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Mark Twain on U.S. Imperialism, Racism and Other Enduring Characteristics of the Republic

by Maxwell Geismar

Maxwell Geismar, the distinguished literary critic and historian, is presently at work on a study of Mark Twain. This essay is

excerpted from his chapter on the political radicalism of Twain's later writings.

“**S**hall we? THAT IS, SHALL WE go on conferring our civilization upon the people that sit in darkness, or shall we give these poor things a rest? Shall we bang right ahead in our old-time, loud, pious way, and commit the new century to the game; or shall we sober up and sit down and think it over first? Would it not be prudent to get our civilizational tools together, and see how much stock is left on hand in the way of glass beads and theology, and maxim guns and hymn books, and trade gin and torches of progress and enlightenment (patent adjustable ones, good to fire villages with, upon occasion), and balance the books, and arrive at the profit and loss, so that we may intelligently decide whether to continue the business or sell out the property and start a new civilizational scheme on the proceeds?”

If only the arrogant and avaricious colonial powers of the early 1900's had listened to the advice of Mark Twain's wrathful literary genius, the new century might have been spared 50

years—with perhaps another 50 to come—of what is essentially a race war under the guise of such ambiguous and shifting concepts as nationalism and capitalism. Even at the turn of the century, Twain saw how the profits of individuals, corporations and nations would only result in a continuing national loss, wholesale suffering for the entire human community, universal sacrifice and destruction.

Increasingly, Twain's later writings were filled with disgust over what he came to see as “the damned human race.” In “To the Person Sitting in Darkness,” one of his most bitter polemics, he foresaw the future in store for the imperialistic mentality. He was referring specifically to an historic occasion which foreshadowed our own time—America's missionary zeal in “subordinating” the Chinese during the Boxer Rebellion of 1900. “Extending the blessings of civilization to our brother who sits in darkness,” he wrote, “has been a good trade and has paid well on the whole; but there is money in it yet, if care-

fully worked—but not enough in my judgment, to make any considerable risk advisable. The people that sit in darkness are getting to be too scarce—too scarce and too shy. And such darkness as is now left is really of but an indifferent quality, and not dark enough for the game. The most of those people that sit in darkness have been furnished with more light than was good for them or profitable for us. We have been injudicious.”

Yet it was still possible, Twain declared sarcastically, to explain our peculiar colonial actions to the people in darkness: “They look doubtful, but in reality they are not. There have been lies, yes; but they were told in a good cause. We have been treacherous; but that was in order that real good might come out of apparent evil. True, we have crushed a deceived and confiding people; we have stamped out a just and intelligent and well-ordered republic; we have stabbed an ally in the back and slapped the face of a guest; we have bought a shadow from an enemy that hadn’t it to sell; we have robbed a trusting friend of his land and his liberty; we have invited our clean young men to shoulder a discredited musket and do bandits’ work under a flag which bandits have been accustomed to fear, not to follow; we have debauched America’s honor and blackened her face before the world; but each detail was for the best. We know this.”

And Mark Twain went on to propose a new American flag with the white stripes painted black and the stars replaced by the skull and crossbones.

THIS HATRED OF COLONIALISM, of racism, of slavery in any guise, of cruelty, exploitation, poverty and misery, was not of course a “new vein” in Samuel Clemens’ work. Its strains are clearly visible in his early writing, perhaps most clearly in the great humanism of *Huckleberry Finn* in which the odyssey of Huck and Jim down the Mississippi is a flight away from oppression towards freedom.

But as Twain became older, and perhaps wiser, the imaginative freedom he conferred on his early fictional characters was more and more compromised by the real world he could no longer shut out. Nor can the increasing anger of his late polemics be explained away, as most critics have tried to do, by describing Clemens as “an embittered old man,” pointing to the fact that he had sustained financial ruin and domestic tragedy. This was part of the slow death of the American Dream he had followed for so long. Personal misfortune was not the cause of Twain’s political and social radicalism, but a realm of experience which coexisted with it and gave it tragic depth.

