

Verbundkatalog Kalliope

In: Tomorrow. Vol. VIII, No. 10, Juni 1949, S. 5-11

Europe's Search for a New Credo.

Mann, Klaus

Juni

Nutzungsbedingungen

Bei zahlreichen Dokumenten auf monacensia-digital.de sind die Urheberrechte bereits abgelaufen. Sie sind gemeinfrei und dürfen ohne weitere Rücksprache mit der Monacensia weiterverwendet werden.

Bei den Dokumenten, bei denen noch Urheberrechte bestehen, müssen für eine Weiterverwendung stets die Rechteinhaber*innen angefragt werden sowie eine Publikationsgenehmigung der Monacensia eingeholt werden. Das Zitatrecht bleibt hiervon unberührt.

Zur Erteilung einer Publikationserlaubnis wenden Sie sich bitte an:

Monacensia im Hildebrandhaus

Literaturarchiv

Adresse: Maria-Theresia-Straße 23, 81675 München

E-Mail: monacensia.literaturarchiv@muenchen.de

Terms of use

The copyrights for numerous documents on monacensia-digital.de have already expired. They are in the public domain and may be reused without further consultation with Monacensia. In the case of documents for which copyrights still exist, the copyright holders must always be contacted for further use and publication permission must be obtained from the Monacensia. The right to quote under copyright law remains unaffected by this. To obtain permission for publication, please contact:

Monacensia im Hildebrandhaus:

Literaturarchiv

Address: Maria-Theresia-Straße 23, 81675 München

E-Mail: monacensia.literaturarchiv@muenchen.de

T O M O R R O W

VOL. VIII, NO. 10

JUNE 1949

"...EACH AGE IS A DREAM THAT IS DYING OR ONE THAT IS COMING TO BIRTH."

Europe's Search for a New Credo

KLAUS MANN

THE economic plight of Europe four years after V-E Day is slowly being resolved, thanks in part to the generosity of American aid—but what is one to say of the intellectual dilemma of thinking men and women from Great Britain to the countries behind the Iron Curtain? I have traveled extensively throughout Europe since the end of the war, talking to artists, scholars, celebrities, and bright young men on either side of the Iron Curtain. They are a baffled, insecure group, these European intellectuals, divided and torn not only by the diplomatic struggle between Russia and the United States, but also by the war of ideas raging throughout the Continent.

What are the European intellectuals thinking in the spring of 1949? What are they to believe, especially those interested in a genuine exchange of ideas, after reading of the strange goings-on at last March's conferences of opposing intellectuals in New York—the Cultural and Scientific Congress for World Peace and Americans for Intellectual Freedom?

In the spring of 1949 the European intellectuals consider their inherited ideas questionable or irrelevant. So many slogans, once inspiring, now have a hollow ring. The European air reverberates with false credos, contradictory arguments, violent accusations. Many voices are

heard in Paris and London, in Prague and Brussels and Copenhagen, but there is no coordinated discussion to give the mass of intellectuals a basis for harmonious belief and action. The extreme leftists shout for the total socialization of the means of production; the fiery nationalists beat their breasts, believing their own countries could save the world if they had the opportunity; the apostles of science point to technical progress as the means of salvation, while the enemies of science oppose it as the archenemy of culture; the ardent Catholics point to Rome and its spiritual leadership as the answer; and the defenders of American doctrines clash with the Stalinist supporters almost daily, solving nothing, adding to the mental confusion which the traveler from America sees in every face on the European streets.

