

if they wanted to do some thing for the war effort of the good Tyrants. (And they were silly enough to want to.) The War is the King's. There are complications, because the King-Badoglio structure has crumbled, but this is not the fault of the Big Three and of their Coalition-cabinet Makers. It's the fault of the people, who are always in a hurry to do things, and who fail to see that while collaboration with a Nazi Badoglio is dishonorable, collaboration with a post-Nazi Badoglio, who has one more treason on his conscience, is honorable indeed, and whoever doesn't go in for it is a traitor.

Well, and then we have Mussolini, the little Duce, who was once Glamor-Boy Number One in the Social Register of Tyrants, and whom Churchill extolled as a much greater man than Washington and Cromwell put together. Roosevelt, too, wanted so much to have him in the Club with Franco and Salazar and other obedient servants of whoever holds the knife by the handle. Too bad he didn't accept! We would now be able to greet him as the Dean of Tyrants! Sad fate of a people! It's always an Italian who has the brilliant idea, and then others exploit it!! The same misfortune befell one Christopher Columbus years ago.

Then there is the little fool of Yugoslavia, (Number Two of the series "Peter"), who is trying to ride on Tito's back as he rode on the back of the fascist Michailovitch up to a few days ago.

And there is the great Nazi-worshipper King of Greece, (Number two of the series "George") who had been rejected by a group of horrible Greek people whom Churchill well described in his last speech as being "of course against the King." (Imagine, what a crime!) These vulgar people were trying to transform this war into a war *against* tyrants, thus upsetting again the legal status of the Foundling. But Mr. Churchill's soldiers gave them a lesson in the proprieties. Unfortunately, in the process of teaching these scoundrels that it doesn't pay to go about stealing Holy Causes from their rightful Owners and Operators, a British officer was killed. "And this fact," said the same ineffable Churchill in the same recent speech of his, "cannot be overlooked." It is to be hoped that H.M.'s Government will pay tribute to the Supreme Sacrifice (as they call it) of this fighter for Liberty (as they call them); by dedicating to him an inscription: *FALLEN IN THE WAR OF TYRANTS*.

NICCOLO TUCCI

## Green Ashes

David T. Bazelon

**A**FTERNOON. The leaves of trees along side-streets are ruffled and warmed by a slow hot wind, while the bricks, car-tracks, the signs and store-fronts of Howard Street (usually busy, but now lazy) are made bright and still by a sun burning uncontrollably. On the thoroughfares, only the rattle of street-cars and El-trains raises the sound of subdued life above a low hum. The rushing rattle and clang of these mechanical vehicles—so incongruous—seem like the shrieks of a smothered city. Widely-spaced along the curbs of smaller streets there stand prim, square-bodied automobiles, sedately setting their tire-prints in the mushy asphalt.

Howard Street is the dividing line between Chicago, which is designed for middle-sized business, and where even the residential districts have the feel of unsophisticated commercialism — this on the south, and Evanston on the north. In Evanston begins a visible, self-conscious effort toward a suburban respectability settled beyond the tide of dollars. Proceeding north through Winnetka, Glencoe, Highland Park, and so on, homes become more and more drenched with ivy, choked with shrubs, and contorted with carefully rambling curves.—But then escape seldom does more than to add extra baggage: the meaning of the monster city, however, cannot be hidden beneath ivy and shrubs, and carefully rambling curves.

Marshfield Avenue (several crossings north of Howard Street) is still fronted with undraped apartment-buildings. One of these, out of sound of the El-trains, sharp and brick

and watery yellow, is shaped like a horseshoe and encloses a courtyard dumped full of bushes and grass, and small cement walks.

In the year nineteen-twenty-six (one of many lost between two wars), on a Saturday afternoon in June, while the crowds of Chicago pour toward the cool waters of the lake. . . .

Mrs. Freeman had planned a shopping trip to the Loop for this afternoon. Of course Donald and Ethel would be taken along. (The boy was four-years-old, the girl eight.) Dress Ethel in fresh gingham and small white anklets; outfit Donald in his blue cotton suit with the white ruffles around the edges. I will wear my new seersucker dress and carry a white purse.

With the windows up and the kitchen door standing open, the apartment was pleasant and cool, although the sun outside shone strongly. Donald ran into his mother's bedroom, clothed only in a clean union-suit and socks: "Momma, can we go to the toy-place, too?" (The bedroom was darkened by the lowered shades, which carried an orange-yellow light while flapping gently in front of the raised windows.)

