

pea pickers. Sheriff H. Rex Smith cowered in his office, saying the situation was entirely beyond his control and S. H. Atchley, prosecuting attorney of Teton county, frantically wired Governor Ross to send troops.

When the National Guard arrived the troops marched into the camps and "captured" over 200 strikers. At the muzzle's end work resumed.

IT IS a fact that the population of this Far Western farm area has fallen by almost a quarter in the last five or six years. West from the Teton mountains to the valleys of central Idaho thousands of dry-land acres lie uncultivated, untenanted, the huddle of aban-

doned shacks on a hillock overlooking the vacant land falling more completely to ruin with every winter. Some of these farms were deserted ten years ago and these look now almost as if a plow had never been set in them and the land never cleared. Others were vacated only last fall, but increasingly as relief money filters more slowly through where it is not cut altogether, the land is being abandoned. Ghost towns—the sun-baked, unpainted frame post-office, dance hall and general store—stand at the junction of section roads as testimony to a dead system of agriculture. Those farmers who have stuck it out speak of the country as being all shot to hell and some even go so far as

to blame the land itself for their sta-

But it is becoming increasingly apparent to a growing number of these men living peasant existences on the bare stretches of the Idaho hills that hunger is the only thing they can expect of the farmer's life under the present set-up. All the confident assertions and ballyhoo of their county agents does not delude them; the slight improvement in market prices has not caught up with the soaring prices of consumer's goods. The great task is simply to reach these disillusioned and angry men and put in their hands the methods to fight for their rights, the knowledge of their historic role in the struggle for a human existence.

An Open Letter to Romain Rolland

On His Seventieth Birthday

WALDO FRANK

YOUR seventieth birthday comes at a time when France holds in her hands the immediate destiny of the Western world. The result of the struggle for power in France between the elements of reaction, typified by the Croix de Feu, which are the forces of death, and the elements of re-creation, typified by the Front Uni, which are the forces of life, may well determine the result, at least as it effects those still living, of the same struggle throughout the Occident. If France fails, Great Britain fails; the sinister forces in the United States, emboldened by a century of capitalist anarchy—may sweep America into the same disaster. If France fails, Western man may fail: and a period of overwhelming darkness may intervene for us all, before that future time when our progeny once again takes up the Torch, held aloft meanwhile who knows for how long? by the Soviet Union and perhaps by certain parts of China, India, America Hispana that prove inaccessible to fascist armies.

At this crucial scene of mankind, as so often in the past, France plays the leading role. And we, who celebrate your seventieth birthday, Romain Rolland, perforce look upon you as the symbol of our hope in your great country. You are a great man, a great person, Romain Rolland, because you are a symbol; because a world spirit speaks through you. At this hour of crisis and of celebration, for many in my country, you incarnate the genius which for eight centuries has sustained French culture.

This genius is a kind of "common sense," rare alas! both individually and collectively rare. It is "common" only as essence, as the universal, is common. It is compounded of a ruthless clarity in meeting the Real and in relating its parts together; of an invincible courage in following whither the Real leads

at whatever sacrifice of individual peace and comfort; and of a creative vision in so mastering the facts that they may ever more closely conform with man's intuition of his dignity and destiny.

As I look about me at the world in which I have now lived for over forty years, meeting men of all qualities of mind and temperament and talent, I am appalled at the rarity of this "common sense"; and I am no longer amazed at the cruel and dolorous pass to which the world has come. Men of genius in the usual sense of the word are not rare; nor men of physical courage, nor men of imagination. But terribly rare is the man who, capable of knowing the truth, continues to serve the truth after that moment in which such service begins to make him suffer; terribly rare is the man of imagination who, finding that he can sell his gifts at high price unto the prostitutes and exploiters who rule the world, elects still to give his gifts into the hands of his humble brothers; terribly rare is the man who, possessing courage, does not get drunk with it and lose his control of reality, finding it easier to move armies or mobs than to master his own ego.