What marks all of the late essays of social protest and moral outrage is the marvelous humor which Clemens was able to summon up even in the midst of his irony and indignation. As early as 1873, writing in the New York Tribune about the proposed annexation of the Hawaiian Islands, he had invoked a theme similar to that of his later work: “We *must* annex these people. We can afflict them with our wise and beneficent government. We can introduce the novelty of thieves, all the way up from streetcar pickpockets to municipal robbers and Government defaulters and show them how amusing it is to arrest them and try them and turn them loose—some for cash, and some for ‘political influence.’ We can make them ashamed of their simple and primitive justice. . . . We can give them juries composed of the most simple and charming leatherheads. We can give them railway corporations who will buy their Legislatures like old clothes, and run over their best

citizens. We can furnish them some Jay Goulds who will do away with their old-time notions that stealing is not respectable. . . . We can give them lecturers! I will go myself. . . . We can make that bunch of sleepy islands the hottest corner on earth, and array it in the moral splendor of our high and holy civilization. Annexation is what the poor islanders need. ‘Shall we to men benighted the lamp of life deny?’ ”

Mark Twain’s views did not change as he grew older; his subject matter—and the urgency with which he treated it—did. His world had been transformed swiftly, brutally and savagely; Sam Clemens had not. His personal tragedies may have saddened and frustrated him—but they had not given him the qualities he so keenly observed in the world: brutality, sadism and greed. What we see in the eloquent and radical social satires of Twain’s later career is not the rant and bombast of a once great author, but the fateful meeting of the man and his time which created art of a unique personality—hardened and deepened, perhaps, by life and by history gone bad, self-destructive and suicidal. Rather than trying to rationalize his late writing as an artistic falling-off, as so many literary scholars have done, we should be glad that the proper chronicler was there at this historical crisis, the sensitive witness of art, civilization and life.

AMONG THE OTHER ESSAYS which Clemens wrote at this time about his own changing America—which was moving from the moral simplicity and grandeur of the old republic at its best to the imperial dynasty of an economic-military complex preparing to cast its giant shadow over the land masses of Europe, Asia and Africa—was “Comments on the Killing of 600 Moros” (1906), a kind of epilogue to “To the Person Sitting in Darkness.”

A tribe of “dark-skinned savages,” as Clemens called them, had entrenched themselves in the bowl of an extinct crater near Jele in the Philippines. Since they were “hostiles, and bitter at us because we have been trying for eight years to take their liberties away from them, their presence in that position was a menace.” The American commander, General Leonard Wood, discovered that the Moros numbered 600 including women and children; that their crater bowl was on a mountain peak 2200 feet above sea level “and very difficult of access for Christian troops and artillery.” There were finally as many American troops and allies on the summit overlooking the bowl as there were Moros when General Wood issued his order: “Kill or capture the six hundred.”

The depth of the crater was about 50 feet, Mark Twain noted. “The battle began—it is officially called by that name—our forces firing down into the crater with their artillery and their deadly small arms of precision; the savages furiously returning the fire, probably with brickbats—though this is merely a surmise of mine. Heretofore the Moros have used knives and clubs mainly; also ineffectual trade-muskets when they had any. . . . The official report stated that the battle was fought with prodigious energy on both sides during a day and a half, and that it ended with a complete victory for the American arms. The completeness of the victory is established by this fact: that of the six hundred Moros not one was left alive. The brilliancy of the victory is established by this other fact, to wit: that of our six hundred heroes only fifteen lost their lives.

“General Wood was present and looking on. His order

had been, 'Kill or capture those savages.' Apparently our little army considered that the 'or' left them authorized to kill or capture according to taste, and that their taste had remained what it has been for eight years, in our army out there—the taste of Christian butchers."

Clemens pointed out that—then as now—the American newspaper dispatches on the battle extolled and magnified the "heroism" and "gallantry" of the American troops, lamented the loss of 15 white men, elaborated the wounds of some others—and ignored the 600 dead Moros. He mentioned the casualty rates on both sides in the Civil War, at Waterloo and in the "pathetic comedy" called the Cuban War: "Contrast these things with the great statistics which have arrived from that Moro crater. There, with six hundred engaged on each side, we lost fifteen men killed outright, and we had thirty-two wounded. . . . The enemy numbered six hundred—including women and children—and we abolished them utterly, leaving not even a baby alive to cry for its dead mother. *This is incomparably the greatest victory that was ever achieved by the Christian soldiers of the United States.*"

He went on at length to describe the silence of the nation, the message of congratulations from President Theodore Roosevelt to General Wood for upholding the honor of the American flag. He then summarized the press accounts which had begun to "explain" and rationalize the savage slaughter of the Moros. "I was never so enthusiastically proud of the flag till now!" he added when the newspaper headlines stated that it was impossible to tell the sexes apart in the "fierce battle" on top of Mount Dajo. "The naked savages were so far away, down in the bottom of that trap, that our soldiers could not tell the breasts of a woman from the rudimentary paps of a man—so far away that they couldn't tell a toddling little child from a black six-footer."

