



Let me conclude by suggesting that there is a fundamental point of intersection between the theory of a just government and much of the underpinning of what we know as Western civilization. Just as there is a necessary nonrational element in the former, so is there a powerful, ordering rational element in Christianity. The start of the Gospel of St. John reads, in English, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." The blending of Platonic elements with Christianity is evident, but the process becomes much more so in the Greek text from which the translation is made. In the Greek, "beginning" is not *genesis* which means a start in time, as used in the first book of the Old Testament, but *arkhe*, which means the beginning not so much at a particular point in time at which things start, but as the foundation principle out of which being comes. "Word," of course, comes from the Greek *logos*, which includes the notion of reason, the inner essence of meaning. Thus, we have the idea that in the beginning, as the foundation principle of the universe, was meaningful reason, and the Word—*logos*—was with God, the Word was God. That is to say, the universe as conceived by this Gospel is not arbitrary, not a matter of chance or accident, but a reasonable world following a reasoned order with God.

It is this interpretation of the meaning of reality, taken from and developed from the Greek philosophers, that runs through the great tradition of Christianity. It is expressed once more by the greatest of all poets at the height of the Middle Ages, by Dante, when he writes, in *The Divine Comedy*, "In the great seas of being, all things preserve a mutual order and this it is that maketh the Universe like unto God."

James Burnham

## Social Register

The *Los Angeles Times* recently featured a picture of a youthful male with the face of a retarded wrestler and the following caption:

Los Angeles designer Paul Battoon shows pleated, wraparound skirt in his fall menswear collection. He tops it with matching T-shirt, wide-body jacket. Available at Allure on Melrose Avenue.

An *LA Times* staff writer offers a comment on the new fashion:

When a woman wears knickers, a tuxedo or a tunic, it's fashion. When a man wears a dress, it's drag. . . . Or is it? Think of Africa and the Arab world—nations of men in caftans—or Bali and Tahiti—"paradises" where men wear sarongs. Members of Scotland's Highland regiments wear knee-baring kilts of various tartans, while *evzones*, the elite military men of Greece, stand guard in wide white miniskirts and tights.

Rich erudition and impeccable reasoning. So why does the countenance of Mr. Battoon strike us as a rare exemplification of mental ruin? Strange. We never suspected that the mere idea of trousers had such an awesome, tyrannical power. □

## Notables

### Natweté

**Jamaica Kincaid:** *At the Bottom of the River*; Farrar, Straus & Giroux; New York.

Some 40 books were published in 1982 that had their genesis in the pages of *The New Yorker*. Last December one that will be added to the 1983 total, *At the Bottom of the River* by Jamaica Kincaid, emerged in all of its slim elegance (82 pages), including a reproduction of "Green Summer" by Burne-Jones on its cover and a panegyric by Susan Sontag ("splendid stories about personal and cosmic desire . . .") on its flyleaf. The book is dedicated to two people: the author's mother and Mr. William Shawn, the redoubtable editor of *The New Yorker* who also happens to be the author's father-in-law.

*The New Yorker* was once synonymous with terms including *elegance*, *refinement*, *urbanity*, and *sophistication*. Nowadays, however, *simplemindedness* is becoming operative, as evidenced in the social sciences by Jonathan Schell's *The Fate of the Earth* and in belles lettres by *At the Bottom of the River*. Ms. Sontag notwithstanding, the latter is a collection of almost-stories, demi-vignettes. Kincaid was born in Antigua and draws on local color in her postcard-sized pieces. Back when *The New Yorker* was a tyro there were those who were still drunk on the dregs of Gauguin and who touted what they characterized as "vital" and "genuine" in the artistic forms of "primitive" societies. The more rudimentary the form, whether it be sculpture or dance, the better. Kincaid is recycling this sort of thing in the prose of a wide-eyed, West Indian ingenue. The pose didn't ring true in the 1920's, and even the imprimatur of *The New Yorker* doesn't help it today. □