Men of this rare "common sense" will, perhaps, some day be more common; this, then, will be a different world. But until that time of maturity arrives, these men are historic. You are one of them, Romain Rolland. In you, there is no break between conviction and action; between recognition of the truth and every word and deed within your power to fulfill it; between the responsibility you feel for your dignity as an heir of Man and the responsibility you feel for your dignity as a servant of men. Ten years ago, I called you a *whole man*, Romain Rolland. I cannot improve this term, today.

The whole man is he who possesses this "common sense" I speak of.

I pray that France may duly celebrate the seventieth birthday of her great son and heir to those intellectual and ethical qualities which have made France great. If she does so, it will have to be by her actions. France knows where the truth lies: will she have the common sense to serve it? She knows that truth lies first of all in fearless realization of the collective economic freedom which can alone make true those principles of *Egalité, Fraternité, Liberté*, which now for a hundred years she has flaunted on all her public buildings. To this end, the people of France must grimly sever from their loyalty to *La Patrie* those greeds and inertias and self-indulgences of class which are the germs of fascism and of death. The hour has come when France must accomplish the promise of her great tradition to herself and to the world. She must mature into realization. It will hurt, it will be heroic. But if France fails now, she goes down; she commits that suicide of the spirit which ever precedes the decomposition of the body.

Great nations mirror their powers and their vision in the lives of their great men. Let France, today, look to herself by looking to you, Romain Rolland. Let her study the clear, pure progress of your ideas from their humanitarian idealism of your bourgeois youth, through the trial of War which schooled you to find the truth in facts, and to the strong revolutionary realism which is your deed, today. What France sees, in studying you, let her understand to be the symbol of her own ineluctable course, if she would continue to be France.

... This prayer to France, this challenge to France, this confidence, is my way, Romain Rolland, of celebrating your seventieth birthday.

The European Spirit

ROMAIN ROLLAND

The Nouvelles Littéraires, a Paris literary weekly, is asking various writers to give their conception of the "European spirit." The following questions are the basis for each writer's article.

Does there exist a European spirit? Is that spirit more than an entity, i.e., is it a living reality?

Has the intellectual a role to play in the formation of this human spirit and should he therefore forsake his traditional position as an intellectual?

Will the European be the new man whom we see springing up in various points on the continent? Will Europe be made by intellectuals or will it be born of certain economic necessities?

The following is Romain Rolland's answer to the questionnaire.

I HAVE read your questionnaire. Allow me to say that I have answered it in advance in my recent volume, *Quinze Ans de Combat* . . . Your questions deal with a Europe that is isolated or distinguished from the rest of the world. I must state flatly that I do not follow you along that road; I can envisage no spirit that would restrict itself to Europe. I do not say that Europeanism may not be the next stage in human evolution and that it does not mark a step more advanced than nationalism. But many of us have passed that stage and we shall not turn back. We see too clearly that Europeanism at the present time in its diverse garbs is the mask of a new nationalism much more dangerous because it groups together greater forces and more voracious interests, and because this Europeanism proclaims itself as such, it provokes instantaneously the formation of two or three rival groups.

Everything is in motion, the whole world is in the melting pot. Let us not make worlds of super-nations, in which the cast-iron grows cold and breaks into new and separate blocks. There must be no International except the universal International.

Ten years after the war, in which he had abdicated like his fellows, Julien Benda took it upon himself to bring to trial intellectuals who had "betrayed." For himself he set up as an idol an intellect, whose independence is without dangers, since it refuses to enter the domain of the real where it might run the risk of getting caught between the fires of the combatants. That spirit reigns over the frozen world of abstract ideas, ideas

without application in practical life. That spirit does not disturb the present masters, and they even like to encourage it, for the games of the esthetes and the sophists of non-applied intelligence, turn the eyes of idle onlookers away from the arena, in which the destinies of peoples are being settled. I shall never be able to say often enough the aversion I feel for that idolatry of the mind in abstracto. . . . Whether that idolatry be conscious or not, it is part and parcel of the *Combinazioni* of the present-day masters of politics and they encourage it. I am more than anyone else the champion of that independence of the mind which permits one to dominate the battlefield, but I do not admit that seeing exempts one from acting. When one sees well, one acts better. One must act.