She became conscious, as usual, but mechanically, of his round, eager face, tinted in reds and pinks; and of his —she thought—pretty blond bangs. This is my son, said her nerves.—But she was having difficulties with her corset. "Donald, if we ever get out of the house, I'll take you to

see the toys again—yes! But not unless you're a good boy . . . and sit still until . . . momma . . . gets dressed." She let out her breath as completely as she could, and tried to squirm intelligently. "Augh!—Oh, go see what Ethel's doing! . . . or something," she cried sharply, having pinched herself with a corset-hook.

Although he had stood in the doorway fascinated by the corset-procedure—and was still gaping,—Donald backed slowly out of the room, afraid that his mother might become really angry. Then he turned and scampered down the hall to the other bedroom, intending to tell his sister of all that he had seen. But entering the room he bumped his head against the door-frame; and receiving sympathy from Ethel, accepted his advantage, began to cry.

Later, to be rid of his noise, Mrs. Freeman sent Donald out of the house. She thought she would write a letter or two before going downtown.

"Donald, call for your little friend next-door, and go out and play in the courtyard for awhile. But be sure to stay close to the house, and don't get yourself all dirty. I'll be down soon, and then we'll go to the 'toy-place'. But now run along."

She heard the sound of his little fists knocking loudly on her neighbor's door. (They were the Laskys, whose small son also was named Donald.)

When he had passed through the doorway to call for Donald Lasky, she had seen a flash of gold, blue, quick arms and legs; then the quiet, colorless door had closed. She took up her pen to write the letters.

Donald Lasky was larger and a year older than Donald Freeman. But the latter did not accept distinctions because of this. Their play, in fact, was often warped or even blocked by the competitive friction which had sprung up between them. This friction held them together, as much as anything else, after their mothers had pushed them together. (The parents thought it cute that the two boys had the same first names and correct, therefore, that they should be constant playmates.)

Just now, the contrast between the two seemed great: the smaller boy, with his sissy suit and bobbed hair, looked like an over-grown, overly-aggressive little girl—all in all, much too clean and rosy. The other Donald wore old over-alls; his face was dirty; and the hair on his too-small head was cut short.

The boys played "adventure," although they themselves had no name for it. But this proved no hindrance because the activity required not a name, but intent hunters who could be crafty to a fine degree,—little children able to people empty space with creatures and things of mystery. Dense with configurations and growing things, the courtyard became, in a mind's moment, an exciting jungle of the imagination. At the very next step they might happen upon a wild beast—a tiger, with gaudy stripes, or even an elephant. Hidden behind a hedge, they crept along slowly, their round faces alive with interest, and their fresh young hands carelessly caressing the earth, the grass, the sun's effect. And they were scrupulously silent so as not to scare off any possible prey.

A hot wind meandered about the courtyard: the boys'

bodies grew warm and wet under their clothing. On his hands and knees, with his head held low, Donald Freeman had some difficulty keeping his hair from in front of his eyes: in continually pushing it back with soiled hands, his face became smudged. He did not remember enough—so engrossed was he—to realize that his mother would be angry.

Suddenly he stopped crawling, crossed his lips with a chubby forefinger, and whispered, "Sh-h-h!"

"I see him!" answered the older boy, peeved.

"Sh-h-h!" he said again, intent on the prey.

Donald Lasky became angry. He jumped up from behind the hedge and ran out of the courtyard, shouting, "Over here. Over here!" (He looked back over his shoulder as he ran.)

This action left the other hunter at a loss: his world was different. After a short time of pained indecision, he walked reluctantly to the sidewalk in front of the building, where his playmate was crouching, quickly turning, hunting. Donald Lasky continued the pretense of playing the game. But it had lost its reality for both of them. The younger boy glanced around idly, taking no notice of his companion's antics. And finally, becoming bored with this foolishness born of his treason, Donald Lasky also gave up the game and stood still, looking about.

They had discovered the persistent impossibility of living in a world alone when another is near.

Singly, lackadaisically (still unreconciled), they explored the new scene: buildings; doors; windows, windows; big trees and the leaves, billions of them; and the street—dark, smooth, and way-out-into.