Many frightened and disturbed Europeans look for comfort in the ancient documents of Hinduism, in the writings of Lenin, in the Bible, in the existentialist philosophy of Jean-Paul Sartre. Others quote the latest pronouncements of the Rumanian Communist leader Ana Pauker, or Einstein or General de Gaulle or that current European phenomenon, the American-born world-citizen Garry Davis. Still others find their solutions in the philosophy of Heidegger or Jung, or they quote with

KLAUS MANN, the son of Thomas Mann, is the author of *André Gide: The Crisis of Modern Thought*, and *The Turning Point*, an autobiography. His articles have appeared in *Vogue*, the *Atlantic Monthly*, *Town and Country*, and the *Nation*. Mr. Mann, who served in the United States Army during the war, is now living in the south of France and is working on a novel.

self-pitying satisfaction the great European Paul Valéry, who proclaimed, "*L'Europe est finie.*"

As in America, the Europeans talk at great length about Kafka and sex and war and nuclear chain reactions. But unlike Americans, who have enough to eat and keep busy with their hustling optimism, the Europeans also talk about despair, "the Sickness unto Death," as Kierkegaard has called it.

What if the European intellectuals are too weak and dispirited to meet their ordeal? What if they fail, if they betray their mission? One of them, the French writer Julien Benda, has accused his own guild of high treason. And the European intellectuals remember Benda's inexorable formula, *La Trahison des Clercs*.

The French word "*clerc*," like the archaic English word "clerk," can mean a clergyman as well as a layman charged with minor ecclesiastical duties, or a scholar, or simply a person able to read and write. By his use of the term "*les clercs*," the French author clearly suggests that the intellectual's position in our modern world may be compared to one formerly held by the priesthood.

In times of undisputed religious authority the intellectual has no function, no *raison d'être*. It is only when the priests lose control that the independent, critical minds take over. That is what happened in Hellas and Rome after the dethronement of the Olympian gods (Socrates, the great question-asker and dialectician, was an intellectual in the most exacting, most sublime sense of the word). It happened again at the time of the Renaissance following the Dark Ages; and the Humanists of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, consciously and proudly free from clerical tutelage, may be regarded as the founding fathers of our modern intelligentsia.

Today's intellectual, then, is something in the nature of a layman priest inasmuch as he, too, is primarily interested in spiritual values, not in material success. The intellectual, like the priest, is supposed to judge life and society according to certain ideals, rather than from a purely utilitarian or "realistic" point of view. But while the priest may rely on a given ethical and metaphysical system, the intellectual—belonging to a race of explorers and nonconformists—has to discover his own moral code, his own truth and gospel. The real intellectual takes nothing for granted. He questions everything. His main characteristic is an infinite *curiosity*. He is in love with novel ideas and hazardous experiences. In contrast to the priest who enjoys the guidance and protection of a powerful hierarchy, the intellectual leads a vagrant, uncertain life—every day a new adventure and experiment, a new ordeal.

But however independent the ideal intellectual may be, he must remain loyal to certain voluntarily accepted basic standards and supreme principles. The true leaders of European thought, from Erasmus to Voltaire, from Montaigne and Spinoza to Heinrich Heine and Victor Hugo, were not only great skeptics and iconoclasts but also great believers. They believed in the Divine, the Good, the

Beautiful, in Man's intrinsic nobility, in the superiority of culture over barbarism. They believed in Progress. Without this confidence, the European intellectuals could not have prepared and initiated such enormous events as the Renaissance, the Reformation, and the French Revolution.

In the second half of the nineteenth century, however, the intellectual captains began to lose their sense of measure and direction. Nietzsche's frantic attacks on Christianity, his insane self-deification and self-destruction; Kierkegaard's abysmal guilt complex, his desperate striving for "Purity of Heart"; Baudelaire's diabolical grimaces and blasphemous paradoxes ("The man of letters," he said, "is the enemy of the world"); Tolstoi's denunciation of art and his rigid asceticism; Dostoevski's pathological ecstasies and remorse; Oscar Wilde's defiance of bourgeois hypocrisy, resulting in his spectacular ostracism and scandalous martyrdom; Strindberg's fierce misanthropy and persecution mania; Richard Wagner's ruthless ambition; Tchaikovsky's morbid nostalgia; Flaubert's withdrawal into the icy realm of detached aestheticism; Verlaine's deadly intoxication with prayers and absinthe; Rimbaud's flight to the African wilderness, his abdication as a poet, the terrible message of his silence; Van Gogh's escape into madness—all these individual tragedies foreshadowed the general crisis now shaking our civilization.

