

In *CATCH-22*, Joseph Heller carried the idea of war to its logical conclusion. Tan Son Nhut is an embodiment of that conclusion. The insane juxtaposition of "business as usual" and bloody military conflict distills a crazy reality that is disjointed, dream-like, impossible; yet inescapably, palpably there.

*Mr. Wahle is a civil airline flight engineer for Pan American Airlines.*

## Opinion:



### THE NEW REVOLUTION OF THE HEART

by Peter Viereck

ALL TODAY ALL OVER THE WORLD the fight is for the private life. The fight is for the playful, the dawdling, the warmly concrete; abstract ideologies are Saharas. Yes (to answer a frequent question), there is indeed a real revolt in post-Stalinist literary Russia. But ultimately it is not a political revolt. It is neither pro- nor anti-communist or -capitalist. Some American observers are vulgarizing and oversimplifying it, as they did with Pasternak's *Zhivago*, by seeing it as a political revolution—instead of seeing it as a much profounder revolution of the private life against the public lifelessness: the right to loneliness and love and inner poetry against inhuman public sloganizing.

I write this after three visits to the Soviet Union in three successive years: 1961, 1962, 1963. Each visit lasted between one and two months. The trips included not only long stays in Moscow and Leningrad, but trips to meet the poets and students (when possible individually and when necessary in groups)

of Georgia, Armenia, the Ukraine, and ancient Asian Uzbekistan. I also spent some six months of 1962–1963 visiting dozens of cities, universities, and remote villages all over the Communist states of Poland, Rumania, and Titoist Yugoslavia, drinking and often arguing with members of dozens of local provincial writers' unions.

So doing, I was on both the giving and receiving end of more than a hundred informal public poetry readings: a unique experience. I found these readings the great rage in the U.S.S.R. and Eastern Europe. From this poetry revival I learned that one kind of boredom can be exciting, namely man's boredom with technical prose and prosaic technology. This creative boredom is the most exciting cultural change I found in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe. It is also a change now needed in America.

The counterpart of the American who revolts against being robotized by advertising slogans is the Russian who revolts against being robotized by political slogans. Both are motivated by a defense of the individual life. In part the same motive made Pasternak write *Doctor Zhivago*.

Communists and anti-communists the world over have their manifestoes. But both are fighting in the area of politics, an area being increasingly bypassed on both sides of the globe, as youth increasingly discovers not merely the self-indulgence but the creativity of the non-political private life.

There is a specter haunting the world, the specter of the revolt of imagination against mechanization and against ideology. On both sides of the cold war there is awakening a free inner life—a "conspiracy of feelings," to quote a prophetic phrase from a 1927 satire by Yuri Olesha.

IN MOSCOW in mid-September, 1961, while the poet Richard Wilbur and I were watching young Yevtushenko at a public poetry reading, we were pleasantly startled when he recognized us and publicly saluted us as brother poets and said he would read in our honor a poem he had composed in America, called "The Harvard Nightingale." At this the whole hall of young people cheered spontaneously. These cheers were not personal; nor were they political; nobody

in the room knew or cared whether we were pro- or anti-capitalist or -communist. Deeper than ideology, on the deepest level of human nature, the spontaneity of such cheers represents the new world revolution, the only universal one today, reasserting flesh and blood against official pomposity and the mechanization of man.

The nightingale—of the poem Yevtushenko read to greet us—represents the new world revolution by symbolizing the universal love of beauty, shared by poets on both sides. The shared beauty will triumph, he told us, over what he called the "dacron and nylon" aspects of America, with the clear implication of a similar triumph over a similar materialism in his own society.

To be sure, this mechanization of man is different and more deadly in the East than in the West. In the U.S.S.R. it is inescapable, being direct political mechanization. In America it is escapable, being largely an indirect psychological mechanization by private forces, such as Madison Avenue sub-

## CHILDREN in TROUBLE

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liminal advertising, and the famous "conformers!" (Among the latter—that is, among the American conformers—I naturally also include their secret twins: the professional baiters of Madison Avenue and the professional self-styled "nonconformists!")