"Look't over there!" yelled Donald Freeman, at once un-passively alive again. Eagerly (no time for petulance!), he pointed to where, halfway down the block south toward Howard Street, an organ-grinder and a monkey stood. The man—thin, pasty-faced, dressed in shabby clothes—began to crank the organ; and soon hurdy-gurdy music established itself in the air. The monkey, a red bell-hop hat attached to its head, jumped from the organ-grinder's shoulder and lumbered about at the length of its leash, repeatedly and mechanically doffing its hat and then putting it back on its head again. *Wide monkey eyes, frail monkey body.* . . . But clothed in a frayed and dirty military suit, colored bright red and blue. And the monkey appeared to lack a shine, which, with the costume and role, seemed quite necessary.

Looking around for people, the organ-grinder spied the two Donalds running toward him. He could hear them yelling gleefully. The music poured automatically into the warm air.

The Donalds arrived. And a small knot of little children gathered from nowhere. Absorbed by the monkey and the music, they formed around the organ-grinder an intense circle—open-mouthed and with eyes enthralled. Soon they began to laugh happily and to clap their hands. A faint smile crossed the organ-grinder's face. . . . The mad human dance: simple, yet eerie; flitting, but remaining.—Manipulating its hat very professionally, the monkey accepted and then pocketed all the pennies that were offered to it; and finally tipped its hat in thanks. When it seemed as if all the possible pennies had been collected (the music

was sliced off, suddenly became nothing), the organ-grinder yanked the leash, the monkey hopped onto the organ and then, with another leap, perched itself once more on the man's shoulder. The man, the machine, the monkey—and the locked-up magic—moved off toward Howard Street.

Each child of the group followed the organ-grinder; some only a short way, others for a longer distance. But when he reached the corner of the block and started to cross the street only the two Donalds followed him to the other side. They were caught up more in the aura of monkey and music than the other members of the circle—because of the game of “adventure” they had been playing. An *actual* strange-animal! What an exciting sequel—or renewal—after the world of their game had collapsed!

*Who offers life to the living—lead: we will follow.*

The organ-grinder stopped in front of the largest building in the next block and began the grinding of his machine. Immediately on hearing the music, the monkey again went into its act. The two boys, enthralled as before, stood with hands clasped meekly behind their backs, staring. When no-one came out to give money, the organ-grinder stopped making music, “packed up,” and moved on. His audience of two followed.

They'll get lost, thought the organ-grinder.

“You kids better go home,” he said.

They hung back ashamedly; but when the man walked on, they followed at a distance.

“Sh-h-h,” said Donald Freeman.

“I know!” answered the other, annoyed.

Reaching Howard Street, the organ-grinder turned east toward the lake: he knew there would be many children, mothers and pocket-books at the beaches. It would be hard work—walking in the hot sand, a fierce sun in the sky; but there the people were, and there he would go.

At the corner the two boys waited for a line of cars to pass before following the organ-grinder across the street. As best he could, Donald Freeman kept his eyes on the organ-grinder through the slits of open which the cars allowed, one after another, as they rolled by. But the glance of the bigger boy roamed the street in all directions.

... Howard Street enveloped, peered down at the two small boys: the people walking by; lamp-posts; the small stores and the bigger buildings; awnings and signs hanging over the sidewalk; even the trolley and telephone wires over the street—over a monotonous mosaic of dull-red bricks inlaid with four shining rails; and finally the big looming Elevated structure, still a distance away, gloomy-dark beneath. This imposing street was a shopping center—crowded with scurrying housewives during the day, brightly lighted and loud with entertainment-seekers in the evening. Easily, two little boys could be swallowed up by a working, preoccupied affair such as Howard Street.

Donald Lasky's hopping eye stuck on a loose group of persons a half-block away, west up the street. His mouth dropped.

“O-o-o-h, look!” he whispered intensely, grabbing his companion's arm without turning his head: “Look't at that!” He pointed his arm as straight and true as the tail of a well-trained dog.

Donald Freeman looked as directed. He saw a very tall man—ill-dressed, boney, rough-skinned, and with long

large features—on whom the street-curiosity centered. A battered hat, beyond redemption, sat on the man's head; and on top of this stood a light-colored untidy rooster, whose proud comb—large, red, and incongruous—topped the scene. The man was loudly cock-a-doodle-do-ing; and the rooster, looking equally insane, mimicked him. Of the group, several boys of the twelve-year-old type were pinching and slapping each other and laughing raucously; older persons tch-tch-tch-d, smiled among themselves, and suppressed giggles. Steadily, Howard Street rumbled by in the growing heat.