THE intellectuals delved too daringly into the secrets of the human soul, of society, of nature. What they brought to light from the depths was as dreadful as that gorgonian face whose glance is said to turn the beholder to stone. Was there nothing safe or sacred any more?

The bold experiments and speculations of modern physicists—particularly Einstein's theory of relativity—revolutionized not only practical science but also man's vision of the universe, his fundamental ideas about the character of time, space, matter and energy. Karl Marx discovered the class struggle as the predominant motive behind all historical and ideologic developments. Another great intellectual, Sigmund Freud, explored the shadowy recesses of our unconscious, which he found teeming with the specters of inhibited desires, the evil ghosts of patricidal and incestuous impulses.

Western man, the *Homo Occidentalis*, who had thought of himself as a basically rational creature, turned out, much to his own horrified surprise, to be still possessed by demons, driven by irrational, savage forces. The most sinister forebodings, the most gory fantasies of nineteenth-century pessimists were surpassed by the appalling reality of the twentieth. The Antichrist, whose gestures and accents Nietzsche had once sacrilegiously aped, now came into actual existence and proved his devastating power. Gas chambers and high explosives, venomous propaganda and organized exploitation, the outrages of the totalitarian regimes and the fiendish tastelessness of commercial entertainment, the cynicism of the ruling cliques and the

stupidity of the misguided masses, the cult of high-ranking murderers and money-makers, the triumph of vulgarity and bigotry, the terror of ignorance—these are the weapons and methods the Evil One uses. With them he seeks to subjugate the human race, to establish his reign over our accursed species.

As civilization tumbles under the assault of streamlined barbarism, what can the intellectuals, the artists do but echo the general anxiety and anguish? Who can describe or rationalize a nightmarish world of Auschwitz and the comic strips, of Hollywood films and bacteriological warfare? The images of our poets and painters disintegrate



along with our social order. Picasso's genius evokes the flashes and thunderbolts of apocalyptic tempests. Franz Kafka reveals, with uncanny insight and accuracy, our innermost apprehension. James Joyce invents a new idiom to vocalize the unspeakable. The masters of the word stammer. "I can connect—Nothing with nothing," admits T. S. Eliot, visualizing the decay and doom of a polluted creation.

The poet, the artist, the intellectual no longer pretends to understand. He shudders, whimpering over the "falling towers" of the great cities of the world. The ordeal, having increased in magnitude and momentum ever since the beginning of the first world war, is now approaching its final, decisive stage.

The current crisis—or, to be more precise, the permanent crisis of this century—is not limited to any particular continent or any particular social class. In this shrunken world of ours, all nations and all classes have to face the same problems and dangers. But if it is true that an intellectual is more keenly aware of the critical world situation than, say, a baseball champion or a chorus girl, it is also true that the European intellectuals are more directly, more vitally affected than their colleagues in Brazil or Australia or the United States. For it is one thing to meditate on the possible breakdown of civilization; it is an entirely different matter to see it happen. Certain apocalyptic events which may seem almost incredible to the student of philosophy in Kansas City or the poet in Johannesburg, are only too familiar to the people of Berlin, Warsaw, Dresden, Rotterdam. In Vienna, Athens and London, the "falling towers" which T. S.

Eliot saw in *The Waste Land* are not just poetic symbols any more. In the midst of ruins, in view of crippled men and starving children, no adult, clear-sighted person can overlook or belittle the deadly seriousness of the permanent crisis.

