle for peace, the battle for life."

August

"We hold these Truths"



A COLUMN OF PERSONAL OPINION

By ROCKWELL KENT

I HAVE a dictionary on my knee, and open it to the little three letter word "man." I read "noun; an individual (genus Homo) at the highest level of animal development, mainly characterized by his exceptional mentality." Then, thinking about it, I add to that definition the following: "A living creature obsessed with asking Why." For in that little three letter verb Why (by dictionary definition "for what, for what cause, reason or purpose?") lies



the key to mankind's greatness. And in his neglect of the word? Well, in the long run, the key to much of the unhappiness and misery he has endured. Consider the long periods in human history when people, naturally curious about sun and moon and stars, about snow and rain and calm and storm, stagnated in acceptance of the gods and demons which their venal priests purveyed to them. Or, as a graphic example from history, take the Light Brigade at Balaklava. As Tennyson wrote of them:

*"Theirs not to reason why,
Theirs but to do and die."*

They did. And died.

OR TAKE LABOR in the last election. Take—let me be sure I know my facts—take labor in the paper mill of the small town in which I live. They have a history that might have served their memories well. Of attempts at organizing in their fathers' time, of political and economic coercion, of a bitter strike. Of outside deputies called in, of force and violence against them, of failure, and of lifetime discrimination.

But time moves on. And then—ten years or so ago—they try again. They meet, discuss. They organize unhampered by intimidation. They vote, and win. They prosper, relatively, now. The town, the tradesmen prosper.

Since then, far off in Washington, dread changes have occurred. Roosevelt has died. Taft-Hartley nullifies the Wagner Act. A presidential year rolls around. A local union by-laws bans the discussion of politics at meetings. Theirs not to reason why. Consequently, as their fathers voted, so in turn vote the good mill workers of Au Sable Forks: Republican. And back to Congress goes their man, their *Representative*. He voted for Taft-Hartley.

Sometimes there is a grim humor in the consequences of stupidity. Humorous, to me, is the printed self-righteous indignation of a similarly politically innocuous organization of artists (of which I am a member) at their branding as subversive by a Representative on the floor of Congress. That they in fact *are* simon-pure, and he an ass, just makes it funnier. First of all let me establish our purity by explaining that although we are essentially a labor union in the sense of working to obtain fairer treatment from our employers (we term them "patrons"!) and, in general, to better our sorry economic lot, we carefully dissociate ourselves from the labor movement and preserve our gentility by terming ourselves, as do the actors, an Equity Association; the Artists' Equity. In the professional all inclusiveness of our organization as in its political exclusiveness we resemble our patriotic predecessor, "Artists for Victory," of the war years in tribute to whose all but incredible freedom from politics as akin to the boasted free-

dom of Artists' Equity I recall the following anecdote.

IT WAS IN 1943, when the peoples of the western world were as one in their heartfelt gratitude for the triumphs of the Red Army and for the morale of the peoples of the Soviet Union who sustained it. Millions of Americans, through the posters and cartoons that reached America, came to know and honor the Soviet artists' contribution to that immense war effort. Outstanding among their cartoonists was a group of three men who worked together as one and were known as the Kukryniksi. Their cartoons were widely reprinted in America. And in their own country they were held in such respect that an exhibition of their works was given in their honor in Moscow. Two days before the opening of the show, I received the suggestion that American artists forward their congratulations to the Kukryniksi. Believing that Artists for Victory, with their broad membership and their clerical staff at hand, could—and would eagerly—act upon the suggestions, I transmitted the request. Two weeks later I received the brief reply stating that while my request had just been brought to the attention of the executive committee no one present but Mr. Gellert had ever heard of "Mr. Kukryniksi" and that "Inasmuch as Artists for Victory has established the policy of taking no part in political activities or propaganda, as an organization it does not feel free to respond to your request."

Is this funny? Or is it sad?

Is it funny, or is it sad, that Artists Equity, in the face of a recent attack on the floor of Congress, falls all over itself to assure Congress and all America, in almost these words of Artists for Victory, that they have established

a policy of taking no part in political activities or propaganda?

IT IS SAD that an organization of professionals in a field for the free expression of ideas either attaches so little importance to the maintenance of that freedom or fails in awareness of the infringements on their own freedom that are implicit in the current suppression of the freedom of writers and teachers and political parties.

It is sad that, living in America today, the attack on such a group as theirs, based presumably on the fear—however unfounded—that they might at some time want to say something that the Committee on Un-American Activities wouldn't like, is of the pattern with the repressions that are increasingly in progress and of which the trial of the twelve Communists is but an outstanding example.

And it is always lugubriously funny when those who as sedulously as Pontius Pilate wash their hands get no more than Washington's ingratitude.