The boys hurried toward this insanity (in the opposite direction from the organ-grinder, who was now forgotten.) In a few seconds they were a part of the chance crowd. Then they stood and gaped, equally fascinated and frightened by the peculiar position of the rooster, and by the eagerly demented light of the man's face. This seemed almost too much. How queer! Now they would believe nearly anything of this strange, changing world.

Soon a big belly in blue serge, riveted with brass buttons, waddled up to the crowd and began to disperse it. Accidentally, the belly bumped Donald Freeman on the back of his head. He scooted out of the belly's path, alarmed—and by this time just a little numb from all he had seen and experienced.

When the crazy man protested against this interruption of his exercise, the cop handled him roughly. The filthy rooster, shaken by this, flapped its wings excitedly and cock-a-doodle-do-d; but it managed to keep its precarious seat. The comb waved a fury of red, like a flag on a lively battlefield.

“Come on, now, Johnson, that's enough for today,” said the cop.

The very tall man—with the rooster, now quieted, still perched on his head—moved reluctantly (but obediently) away. He turned down a side-street, into his loneliness.

“Now break it up, folks; move along.”

The cop shooed the two little boys away—incidentally: he pushed them west up Howard Street. Then he tilted back his cap, mopped his forehead, and murmured, “Wheh, 'tis a scorcher to be sure!”

Could all this movement—being pushed and being pulled—could it all be *just waiting*?

One in dirty over-alls, the other in a crisp blue suit with ruffles, they strolled wonderingly along the sidewalk. Their attention was attracted by the long monotony of a funeral procession passing. At the end of this train of slow-moving cars was a trapped delivery truck, nervously trying to escape. The Donalds peered into store-windows and at people hurrying by. (The red delivery truck, still caught, continued its squirming.) A shoemaker, his hand on an upturned shoe before him (raised hammer, tacks in mouth), glanced abstractedly through the unlit neon sign against his window — glanced at two little boys looking widely in at him. Then he deftly, quickly pounded four tacks. When he looked up again, the boys were gone. They passed an active pop-corn machine in front of a candy-store: regular, persistent noise; the smell of butter and salt and corn. And still the sun flooded heat onto the street. Through a grocery window (under the shade of a large awning: it had whispered, Halt, and be cooled)



they looked in at the carefully confused bustle of food-buying. A clerk stood next to a vegetable bin (close to the window, close to the boys)—raised hand grasping a large potato, body turned askew, head slanting upward, throat straining, and mouth redly, widely opened. Statuesque for a second. Only after the clerk had done with his say, did the confused bustle resume for the boys. They walked further up the street, finally passing under the shade-darkened Elevated structure, on the other side of which were fewer people and less activity—a more open unhurriedness. The busy section of Howard Street lay behind them. Brightly warm.

Nature moved them *here* by this, and *there* by that: drawn on, they had used the world and been seen by it: and they had passed.

... And soon, following the sidewalk, they were led to a good-sized lumber-yard. Across the street a moving picture theatre was in the process of construction: a grayish-white, partly-clothed skeleton; sand and bricks half-neatly strewn about. They stood gazing at the unbuilt building. A section of the lumber-yard fence had been removed to give the theatre-builders easier access to the lumber. At the rear of the yard rose the Elevated embankment, an ominous, artificial hill, atop which gleamed the pairs of steel rails. Saturday afternoon had denuded the scene of workmen. A quiet section of the street. Occasionally, electric trains rustled by on the embankment: they were the sound of the scene.

After tasting their surroundings, and judging, the two boys fell through the breach in the fence. What could the inside be like? Donald Lasky was braver—he entered first; but Donald Freeman, the more curious of the two, went in further. They were confronted by strangely similar piles of lumber, row after row, but of many kinds and sizes—all stacked several times higher than either of the boys. The smell of dry pine-wood predominated. Together, the small boys crept slowly, then scurried,—always searching—among the rectangular mountains of wood which towered above them.

... An old watchman, his mouth stuffed with a much-used corn-cob pipe, hobbled painfully toward a shelter at a far side of the yard. Uncomfortable, he felt the rim of his hat sticky against his head. Hot sun.

A small mouse darted unexpectedly across the open space between two piles of lumber. Seeing it, the boys were startled, and ran away. When finally they stopped running, and then had carefully inspected their new surroundings for signs of more strange-moving-things, they again gazed around (by this time, almost with a professional lust) for still another something to follow and devour. Their aimless movement had led them to the back of the lumber-yard, far away from the front fence with its gaping hole. The hill of the Elevated trains loomed up next to them. A hill, an obstruction, and something on the other side. Trying to peer past it, they were forced to look up, and then saw only the sky, clear-colored and immense.