No wonder, then, that the European intellectuals are today the most crisis-conscious people in the world. Also, they are more consciously *intellectual* than their fellows in other continents; and they have become more emphatically *European* than they were prior to World War II. Common suffering has the power to unify. In spite of national and ideologic conflicts, there is in Europe today (especially among intellectuals) a certain sense of continental solidarity. If the Czech patriot hates his Hungarian neighbor, if the Belgian cannot bring himself to forgive the German, they still belong to the same tragic, but proud and distinguished clan. I met many Europeans who spoke contemptuously of both the United States and the Soviet Union—the two colossi endowed with material wealth and military power, but lacking wisdom, refinement and cultural tradition. It is the same melancholy arrogance, the same weary disdain, with which the sophisticated literati of decadent Hellas may have referred to the vulgar toughness and efficiency of the Roman conquerors.

Even the English, once so haughtily detached and insular, seem to have renounced their splendid isolation. They, too, have suffered; they, too, are poor, and face an uncertain future. Why should they not join at last the proud and pathetic brotherhood of crisis-ridden Europeans?

A well-known young English composer said to me, after a concert in Amsterdam: "I've only just come back from America where I had to spend a few weeks. It was all right, it was interesting; but I don't think I'd be happy there, in the long run. No intellectual tension! No awareness of the great issues and problems! People are too well-off. Preoccupied with their new cars and television sets, they seem to miss the real drama of our time."

HOW do the European intellectuals meet and master these great problems dominating the drama of our time? I found most of my intellectual friends high-strung and irritable. One bright young man told me, "We don't know what to believe. We're all mixed up." And a venerable professor said at the end of a conversation, "We're all mixed up. We don't know what to teach."

The grand old men are scarce in Europe today. There are not many left of the powerful generation which produced Anatole France and Freud, Bergson and H. G. Wells, Maxim Gorki and Paul Valéry. As for the survivors, some of them, like Einstein, Stravinsky, Schoenberg and Thomas Mann, have migrated to the other side of the Atlantic.

Of course, there is always Shaw, pouring out *bon mots* and paradoxes with indefatigable gusto. But for all his

courage and sagacity, old G. B. S. has ceased to influence the intellectual vanguard. Since he considers it his privilege to ridicule any serious cause, people no longer take him very seriously.

Somerset Maugham, while gradually assuming the role of an illustrious old-timer, hardly aspires to moral or intellectual leadership. Nor does E. M. Forster, even though his great prestige would entitle him to such ambitions. There can be no doubt that the author of *A Passage to India* enjoys more respect and authority than any other living English novelist since the death of Virginia Woolf. But his fame is of a purely literary, almost esoteric, nature, and is limited to the English-speaking countries. In Germany, France, Spain and Italy, not even the professional men of letters are acquainted with that exquisite critic and narrator.

Bertrand Russell certainly deserves the rank of an intellectual leader, although his somewhat noncommittal agnosticism and unimaginative common sense may not be particularly attractive to some of the more fastidious minds. Benedetto Croce, the great scholar and upright liberal, is admired far beyond the frontiers of his native Italy. But when visiting him in Naples, some time ago, I felt myself in the presence of a magnificent relic, a live memorial of past exploits and forgotten principles. Ortega y Gasset, the outstanding philosopher of modern Spain—living today in Madrid as an exile in his own country—is more deeply versed in the crucial questions of our time. His brilliant speculations in the *Revolt of the Masses* have helped clarify the tumultuous events of the past decades. But however significant such shrewd comments may be, the perplexed youth of Europe want more. They want guidance and comfort, new ideals and hopes.

"Whenever young people come to me for advice, I feel so shamefully incompetent, so helpless, so embarrassed!" So declared André Gide, the greatest writer living in Europe today, after I had a long talk with him. "They keep asking me whether there is a way out of the present crisis," he said, "and whether there is any logic and purpose, any sense behind the turmoil. But who am I to tell them? I don't know myself."

He, for one, offers something more precious than mere advice: the splendid gift of a durable lifework, and the example of a complex, yet serenely balanced and bravely consistent personality.