BUT AMONG TWAIN'S polemical writings of the early 1900's, perhaps the most famous of all was "King Leopold's Soliloquy." It is now almost an historical truism to state that the Belgian rule over the Congo was a dark rehearsal of the Nazi terror in Europe; that once it had happened in "savage" Africa it was possible in "civilized" Europe; that once mass human destruction had been practiced for profit on the black races it could be used for the highest of ethical, moral and patriotic reasons upon the "inferior" white races. Whatever the validity of the comparison, however, it is certain that there were ten million murders in the Belgian Congo between 1885 and 1905—no mean comparison for the fabricated death factories and other methods of "scientific" mass extermination later developed by the Nazis.

The essay itself, like all of Twain's writings—both during and after this period—has been seen as "crude" in form, or "uneven" or even "formless" by most conventional academic critic-scholars who, particularly in the 1950's and '60s, used such criteria to rule out the entire later phase of Twain's radical social criticism. The point is, of course, that Clemens had again devised his own native form for this genre of writing which, rough and careless as it appeared to be, was still extraordinarily eloquent, forceful and historically invaluable.

In "King Leopold," Twain took newspaper headlines, first-hand journalistic accounts of the Congo, photographs of mutilated savages taken by the incontestable new witness of the time, Kodak, missionary reports, official documents of

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—*Samuel Clemens*

Congolese administrators, and put them into a montage cemented by his own imaginative reconstructions and passages of prose characterized by raging moral anger and savage satire. He shows Leopold speaking in person, surrounded by the documents and records of his infamous doings, swearing violently, kissing his crucifix, apologizing, admitting certain errors, rationalizing, defending himself without a trace of guilt or "Christian" conscience about the evils he had perpetrated on an innocent and helpless people. "I have spent millions to keep the press of the two hemispheres quiet. . . . I have spent other millions on religion and art, and what do I get?" Leopold asks. "In print I get nothing but slanders—and slanders again. . . . Miscreants—they are telling *everything!*"

And then Clemens retells the history of how Leopold obtained the territory of the Congo from the Great Powers, including America, to root out slavery and stop the slave raids, "and to lift up those twenty-five millions of gentle and harmless blacks out of darkness into light, the light of our blessed Redeemer."

But the documents with which Clemens surrounds Leopold show that for 20 years he was the absolute sovereign of a fruitful domain four times as large as the German Empire, claiming millions of inhabitants as his private property, his serfs, his slaves. "Yes," Twain's Leopold says about his detractors, "they go on telling everything, these chatterers! They tell how I levy incredibly burdensome taxes upon the natives—taxes which are a pure theft; taxes which they must satisfy by gathering rubber under hard and constantly harder conditions, and by raising and furnishing food supplies *gratis*—and it all comes

out that, when they fall short of their task through hunger, sickness, despair, and ceaseless and exhausting labor without rest, and forsake their homes and flee to the woods to escape punishment my black soldiers, drawn from unfriendly tribes, and instigated and directed by my Belgians”—those “unspeakable Belgians,” as Clemens declared—“hunt them down and butcher them and burn their villages—reserving some of the girls. . . .”

“Another detail, as we see!—cannibalism. The report cites cases of it with a most offensive frequency,” cries Twain’s Leopold in despair. “My traducers do not forget to remark that inasmuch as I am absolute and with a word can prevent in the Congo anything I choose to prevent, then whatsoever is done there . . . is my act, my *personal* act . . . that the hand of my agent is as truly *my* hand as if it were attached to my own arm; and so they picture me in my robes of state, with my crown on my head, munching human flesh, saying grace, mumbling thanks to Him from whom all good things come They speak out profanely and reproach Heaven for allowing such a fiend to live. Meaning me. They think it irregular. They go shuddering around, brooding over the reduction of that Congo population from 25,000,000 to 15,000,000 in the twenty years of my administration; then they burst out and call me ‘the King with Ten Million murders on his Soul.’ They call me a record.”

WHILE “THE CZAR’S SOLILOQUY” (1905), in a sense a sequel to “King Leopold,” was not so well understood or so popular, in literary terms it was a more compact, direct and impressive piece of writing than the earlier essay.