Let's see what's on the other side.

The one tugged the other and they began climbing the embankment. On the journey up, they had to use their hands; and at times they even fell to their knees. Donald Freeman's light blue suit, already dusty and crumpled, now

became quite dirty. His hands were filthy; and wiping his nose with them, he smeared even more dirt on his face. The blond bangs were twisted and disheveled. Again he forgot to remember that his mother would be angry when she saw him.

... Seated at last in the shade of the shelter, and puffing at his pipe contentedly, the watchman surveyed the yard. His pleasant indifference evaporated as he saw two small figures (one, in the sun's full ray, seeming to radiate light blue and gold) disappear between the hill and the sky. His heart thumped once, then twice, sickening.—Too far to shout.

Get off'a there, ya crazy kids!

"*Damn them kids!*" he muttered, limping after them as quickly as he could, cursing. (His limp was left over from an accident he had had while still a trainman.)

At the top the boys halted and beheld an expanse of shining steel ribbons. Now they relished the beautiful height nature had given them. Then they moved forward. ...

*The bear went over the mountain*

*The bear went over ...*

*To see what he could see*

*To see ...*

*... He saw the other side*

Fifty yards in either direction from them, there stood stray, uncoupled cars. A yard-engine was backing slowly into one of these. (Howard Street was the end of the line, where trains were reassembled for the return trip to the Loop.) The engineer, leaning half out of the cab-window, stretching to look backwards, watched the operation closely. After successfully coupling the car to the engine, he relaxed and took a large red handkerchief from his pocket to wipe the sweat from his face. He was startled to see two small boys crossing the tracks, and already three-quarters of the way to the other side.—*Much too small.*

And at last the world took effective notice of them.

He shouted loudly,

"Get the hell off'a there!"

Anxious and annoyed (caught, half-unconsciously, in a cruel indecision), the engineer waited to see what would happen.

The boys turned in the direction of the voice, greatly frightened. They saw a blur of red cloth attached to a waving arm. Donald Lasky began at once, hurriedly but carefully, to finish the distance to the other side.

Donald Freeman remained rooted where he stood, while his confusion grew to equal his excitement, and both were great. He felt completely alone in a wide world suddenly become threatening and alien: the mysteries closed in upon him: nature drew her sword. Wanting to run, to escape, he did not know the way. He felt his foot getting caught between the ties: violently he yanked it free.—*Don't try to hold me!* He started to run, but had somehow got turned around, and was running toward the side which he had come up. His terror increased: he could not see the danger which he knew was flooding him away. *Why am I here?* Irrelevant images charged through his consciousness, now in chaos: the desire-feel to be home, snug but free, in the

cool and comforting darkness of his mother's bedroom, with her assuring presence and familiar body nearby; or to have again the perfunctory monkey, the wild rooster, the crazy man, the organ-grinder (he saw again and wanted all of these.) He even remembered that his mother would be angry when. . . . No longer could he see adequately: so he stumbled, then fell, his hands crossing the "live" third-rail, and his head hitting the ground near to that deadly metal—

Soundless, fierce, an air-like nothingness flamed through every cell of his body. His face began to contort: in spasms, his throat and mouth struggled violently to function. And like a marionette on a string, lying on a table, being jangled unkindly, his arms and legs jerked. . . . He fell limp.

This, too, the sun beat down upon.

Donald Lasky cried,  
"Donald! Donald!"

The watchman reached the top of the embankment too soon not to see. The sight elaborated itself and came to include (for him) the imaged recall of his own clock-ticks of crippled misery—the millions of them.

And the engineer, transfixed (enlightened by indecision), stared deep into that pause of reality's rhythm. . . .