NOT many intellectuals have the faith and fortitude, the uncompromising integrity and obstinate independence of Gide and Croce. German writers were not the only ones to accept the atrocities and anti-Semitism of Nazi-Fascist control. In France, the triumph of barbarism was applauded by literary celebrities like Céline, Paul Morand, and Henry de Montherlant. In occupied Norway, that nation's outstanding novelist, Knut Hamsun, became a traitor to his country and to civilization.

And those who collaborate now with the Russians, who

preach and propagate the Communist gospel—are they, too, "traitors"? Some of them—especially in the Iron-Curtain countries, including the Soviet-occupied parts of Germany—may have become Marxists out of opportunism and cowardice. Others, however, are of unquestionable sincerity and good faith. A man like Louis Aragon—formerly a leading surrealist, now the "Red Pope" of French letters—does not think of himself as a traitor but as a gallant patriot, a stout-hearted champion of peace and progress. Nor can an earnest and generous woman like Madame Irene Joliot-Curie, or a truly inspired poet like Paul Eluard, be labeled simply as "Bolshevist agents" or "fifth-columnists."

It would be a grave mistake to underrate the determination of the pro-Soviet intelligentsia in western Europe today. There are, all over the Continent, men and women



of stature, who firmly believe that a world revolution is both inevitable and desirable. To them the Soviet Union is the mighty rock of freedom and enlightenment in the midst of capitalistic darkness and decay.

In Copenhagen I talked to the white-maned dean of contemporary Danish literature, Martin Andersen-Nexoe, whose novel *Pelle, the Conqueror* has long been an international favorite. The aged master assured me, gently but positively: "The future belongs to Communism. Communism is peace. Communism is prosperity. Communism is culture. Whoever fails to see those basic truths must be blind or bribed by American warmongers."

In Berlin the famous German writer Anna Seghers, author of *The Seventh Cross* and other successful books, described to me her recent visit to the Soviet Union as "a wonderful time." No, she maintained, there wasn't any censorship. Soviet artists and scientists enjoyed perfect freedom, as long as they respected the fundamental principles of truly popular, truly Socialist culture.

I talked to intellectual advocates of Stalinism in Prague, Vienna, Budapest, Brussels, Paris and Milan, who said, "What's all that excitement about reprimanding Shostakovich, Prokofiev and Khachaturian? If the Russian people don't care for atonalism and cacophony, then those gentlemen have to produce more understandable, more appealing stuff! That's simple enough, isn't it?"

In the company of my Marxist friends I was often reminded of those angels who, according to William Blake, "have the vanity to speak of themselves as the only wise; this they do with a confident insolence sprouting from systematic reasoning." Some of them seemed a little uneasy, though. A talented young writer I interviewed in Prague, even while professing his ardent faith in Communism, could not quite conceal his apprehension. "Of course, the case of Shostakovich and his friends has rather . . . disquieting implications," he said, with a furtive glance about the room. "If the same kind of regimentation were to be imposed on the intellectuals in Czechoslovakia—well, that wouldn't be so good! Naturally, I have the greatest respect for the Soviet Union, and I do believe in Popular Democracy. But I'm not particularly fond of goose-stepping, you know. . . ."

Discreet complaints and ominous intimations were voiced by the German novelist Theodor Plivier, whose *Stalingrad* is generally regarded as one of the major contributions to the literature of the second world war. At the time I went to see him in Weimar, in the Russian-controlled zone of Germany, he seemed to be on excellent terms with the Communists. In fact, Plivier, with Anna Seghers and two or three other writers, represented the *crème de la crème* of party-line intelligentsia. Considering the opulence of his home and the grandeur of his social position, I assumed he was pleased and satisfied. But when I congratulated him on his good fortune, he shrugged and mumbled: "I have plenty to eat, all right. But, believe me, it's no fun to live as a prisoner—even if it's a golden cage they keep you in. . . ." A few months later, Theodor Plivier escaped from the Russian zone and was given refuge by the Americans.