Clemens was one of the few Americans who did not regard Theodore Roosevelt’s mediation of the Russo-Japanese War with approval. The Portsmouth, New Hampshire, peace treaty won the Nobel prize for “the windy and flamboyant President,” but, as Twain wrote in his *Autobiography*, it destroyed all of his hopes that a defeated Russia might find a revolutionary release from “an insane and intolerable slavery.”

“I was hoping that there would be no peace until Russian liberty was safe,” he said to the Associated Press at the time. “I think there can be no doubt that that mission is now defeated and Russia’s chains riveted; this time to stay. I think the Czar will now withdraw the small humanities that have been forced from him, and resume his medieval barbarisms with a relieved spirit and an immeasurable joy. . . . I think nothing has been gained by the peace that is remotely comparable to what has been sacrificed by it.”

“The Czar’s Soliloquy” was, among other things, a plea for immediate and bloody action. As Janet Smith—whose collection of Twain’s social satire is the best I have ever seen—says: “But what Mark Twain had in mind was not revolution, but a program of assassination. This program various Russian groups—mainly Anarchists and Nihilists, and mainly young people—had been enthusiastically pursuing since before 1881, when they assassinated Alexander II, one of the most liberal of the Russian czars. But Alexander III, who succeeded his father, was of the same stripe as Nicholas II, who came to the throne in 1894”—and was the czar being described here.

As early as 1890 Clemens had stated his views about Russia in an unmailed letter to the editor of the American magazine, *Free Russia*: “Of course I know that the properest way to

demolish the Russian throne would be by revolution. But it is not possible to get up a revolution there; so the only thing left to do, apparently, is to keep the throne vacant by dynamite until a day when candidates shall decline with thanks. . . .”

In the same letter he made it clear that his vision of history was hardly pacifistic. “My privilege to write these sanguinary sentences in soft security was bought for me by rivers of blood poured upon many fields, in many lands, but I possess not one single little paltry right or privilege that came to me as a result of petition, persuasion, agitation for reform, or any kindred method of procedure. When we consider that not even the most responsible English monarch ever yielded back a stolen public right until it was wrenched from him by bloody violence, is it rational to suppose that gentler methods can win privileges in Russia?”

For these reasons and others in “The Czar’s Soliloquy,” it is easy to see why Mark Twain is regarded with such reverence by contemporary Russian scholars, why they are so well informed about his work and why they objected when this whole area of Twain’s writing was omitted by American scholars during the heyday of the Cold War. The Russians were right, of course, and the American scholars were wrong. As any reader of Twain’s polemical essays can testify, this area of his social criticism is an adornment of his craft, as it should be considered of his country’s culture.

In the “Soliloquy” itself, Clemens seized upon a London newspaper item which declared that the Russian czar, after his morning bath, meditated for an hour before getting dressed: “A curious invention, an unaccountable invention—the human race!” says this blood brother of King Leopold. “The swarming Russian millions have for centuries meekly allowed our family to rob them, insult them, trample them under foot, while they lived and suffered and died with no purpose and no function but to make that family comfortable! These people are horses—just that—horses with clothes and a religion. A horse with the strength of a hundred men will let one man beat him, starve him, drive him; the Russian millions allow a mere handful of soldiers to hold them in slavery—and these very soldiers are their own sons and brothers!”

THESE GREAT ESSAYS DO NOT express the “frustration” of an embittered “failure” in life and art; they are rather the logical outgrowths of an inquiry by a master artist outraged by blatant social injustice.

This same keen sense of man’s infinite capacity for shameless cruelty is seen in another one of Twain’s looks at the manners and mentality of his own country, “The United States of Lyncherdom” (1901). What he saw was a panorama whose salient features were colonialism, imperialism and racial prejudice. This essay was so heartbroken and indignant that Twain decided not to publish it. Even when Alfred Bigelow Paine, his friend, biographer and editor, published it 20 years later in a collection of posthumous essays, *Europe and Elsewhere*, it was with great concern about its effect.

“And so Missouri has fallen, that great State!”—thus Twain responded to a rash of lynching in that State. “Certain of her children have joined the lynchers, and the smirch is upon the rest of us. That handful of her children have given us a character and labeled us with a name, and to the dwellers in the four quarters of the earth we are ‘lynchers,’ now and ever shall be.”