# The Victory of the Unvanquished Losers

Peter Wyden: *The Passionate War: The Narrative History of the Spanish Civil War, 1936-1939*; Simon and Schuster; New York.

by Lee Congdon

History has not been kind to the radical left, not because modern revolutions have invariably failed, but because they have frequently succeeded. So deplorable has been the record of revolutions in power that those who continue to proclaim the necessity of total political/social solutions find themselves in the unenviable position of having to persuade the skeptical that the next "liberation" will not result in thought control, concentration camps, and mass murder. Even the most uncharitable among us might sympathize with the predicament of those who are called upon to say something flattering about Lenin, Stalin, or Mao; small wonder that contemporary *enragés* prefer to speak of such media heroes as Castro and the Sandinistas. But even these idols tarnish as their despotisms show no sign of withering away. Where, then, can a radical turn? Few, if any, of them would now take the trouble to defend the governments of Vietnam or North Korea, and they know full well that any attempt to extol the Eastern European regimes will meet with cynical laughter.

It is largely for this reason that the Spanish Civil War continues to excite the radical imagination. In Quixote's somber land the left was defeated and therefore spared the painful duty of apologizing for the consequences of victory. The peddlers of revolution are thus at liberty to call attention to noble intentions, heroic gestures, and the villainy of the victors—in this case a military clique that accepted aid from Hitler and Mus-

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solini. There is, it seems, nothing quite so awe inspiring—and so safe—as a *lost* cause. One thinks of the romantic aura that still surrounds the late, unlamented Salvador Allende. And always one remembers Spain, which was, if not the last, certainly the most sacred cause. "The Republican *causa*," Peter Wyden informs us, "stood against Hitler, the priests, the landowners, the military caste, the privileged." What right-thinking person would not wish to make such a purpose his own?

The author of this clumsily written volume is yet another tireless, and tiresome, propagandist of the left masquerading as a historian. Throughout, he manages to portray all who fought for the Republic, particularly the communists, as well-intentioned lovers of liberty and uncompromising opponents of "fascism." He lionizes the famous communist leader "La Pasionaria" ("the passion flower," Dolores Ibarruri) as well as Stalin's ubiquitous agent Mikhail Koltzov. He speaks with reverence of Republican champions including Hemingway, Malraux, Robert Capa, and Arthur Koestler, and he lavishes praise on members of the International Brigades, especially American communists such as Alvah Bessie, Ben Leider, and Robert Merriman,

the University of California economist whom Hemingway immortalized as Robert Jordan in *For Whom the Bell Tolls*.

"World War II was the surgery," Wyden concludes, "Spain was the infection, and the men and women who flocked there were the committed few who could tell their children that they had been there, present at the creation of our age." That is, the German-born Wyden maintains that the Spanish Civil War was part of a larger struggle against fascism that ended only with the Soviet Army's capture of Berlin in 1945. Although advanced in a crude and amateurish manner, this interpretation—it is only fair to say—does not differ markedly from that offered by Hugh Thomas in his able and exhaustive study, *The Spanish Civil War*.

If one rereads the large and impressive literature inspired by the Spanish Civil War and pauses to consider how many intellectuals died or were prepared to die in Spain, one cannot but be impressed by the collective will to believe in an antifascist crusade. Driven by an almost religious fervor, the poet John Cornford and the Marxist aesthete Christopher Caudwell fought and died for the Republic; so did the Hungarian writer Máté Zalka, better known by his nom de guerre "General Lukács." André Malraux risked his life as commander of a Republican air squadron, the "Escuadrilla España"; Hemingway acquired an unwonted political consciousness; and Auden could write, rather thoughtlessly, of "the conscious acceptance of guilt in the necessary murder" ("Spain"—1937). Even the aloof Samuel Beckett took sides. "UPTHEREPUBLIC!" he wrote in reply to the question: "Are you for, or against, the legal Government and the People of Republican Spain?" No doubt some of these intellectuals were initially aroused by the murder in rebel-held Granada of the great poet-dramatist Federico García Lorca, but most seem to have been impelled by the unexpected