If the Communist intellectuals dislike all non-Communists, they really loathe the deserters and apostates who were their former comrades. This violent animosity on the part of the Stalinists is understandable when one considers the renegade's natural tendency to vilify the cause he once embraced. Among the many shrill, hysterical voices heard in Europe today, none is more offensive than that of the ex-radicals who have turned into fanatical red-baiters. In their eagerness to prove the sincerity of their conversion they resort to the most absurd and infamous practices. Even Arthur Koestler has alienated many of his admirers by the violence of his anti-Russian obsession. Another prominent ex-Communist, André Malraux, once a fighter for the freedom of the Spanish people, has now become the prophet and propagandist of General de Gaulle who, if he came to power, might well deprive the French of their democratic constitution and their liberties.

And so the Communists shout "Traitor!" at men like Malraux and Koestler, and the ex- or anti-Communists scream back at men like Aragon, Picasso, Eluard, Bertolt Brecht, Martin Andersen-Nexoe: "Filthy agents of the Kremlin!"

Thus the accusations and counter-accusations are hurled

to and fro, throughout the tormented Continent. As East and West threateningly face one another, the battle of ideas claims and absorbs the finest European minds. Detachment, wisdom and objectivity are considered high treason. The intellectuals must take sides. They must become partisans and fight as soldiers.

IS there no "Third Force" mediating between the two hostile camps? Certain writers may try to maintain an "unpolitical" attitude. One of them, Jean Cocteau, told me recently that politics, to him, is "*de la blague*"—a distasteful joke, a gory carnival, not to be taken seriously. Cocteau's most recent book, *La Difficulté d'être*, a collection of charming autobiographic notes and brilliant *aperçus*, deals with such subjects as Beauty, Death, Youth, Style, Language, the meaning of dreams, the infinite attraction of certain landscapes, poems and human faces.

There are those among the European intellectuals who seem impressed with Aldous Huxley's admonition: "It is only by deliberately concentrating on eternal things that we can prevent time from making diabolical foolishness of all we do."

The trend toward religious mysticism is one of the most striking features of intellectual life in postwar Europe. Even some of the authors formerly connected with left-wing, atheistic movements are now indulging in pious moods and metaphysical speculations. For instance, Ignazio Silone—first a Communist, then a militant Social Democrat—seems to be more and more preoccupied with "eternal things." The same is true of another repatriated exile, Alfred Doeblin, the German novelist, who, after some years in the United States, has returned to his homeland and is now working for the French *Centre de l'Éducation* at Baden-Baden. Revoking his earlier Marxist views, Herr Doeblin, a highly talented, if somewhat unreliable thinker of Jewish origin, now proclaims: "A new era of religion and metaphysics has started. The world, hitherto overly clear from our positivist and scientific standpoint, has once more shrouded itself in mystery." As for mystery-conscious Herr Doeblin, he has found peace and illumination in the Catholic Church.

The Catholic influence is steadily increasing among European intellectuals outside of the Iron-Curtain countries, although modern Italian letters seem comparatively free from papal authority partly due to Benedetto Croce's uncompromising secularism. The Holy See, however, boasts powerful literary supporters in France. Paul Claudel, François Mauriac, and Jacques Maritain are remarkably effective servants of the Vatican. Even the much-discussed existentialist movement has its Catholic wing, represented by the highly respected philosopher Gabriel Marcel.

