

theCat" are closed to the records of Richard Nixon. One is forced to wonder just what benefit this exclusion confers on American education.

### *Une Petite Crapule*

In the forthcoming California senatorial race, one contender for the Democratic Party's nomination is Mr. Gore Vidal, a novelist. He has perfect credentials for a certain not-negligible segment of the state's voting constituency. His appeal to this group is through an aberrationist program which might be encapsulated as freedom from any responsibility—moral, civic, etc. His tenets and goals, perhaps not announced publicly, will encompass the abolition of the human sense of normalcy, which will be replaced with the sacrosanct tenet of the emancipation of instincts—all instincts, with no discrimination whatsoever. As an impeccable deviate and an unrestricted nihilist, Mr. Vidal can count on large donors and influential supporters throughout Los Angeles and San Francisco: their liberal honor will guarantee their devotion—with a sentimental mist in the radiant eyes of film stars, movie tycoons, sitcom poets and talk-show philosophers—to his campaign.

Mr. Vidal has recently published an article in (where else?) *The Nation* which may help the California voters to assess the newest personality on the West Coast political scene. In it, he viciously berates American Jews for their alleged reluctance to work out a concept for a new popular front in which they would, together with homosexuals and lesbians (who are, according to Mr. Vidal's gospel, the most oppressed "minorities"), combat the establishment's yoke. He seems unclear as to what he means by the "establishment": by dint of origin, money, family, money, sexual refinement, once again money, and his utterly plutocratic lifestyle, Mr. Vidal himself is the epitome of the WASPish establishment. Which does not impede

him from hating the society that gave him everything (even the right to openly defend pederasty) with a vicious and genuine hatred. Here are a few gems of his mindset:

—He believes we are in the "last days of empire": "empire," in Mr. Vidal's kinky lingo, means American democracy, and since he's absolutely positive of our imminent demise, he naturally wishes us ill, if only to prove the sharpness of his diagnosis;

—"American evangelical Christians" are, for Mr. Vidal, "natural fascists";

—Mr. Vidal's sense of past and present moral culture consists of a rather simple evaluation: "To deny giving physical expression to those [homosexual] desires may be pleasing to Moses and St. Paul and Freud, but these three rabbis

are aberrant figures whose nomadic values are not those of the thousands of other tribes that live or have lived on the planet. Women's and gay liberation are simply small efforts to free men and women from this trio."

—Having formulated his own virulent anti-Semitism, he proposes an alliance with Jews: "Since . . . [Jews] are going to be in the same gas chambers as the blacks and the faggots, I would suggest a cease-fire and a common front against the common enemy, whose kindly voice is that of Ronald Reagan . . ."

He thus concludes by suggesting that Ronald Reagan is preparing some sort of American Auschwitz. About a contemporary with Mr. Vidal's psychomoral profile and political methods, Stendhal once wrote a brief denomination: "*une petite crapule*." □

## JOURNALISM

### *The South Omnis Vincet*

Given the regional origins and ideological predispositions of Lyndon Johnson and Jimmy Carter, one might wonder what has happened to Southern politics. Has the land of John C. Calhoun forsaken its birthright for a mess of pottage cooked up by the *Washington Post*? Has Andrew Young become the quintessential Southern politician? Will Mississippi be transmogrified into the Massachusetts of the South?

A solid "no" will answer these questions, for John East and Jesse Helms are still more typical of Southern politics than Andrew Young. But a different situation confronts those who are curious about intellectual and cultural life south of the Potomac. Despite the lingering

reverberations of H. L. Mencken's "The Sahara of the Bozart," the culture industry thrives in the South; no longer is an oboist as scarce in Dixie as a statue of William Tecumseh Sherman in Atlanta. But just as certainly as that oboist exists, he almost assuredly follows the dictates of an alien culture, for values and mores once anathema in the South have slipped across the Mason-Dixon line in recent years. Major newspapers such as the *Nashville Tennessean* and the *Atlanta Constitution* seem bent on molding themselves in the image of the *New York Times*. The faculties of major Southern universities—the University of Virginia and the University of North Carolina, to name two—have more than their fair share of Marxists and holdovers from the so-called counterculture of the

1960's. Chic young Southern women decorate their coffee tables with copies of *The New Yorker* and *Rolling Stone*, while John Irving and Erica Jong replace Faulkner and Eudora Welty in their bookcases. The offspring of ardent Trinitarians now worship a new trinity: marijuana, rock music and polymorphous sexuality. In the name of fun and enlightenment many Southerners—especially in the region's burgeoning cities and suburbs—have encouraged, or at the very least condoned, the growth of an alien culture. And when the culture changes, can politics be far behind?

Since the demise of the Southern Agrarian movement at the end of the 1930's, the South has lacked a focal point for the defense of a conservative intellectual and cultural tradition. Individual voices have been raised—a Richard Weaver here, a Flannery O'Connor there—but no concerted effort has been made to give broad and coherent expression to what oftentimes has been reduced to the stoical mutterings of men forced to stand by helplessly as twilight thickens into darkness.

In the fall of 1979 a group of Southern writers and scholars decided that the time had come to reverse the retreat toward Appomattox; the moment demanded one of Stonewall Jackson's dashes through a Blue Ridge gap or one of Bedford Forrest's hell-for-leather assaults on a seemingly impregnable position. Led by Thomas Fleming, a classicist, and Clyde Wilson, editor of the John C. Calhoun Papers at the University of South Carolina, these men established *The Southern Partisan*, a quarterly journal dedicated to the defense of Southern tradition.

The survival rate for small magazines that challenge the spirit of the age is not high, so the future of the *Partisan* is uncertain. But oaks grow from acorns, and at the very least, the *Partisan* provides a gathering place for discontented conservative intellectuals in the South. And no one ever accused Southerners of shrinking from a fight. Victory? Well,

Southerners have had few of these since 1865, and perhaps they no longer seek the elusive laurels of the victor. But more important, Southerners, above all other Americans, know the answer to a question posed by a Southerner, Walker Percy: "Which is worse, to die with T. J. Jackson at Chancellorsville or live with Johnny Carson in Burbank?" □

## Precision Work

The Soviet-made and -supplied acid rain may be eating away at the lungs of little children in Cambodia but nobody in Western Europe is marching against this unfortunate circumstance. A Soviet submarine may bring an atomic projectile within a couple of miles of the Swedish coast, but only a handful of citizens protests in Stockholm. Remember the Swedish marches against the U.S. when the Marines tried to protect those Vietnamese who later became the boat people? Scandinavian marchers remain unmoved now, when hundreds of Afghan villages are covered by Soviet napalm that scorches mothers feeding their babies.

But what can we do about it? Nothing, as long as we have *Time* mag-

azine, which helps the Soviet propaganda machine with this kind of precise "information":

Europe's fears are so ripe for exploitation by the Soviets that the Kremlin is naturally suspected of financing some of Western Europe's peace groups. That belief seemed to be confirmed earlier this month when a minor Soviet diplomat in Copenhagen was expelled by the Danish government after reportedly being caught passing money to peace organizations. But there is no concrete evidence that Moscow has been funding pacifist groups on a large scale . . .

So we have reports that the Soviets have financed peace demonstrations in Denmark. Yet for *Time* this is of no significance, because it was only a "minor Soviet diplomat." For *Time* only the sight of Mr. Gromyko handing out cash in front of Copenhagen's Tivoli Gardens would be considered "concrete evidence" of Soviet complicity in staging and orchestrating festivals of anti-American hatred. President Johnson complained that the American press never seriously investigated Soviet subversion during the Vietnam War. Small wonder. Their reports on My Lai, etc. were so much more saleable. □