The servants of the intellect have no right to hold themselves aloof from social and political movements. They form a team in the confederation of human labor, a special weapon, which Stalin has called in a lapidary formula the *engineers of souls*. They have no reason to attribute to their special weapon a superiority, which it has not, over the weapons of their proletarian companions, without whom they would be nothing. The aim of action of both must be the same: namely, to establish a humanity more just, more free and better ordered.

Let not the intellectual be disinterested in this action. It would ill become him to pretend unconcern, for, no more than the humblest of his brothers, has he the right to disdain the material realities which are the support and prime condition of the mind. If as an individual he pleases to buy his intellectual independence with an ascetic renunciation, he has no right to demand this renunciation of the great mass of his brothers, who cannot find in their minds the same recourse against the harshness of existence. Above all, we must lessen their misery.

My experience of the last twenty years has taught me that there is no graver error than to oppose, as we do ordinarily, a would-be realism of action to a derisory idealism of thought. In truth, the real interest of a nation is always in accord with the real sense of justice and of the permanent values of the spirit. It is not as an intellectual idealist that I combat warlike chauvinism. It is as a realist, who sees in nationalism and militarism the worst enemies of their own people, those who shrink its intelligence, those who bleed it dry, for the sole preparation of war and who by preparing for it provoke it, for they force other peoples to

prepare for it. If it were true that intellectuals were, as they have a propensity to say, the brain in reference to the rest of the body, it would be appropriate to remind them of the apologue of Menenius Agrippa: What can the brains do without the members?

These times are grim, cruel, laden with havoc, but they are potent and fruitful. They destroy, renew. Let us leave aside today strictly European preoccupations. We have to struggle with ancient ideals, the dying and murderous gods and with the millions of minds without eyes which serve them blindly. We have to be found new gods and a new humanity. We can do it only at the cost of the most intense energy and a complete self-sacrifice.

It is clear that, for me, there is no reason to think that the *new man* will be by preference European. I have seen in India and in China superior types of the *new man*. He may quite as well appear among any of the races that are liberated and that have reached a certain degree of culture (and why should not they all reach it?). When we speak of the new humanity which is being built in the Soviet Union, we do not for an instant think of calling it European. It is no more so, or it is just as much so as Asiatic—or even African (why not?). In a beautiful poem by the young writer Kornilof—*My Africa*—we see a Negro fight and die, at the head of battalions of the Red Army, for "our Russia," for "our Soviet fatherland" . . . And the characteristic of the new man lies precisely in this total elimination of the degrading prejudice of great human races. To the stupid racism of the low-browed non-commissioned officer Hitler, the new man opposes his universal humanism, without distinction of races, without distinction of classes—the *Weltarbeiter*—the worker of the world.

¹ In his book *La Trahison des Clercs*. The following week Benda in his answer to the same questionnaire wrote: "I do not know where Mr. Romain Rolland conceived the idea that I had 'abdicated during the war,' whereas for four years I never stopped proclaiming publicly that the cause of France was the cause of right attacked by force, prompted by exactly the same impulse which leads me today to speak for the cause of Ethiopia. To finish with Mr. Romain Rolland, I am convinced that if he had been a citizen of Guatemala, he would have loudly insisted that France's cause was just, at least compared with that of the aggressor; that, if he did not do so, if, out of arrant unfairness, he considered them equally guilty, it was for fear of passing for a nationalist and of saying the same thing as Barrès and Maurras. As an intellectual and placing the freedom of the intellect above everything, I have the profoundest scorn for that lack of courage."