I use the words "bureaucrat" and "organization man" not literally—almost everybody works in some "organization"—but for a state of mind. It is the state of mind that prefers what is made to what is grown, the metallic to the organic; it sees individuals not as developing creatively from within but as raw material needing to be manipulated from without by some Procrustean blueprint, some so-called improvement. It is at its most honest when openly brutal toward human dignity, so that at least you know where you are at; it is at its trickiest when sugar-coated by unctuous solicitude: "now hold still, this is for your own good!" The manipulating and mechanizing and deracinating solicitude may be either the "build a better world" oversimplifications of the East or the old-fashioned Western modernisms of mental-hygiene pieties and shiny plumbing. Comparing them, I know which I prefer politically, but there is not so much difference esthetically between being coerced by the social engineers of the state and being seduced by the entertainment industries of the private ad companies.

In Paris before the war there appeared a little-noted book by Bruno Ricci, called *La Bureaucratization du Monde*. When I speak of the universal type of the Procrustean bureaucrat, I am accepting in the esthetic and psychological spheres—and solely in those spheres—Ricci's thesis of a worldwide managerialism. He himself applied the thesis less persuasively to political and economic spheres. In the esthetic and psychological, neither America nor the U.S.S.R. has found a cure for the stereotyped Babbitt ugliness brought by the one thing we do equally share: the universal type of the organization man.

This universal type is hell-bent on mechanizing man, on making man the tool of his tools, and on separating him from his traditional roots. As if we were descended from ants instead of apes! In both countries a non-political revolution by outraged human nature is now trying to reassert the simian

individualism of the dawdling, playful, creative imagination against the insect togetherness of empty, civic-minded busybodies buzzing in hives. Psychologically there is indeed a *bureaucratization du monde*. And against it is the worldwide non-political revolution of artists and poets and all leftover ornery, individualist cranks. "There is a specter haunting the world"—the specter of the conspiracy of feelings.

“NOW THEY’VE STARTED talking about feelings!” exults a pro-human, anti-bureaucratic rebel in the novel that gave its name to the whole movement: Ehrenburg’s novel of 1954, *The Thaw*.

There are numerous examples of writers less famous than Ehrenburg and Yevtushenko, illustrating how widespread is the return from public to private life. "The writer must avoid like the plague any moralizing or didacticism in the unequivocal adherence to the truth of life—that is the greatest law," one told an interviewer. No Pollyanna. No chirping optimism.

The poem "Ballad of the Robot," by one of the minor Soviet poets, is a revealing example of today's true Russian revolution—not the political communist one but the non-political revolt of Venus against Vulcan, of the heart against technology. The poem describes a supposedly flawless robot with an electronic superbrain, almost an allegory of "the positive hero." The robot gets lost among human beings, falls in love, and pays for this by suddenly collapsing into a heap of metal. A doctor is summoned to determine the cause of death. His verdict? Heart failure! Behold, the new revolution of the heart.

Being non-political, the conspiracy of feelings does not attack the structure of Soviet society, its collectivist economics. Rather, it seeks to establish a new spirit within the existing framework. Consider, for example, a public poetry reading for Moscow youth which I attended in February 1963. One of the biggest responses was evoked by a young poet from Soviet Asia praising the spontaneous sympathies between heart and heart in his rural home. Far from rejecting the Lenin gospel of materialism as incompatible with this conspiracy of feelings, the poet defined the response of heart to heart as the highest form of electricity and concluded

amid applause that ultimately this is what Lenin meant by his famous slogan of "rural electrification."

These kindred poems of robot heart failure and rural electrification are object lessons of how the conspiracy of feelings works in actual practice. They involve a perfect understanding between audience and poet, an understanding that would seem almost mystic or telepathic to a Westerner; an understanding of meanings not merely between the lines, but "between the between." The meaning is no longer in words at all, not even symbolic Aesopian words, but in rhythm, tone, mood. Nothing to pin down in cold print. Only to respond to with heart rather than head. And for Russians it has become almost second nature to read (better: feel) between the between. At this tenu-

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ous point, nine-tenths of the message is iceberg-like below the surface of consciousness, in a series of very strategic Freudian slips. In these slips the heart beats out its own Morse code to other hearts—the “electrification” motif again—even while head speaks to head in sincere, tedious, Lenin-quoting clichés of the Establishment.