## II

*The room is made gray by thick, shuddering light. Massed but irregular, the people: sombre; and glued like shadows against the wall. (Penumbra gray.) They are with hands clasped; and from their bowed heads, sorrowful clucks come noiselessly. Their hypocritical presence for me.*

*Doctor and nurse (both in certain white) stray over me, who lies taut and still, listening . . . (as it continues) . . . oh, the swish and scrape of the doctor's hands and the nurse's feet, and more.*

*I try to see through the curious mound on my chest—to the other side—but cannot. I cannot raise my head,—so pillowed that (tilting it back only a little, following my eyes) I see, between the bars of my bed, the wall behind me: cool gray painted on a hard semi-darkness.*

*A deathly smell of gangrene pollutes the air: I wish he would leave the room, whoever is so offensive.*

*Beneath a thin rustle of whispering, feet shuffle. Then a gasp of sympathy. . . . Out of this now I hear the metal noise of tools at work. Half-dark. I see only snatches of the room: parts of figures; here; there; a segment of color; blank blobs of ceiling and wall. But I know the enveloping whiteness of the sheet (a freshness) over me, next to me, and around.*

*This stink and this activity—both endure.*

*Removed: misshapen; lifelessly fingered at one end and at the other, in all its (severed) biological diversity, gaping; like a stuffed lump of rotten wet orange-peel . . . is placed in a brown paper bag and later lost: returned (prematurely; alone) to the great garbage-can.*

*I sigh with relief, I don't know why, and our sweat (and more) mingles in a kiss upon my brow: the wet face comes upon its own.*

*my mother is*

*. . . and this is all I can remember having forgotten*

In a chair by the doctor's desk sits Mrs. Freeman, uncomfortably. Somehow it is necessarily at a distance that Donald half-fills another seat in the same office. His face is now pale, although still round-looking; and there is a mixture of hurt in his aspect of wide wonder.

A room of marble floor and primly whitewashed walls.

The view from the window is important; and it is blocked by a part of the building nearby,—this spread with sun-glinted windows; shining windows forever called up in perfect rank and file.

With the serious wisdom of a slightly sentimental businessman, the doctor (perhaps silently) gestures and moves his mouth at Mrs. Freeman.

The sun, no longer merely a memory, slices the stone floor.

In the midst of which, she asks: "But is it really necessary?"

"Yes, it is," the doctor answers.

"But he's been through so much in the past few months." (She has begun the habit, even at twenty-nine, of allowing that hurt, half-hysterical look to grow slowly, eatingly into place whenever the open nothing—an unsolved problem—is before her.)

"Yes, I know. That's true. But I am satisfied with the necessity of attempting to remove the obstacle at hand. It will make an important difference in the future.—You see? We should try—" The doctor makes a move toward Donald; then, on a second impulse, checks himself. After a moment, he continues: "Another operation will do him no harm. He is fully recovered now."

"Yes . . . I know he is." An involuntary movement directs her eyes to the small, brightly-colored sleeve hanging half-empty over the left side of Donald's chair, into space. "But still . . . another operation. . . ."

Suddenly Donald sits up straighter, strongly feeling the need to answer the undigested jumpiness inside him. Then it all expands big, and he says (over-loudly in the stillness), "No, mamma! I don't want to!" She rushes over to coddle him . . . kisses his forehead and temples; tries to kiss away something in both herself and him. Damp grief again.

The mother takes a few short, certain breaths, and straightens up. (Facing any necessity, control over oneself is prerequisite.) She tightens her lips, although this is not seen, since she speaks through them: "Donald, how would you like mother to get a nice big drum for you? Huh, sweetheart? . . . Now how would that be?"

The genii-shape of a drum, growing for some seconds, fills the room. Now a lasting dull-echo of its deep beat (after flooding the room) rolls irresistibly through the window; then relaxes its solidity and floats all-wheres away from the hospital—beyond the glass-view. As the 'sound' disappears, the 'substance' materializes: a beautiful red drum!

"A red one?"

Her hands on him now: "Any color or any kind you want, darling!"

"Oooohh . . . !" he exhales, surprised and pleased and baffled.

*My son!* scream her nerves.

. . . Without warning, Donald sees as one thing the

drum and the doctor's office—sees them together, as they exist. He discovers more-hospital standing between him and the drum-his.