Of the two German thinkers who are generally regarded as the initiators of existentialism in its present form, one, Karl Jaspers (formerly professor of philosophy in Heidelberg, now active in Switzerland), is definitely religious-

mind, which is why the Marcel group claim him as their patron saint; the other, Martin Heidegger, without coming out openly for atheism, maintains that God is "absent," too remote from His creation, too incomprehensible to be counted on. The conception of utter "absence," the idea of total nonexistence (if such a thing or state can be imagined), seems indeed the very crux and basis of Heidegger's philosophy. To him, *Nothingness* means almost what *Tao* does to the Chinese. It is the Primal Cause of all phenomena, the perfect and eternal Source—indefinable, unchanging, inexhaustible, existing and non-existing. Heidegger has been called a "mystic of Nothingness," an idolater of the *Nihil*. No wonder, then,



that he was rather pleased with the "Revolution of Nihilism"—National Socialism. This same philosopher who, until 1945, was one of the intellectual pillars of Hitler's Third Reich is now exalted by the French literary vanguard. Jean-Paul Sartre considers himself a disciple of Heidegger, although the German philosopher repeatedly, and rather bluntly, has disclaimed all responsibility for existentialism à la Sartre.

Equally accomplished and successful as a novelist, playwright and essayist, Jean-Paul Sartre is the most conspicuous literary figure in postwar Europe. It is true that certain critics consider his early work—especially his sad, saturnine novel, *La Nausée*—more original and significant than his recent writings. Many European critics with whom I spoke feel that Sartre, as a narrator, cannot compete with his fellow existentialist, Albert Camus, whose symbolic tale, *The Plague*, has been an international sensation. However, it is Sartre, not Camus, through whom existentialism (the leftist, atheistic branch of the movement) could become a major force in European intellectual life. Yet the meaning of existentialism, as taught by the Sartre group, is difficult to define, for this remarkably unsystematic philosophical system seems to consist of inconsistencies. A haphazard, if provocative, mixture of incongruous elements, Sartre's teachings have been shrugged off by academic French sages as "*une confusion des plus fâcheuses*."

Is Sartre a pessimist? Does he think life a crazy, ghastly mess? The tendency he shows, as an artist, for sordid situations and vile characters suggests a disillusioned, nihilistic viewpoint. But Sartre does not like to be

called a "nihilist." Even while speaking of the universe as a "*totalité désintégrée*" and of God as a misshaped human invention—a "*Dieu manqué*"—Sartre accepts and praises ethical principles. Without explaining the origin or authorization of his moral code, he wants us to believe that certain things are evil, certain other things good; that it behooves us to choose between those two alternatives; and that, by doing so, we decide upon the salvation or condemnation of our soul. Since there is no God to guide or judge us, it is up to ourselves to determine our plight here below and our status in a rather vague, metaphysical future. Our actions, our behavior, are all that matters. Every man is what he makes of himself.

Like Marx, Sartre admonishes the intellectuals not to content themselves with *understanding* the world: they are urged to help in *changing* social and economic conditions. The term *engagement*—meaning "commitment," or the definite stand we are supposed to take in regard to the controversial issues of our time—plays a predominant role in Sartre's thinking. In contrast to the orthodox Marxists, who find the historical process determined by economic factors, the existentialists stress the importance of *individual* decision in the face of a universe which, in itself, is devoid of any aim or logic. An outspoken individualist and believer in the primacy of spiritual values, but simultaneously an active fighter for social progress, Sartre tried to reconcile the two traditional schools of thought—idealism and materialism.

As he preaches a kind of radical middle way, politically and philosophically, he is frowned upon by all the major parties. To the Catholic Church, Sartre's views are a particularly objectionable form of paganism. Arthur Koestler and others have denounced the existentialist leader as a Stalinist in transparent disguise, while the official spokesmen of Marxism reproach him for his "pro-Fascist" leanings. At the Tenth International Congress of Philosophy, held last year in Amsterdam, the Czech delegate, Arnost Kolman, referred to existentialism as "a variety of sly apology for capitalism."

And the quarrelsome battle of ideas goes on.