**R**USSIA'S NON-POLITICAL revolution of the heart reached a turning point, which no pressure or recantation can reverse, when thousands of young Muscovites stood for hours hearing the young poets on an icy day on Mayakovsky Square. I stood among them; it was an event I shall never forget. For the emotions were real and deep, not the superficial and phony reactions aroused by a demagogue or matinee idol; and they were and are not only local Russian emotions but also American and indeed universal, wherever the spirit of poetry is fighting for humanity against the spirit of robotism.

In the 1930's a then leftist political poet wrote in England:

*Minute your gesture but it  
must be made . . .*

*Still I drink your health before  
The gun-butt raps upon the door.*

Today let us repeat these same lines defiantly in a broader, less political sense. In either case the minute necessary gesture is the assertion of human dignity.

Russia's conspiracy of feelings may fail. So may our own parallel revolt against organization men in America. So did Pasternak's hero, Doctor Zhivago, fail. Overwhelmed by a society of metallic stereotypes, the individualistic Zhivago—the man of organic archetypes, the man of creative imagination—died in total defeat, felled in a crowded public conveyance by a heart attack of obviously psychological origin.

In terms of practical power Zhivago failed, and his creator Pasternak failed. But I know of nothing more honorable than failure in such a cause. I know of nothing more honorable and ultimately more fructifying than the conscience-kindling failure of the human spirit against overwhelming material power.

Today the American and Soviet boosters of production quotas like to ridicule the lonely artist for what they

both call “failure of nerve.” But (to use in a new way a phrase of David Riesman's) what a success-worshipping society most needs today is the nerve of failure. Only the nerve to fail honestly, in resistance to an over-mechanized society, can preserve for society its small flame of creativity, its living core.

The non-ideological writers and poets may fail, but such a cause cannot fail. It cannot fail because, Orwell's 1984 to the contrary, human beings are not ants, not the descendents of insects. They are the descendents of apes, individually playful fantastic apes, with all the crime and folly of such individualism but also with all its potential for free imagination and creative self-sacrifice.

“ . . . Minute your gesture, but it must be made.”

*Peter Viereck, poet and essayist, is a professor of Russian and European History at Mount Holyoke College; the article above was adapted from a talk he delivered to the alumnae and is a preview of his forthcoming book, A New Russian Revolution. Prof. Viereck received the Pulitzer Prize for Poetry in 1949 for his Terror and Decorum.*

## Letters:



### CABLE FROM CAMBODIA

SIRS:

I wish to express my sincere thanks for the courageous article [RAMPARTS, April 1966] concerning Washington's aggressive policy toward Cambodia.

Once again you have shown a lucidity and an objectivity which differs radically from the systematic bias of many American newspapers and magazines,

which are clearly trying to prepare the opinion of your country for a possible violation of Cambodian neutrality by the American interventionist forces in Southeast Asia.

Your article is thus a source of reassurance for my compatriots and for myself, for it proves to us once again that the cause of Cambodian neutrality has, even in the United States, objective witnesses and convinced defenders.

PRINCE NORODOM SIHANOUK  
Chief of State, Cambodia

### PASSPORT TO RESPECTABILITY

SIRS:

RAMPARTS deserves much credit for its innovating work in American journalism. It also deserves support for its unpopular views. The great majority of magazine writing and editing done by the Left only serves to satirize itself. Because of this self-negation it does not provoke discussion outside of inbred leftist circles. RAMPARTS seems to take itself seriously. It also seems to recognize the need for a slick format in a culture in which that type of format is the only passport to respectability. A combination of responsible radicalism with the most advanced American marketing techniques does not compromise that radicalism but is a necessity to bring certain topics into more general discussion.

The attacks on RAMPARTS currently being brought by Michigan State University only serve to illustrate the danger of such a magazine to entrenched views. The facts of Michigan State's involvement in the Diem regime have been available for quite a while in a pamphlet published by the Center for the Study of Democratic Institutions.

I sincerely hope that you will become a mass medium of your own without retreating from your iconoclastic stance.

R. F. JAFFE  
Chicago, Illinois

SIRS:

Congratulations on your splendid article on Senator J. W. Fulbright. The Senate Foreign Relations Committee's televised hearings on Vietnam and China brought some hope to many troubled Americans that a reappraisal of our whole Asian policy might be