Under the skin of his small body, half remains hot, while the rest becomes cold; part zooms up, and part stays down—sticks thickly. So he tries to move to the side; but his body only jerks slightly. *one cannot move . . .*

*All becomes hazy: the room wraps itself slowly about the doctor, who is a part of the chair and desk; the mother*

*begins to evaporate (measured continuum of time ) over and around—the outside of—the blob of the doctor and his room and the wavy furniture and fittings; she seems to dissolve, fade into the streaked amorphous marble of the once-floor . . . this making a pretty-colored, almost-stone ball of the old reality. and donald, very small in his chair, grows suddenly sharply defined and very tightly still . . .*

*two hands on a large red drum in his lap*

## The Political Relevance of Conscientious Objection

THE editor, in a tribute to Milton Mayer in the March issue of *Politics*, remarks, "I do not agree with Milton Mayer that the best way to act if one has profound political objections to this war is to become a C.O. or go to jail; it seems to me one can more effectively fight for one's ideas *if one does not isolate one's self from one's fellow-men*, and that the Army is a better place to learn, and teach, than either a C.O. camp or a jail." (Italics mine) It seems to me that the logic and meaning of the position taken by Mayer and a considerable number of other left-wingers is a subject which can bear a good deal more discussion in the radical press than it has yet received.

After reading this editorial criticism of Mayer's position on page 45 of the March issue, I was rather surprised, on page 35, to find the editor's comment on Max Lerner's remarks about Randolph Bourne. The quotation from Lerner reads: "If there was a fatal flaw in Bourne as a social critic, it was that he allowed himself to be . . . alienated from the main sources of strength in American life, the people themselves." The editor's analysis of Lerner's remark is telling: "This totalitarian mystique of 'the people' is simply a way of protecting the oppressors of the people from the criticism of men like Bourne." Lerner's criticism of Bourne and the editor's reflections on the left-wing C.O. may not be parallel. Certainly in motive they are not. But, motive aside, I am unable to see just wherein they are dissimilar.

However, exploration of this point is not so important as investigation of the assumption that the C.O. cuts himself off from his fellow men. Of course it is true that the C.O. in a CPS camp or in jail doesn't see much of the general public, but then neither does the man in the army. Then, too, there may be twenty thousand men in an army encampment and two hundred in a C.O. camp or a jail, but either the C.O. or the army man will have done a pretty good wartime job if he succeeds in thoroughly educating two hundred men, or being educated by them. It appears then (unless separating one's self from one's fellow men is to mean nothing at all more than a mystical alienation from the folk) that there is something about one's companions in a C.O. camp or in a prison that places them outside the genus *homo sapiens*.

One may suspect that a certain stereotype of the C.O. as a somewhat unreal or asocial or apolitical character is lurking somewhere in the background. A stereotype of the C.O. is bound, however, to be a distortion, for the reason that by any sociological criterion the distribution of men

in a C.O. camp is surprisingly like that of men in the army. A census of the approximately 7,000 men in CPS camps in 1943 showed about 3,500 farmers, 560 teachers, 200 in the building trades, 150 in clerical work, 150 in the metal trades, 100 college students, and a distribution of physicians, miners, economists, engineers, chicken farmers, chemists, lawyers, bee keepers, anthropologists, truck drivers, cooks, a professional ball player, and over 100 other occupations. The religious distribution included Mennonites, Jews, Quakers, Unitarians, Brethren, Pentacostals, Catholics, Jehovah's Witnesses, Episcopalians, Russian Molokans, Methodists, Assembly of God, over 100 other denominations, and 421 men without church affiliation. There are differences between the C.O. distribution and the army distribution: the greater number of farmers, college men, and men claiming formal religious connections among C.O.'s, the greater prevalence of radical thought in C.O. camps, and the presence of an imposed caste system in the army and its absence in CPS camps. But the differences are hardly such as to place the inhabitants of a C.O. camp outside the pale of one's fellow men.

As to results, no one expects any spectacular returns from men caught up in the conscriptive machine. Most of the C.O.'s day is spent in "made" work and general piddling, but from the left-wing viewpoint the day's chores in the army can hardly be regarded as of intense social significance (at least not positive significance). The growth of Socialist Party locals (in some CPS camps they include over 10% of camp strength) bears witness to the fact that if the day's work is not always exactly "of national importance," the evenings and the project bull sessions are not entirely lost. At least one incident in C.O. history in this war is worth remembering: In April, 1943, when General Hershey placed an arbitrary ban on assembly for civilian C.O.'s (contemporaneously remarking that the same principle might eventually be applied to labor union meetings), the C.O.'s performed a service to the cause of civil liberty by resisting and still resisting. A disproportionately large number of the men involved are Socialists.

Of the objector in jail it is even less true, in any real sense, that he breaks with his fellow man. There is probably no situation in which a drafted man can place himself which brings him into closer identification with the elemental social struggle than in a prison. I should like to give just one statement by a C.O. prisoner as typical of the kind of probing that goes on: "I have concluded that