They quarreled in Amsterdam, where seven hundred professional thinkers from twenty-five countries assembled to exchange ideas. "When you go back to Prague," Professor Bertrand Russell sneered at his learned colleague, Professor Arnost Kolman, "tell your employers that the next time we have an international congress we'd prefer that they send someone not so crude." Another emissary from Czechoslovakia, Ladislav Rieger, continued to defend militant Marxism as a "new humanism," whereupon a German sage, Walter Brugger, hissed: "I see no difference between the Marxist philosophy and the philosophy of Nazism." Finally the venerable Dutch scholar, Hugo Pos, chairman of the congress, came to the sad conclusion: "Our discussions revealed the general diffuseness of post-war thinking."

They quarreled at Wroclaw (formerly Breslau), where

intellectuals from all over the world met under Communist auspices to look for a common platform. Soviet writer Ilya Ehrenburg tried to promote international understanding by calling Anglo-American literature "a flood of mental opium," which caused an English delegate, Professor A. J. P. Taylor of Oxford, to state bitterly: "This congress has not served the purpose of bringing people together." A representative of India, Mulha Raj Anand, suggested in the end that the way for delegates to help the cause of peace was to "fast like Gandhi."

Is there no other hope?

The touching enthusiasm with which the European intellectuals, along with the European masses, responded to the bold gesture of the American-born "world citizen," Garry Davis, is indicative of the general anxiety, the widespread, intense desire to find a way out of the present deadlock, but will the initiative of a powerless, isolated young man be sufficient? Even while Davis is congregating a little troop of well-meaning, spirited men and women, among them some literary celebrities, like Gide, Camus, and Sartre; even while millions of frightened people are longing and praying for peace, the ominous preparations for war continue, the fatal rift between two world powers, two philosophies, is deepening from day to day.

A weak, dissonant chorus, the voices of the European intellectuals accompany the prodigious drama. I have heard many voices on my travels, some aggressive and arrogant, others gentle or flippant, passionate or sentimental. I have yet to hear the harmony of coordinated sounds, the concert of reconciled or peacefully competing forces.

"There is no hope. Whether we intellectuals are traitors or whether we are victims, in any case we'd better recognize the utter hopelessness of our situation. Why fool ourselves? We're done for! We're licked!"

These words were uttered by a young student of philosophy and literature I met in the ancient university town of Uppsala, Sweden. What he had to say was certainly characteristic, and I believe his words echo the

beliefs of young intellectuals in all parts of Europe.

He continued: "We're licked, we're through. Why not admit it at last? The struggle between two great anti-spiritual powers—American money and Russian fanaticism—does not leave any room in the world for intellectual integrity or independence. We are compelled to take sides and, by doing so, to betray everything we should defend and cherish. Koestler is wrong when asserting that one side is a little better than the other—not quite black, just gray. In reality, neither side is good enough—which is to say that both are bad, both are black."

He said a new movement should be launched by European intellectuals, "the movement of despair, the rebellion of the hopeless ones. Instead of trying to appease the powers that be, instead of vindicating the machinations of greedy bankers or the outrages of tyrannical bureaucrats, we ought to go on record with our protest, with an unequivocal expression of our bitterness, our horror. Things have reached a point where only the most dramatic, most radical gesture has a chance to be noticed, to awake the conscience of the blinded, hypnotized masses. I'd like to see hundreds, thousands of intellectuals follow the examples of Virginia Woolf, Ernst Toller, Stefan Zweig, Jan Masaryk. A suicide wave among the world's most distinguished, most celebrated minds would shock the peoples out of their lethargy, would make them realize the extreme gravity of the ordeal man has brought upon himself by his folly and selfishness."

In a trembling voice, he said to me, "Let's resign ourselves to absolute despondency. It's the only sincere attitude, and the only one that can be of any help."

While I thought of the black future the young men and women of Europe must visualize for themselves, the university student added, very softly, while a faint, timid smile was lightening his pensive young face: "Do you remember what the great Kierkegaard has told us? *The infinite resignation is the last stage prior to faith, so that one who has not made this movement has no faith. . . . Therefore faith hopes also in this life, but . . . by virtue of the absurd, not by virtue of the human understanding.*"