The world would not stop and think, said Clemens with a

familiar irony, that the bulk of Missourians building an honorable name for themselves did not endorse the action; that the hundred Missourians who were lynchers were in fact renegades. "No, that truth will not enter its mind; it will generalize from the one or two misleading samples and say, 'The Missourians are lynchers.' It has no reflection, no logic, no sense of proportion. With it figures go for nothing; to it, figures reveal nothing, it cannot reason upon them rationally. . . . It would say, 'There are a hundred lynchers there, therefore the Missourians are lynchers'; the considerable fact that there are two and half million Missourians who are *not* lynchers would not affect their verdict. . . . Oh, Missouri!"

The lynching occurred after the discovery that a young white woman had been found murdered, and perhaps raped—the "usual crime" of that period, the common pretext for lynching Negroes. "Although it was a region of churches and schools," Clemens continued, "the people rose, lynched three Negroes—two of them very aged ones—burned out five Negro households, and drove thirty Negro families into the woods." Churches indeed; one could ask, as Clemens did, what kind of Christianity was practiced in the Southern churches, and what was the part the ministry played in opposing such mobs?

Clemens, moreover, went on to point out that every time a Negro was lynched on the supposition of rape, it encouraged more Negroes to consider the possibility of raping, and more white men to perform the act of lynching. In 1900 there had been eight more cases of lynching than in 1899, and in 1901 he thought there would be more cases than in 1900, mainly in Alabama, Georgia, Louisiana and Mississippi.

The other reason Clemens suggested for the rising rate of lynching during these terrible years in the South was simply the moral cowardice of man at which he had briefly hinted in the somber passages that provide a sort of tragic relief in *Huckleberry Finn*. Now, many years later, he wrote: "It has been supposed—and said—that the people at a lynching enjoy the spectacle and are glad of a chance to see it. It cannot be true; all experience is against it. The people in the South are made like the people in the North—the vast majority of whom are right-hearted and compassionate, and would be cruelly pained by such a spectacle—and *would attend it*, and let on to be pleased with it, if the public approval seemed to require it. We are made like that and we cannot help it. The other animals are not so, but we cannot help that, either. They lack the moral sense; we have no way of trading ours off, for a nickel or some other thing above its value. The moral sense teaches us what is right, and how to avoid it—when unpopular."

Mark Twain on the "moral sense" in man: a favorite source of ironic commentary in his later period of work. But against the mass drive and mob instinct of man, he asked, why were there not a few more bold spirits to oppose this, like some of the sheriffs of the period who held back the lynch mobs, or the more courageous outlaws who could terrorize such mobs. But no, he concluded, his scheme would not work: "There are not enough morally brave men in stock. We are out of moral-courage material; we are in a condition of profound poverty."

In the meantime, there was another plan: "Let us import American missionaries from China, and send them into the lynching field. With 1511 of them out there converting two Chinamen apiece per annum against an uphill birth rate of 33,000 pagans per day, it will take upward of a million years

to make the conversions balance the output and bring the Christianizing of the country in sight to the naked eye; therefore, if we can offer our missionaries as rich a field at home, at lighter expense and quite satisfactory in the matter of danger, why shouldn't they find it fair to come back and give us a trial?"

And then he referred once more to the description of the lynching of one Negro which he multiplied by 115 (the estimated figure for lynchings in 1900), added 88 (the figures already recorded for lynchings in 1901) and directed: "Place the 203 in a row, allowing 600 feet of space for each human torch, so that there may be viewing room around it for 5000 Christian American men, women, and children, youths and maidens; make it night for grim effect, have the show in a gradually rising plain, and let the course of the stakes be uphill; the eye can then take in the whole line of twenty-four miles of blood-and-flesh bonfires unbroken, whereas if it occupied ground level the ends of the line would bend down and be hidden from view by the curvature of the earth. All being ready, now, and the darkness opaque, the stillness impressive—for there should be no sound but the soft moaning of the night wind and the muffled sobbing of the sacrifices—let all the far stretch of kerosene pyres be touched off simultaneously and the glare and the shrieks and the agonies burst heavenward to the Throne. . . . There are more than a million persons present; the light from the fires flushes into vague outline against the night the spires of five thousand churches. O kind missionary, O compassionate missionary, leave China! Come home and convert these Christians!"

THUS THE CELEBRATED CONCLUSION of "The United States of Lyncherdom," which was indeed "dramatic" and "visual" and "scenic" and "rendered" enough to satisfy all the deepest yearnings of even a Henry James. (James, in his *The American Scene*—written at the same time and also about the South—would describe only the barbaric American tribal types he found there and the terrible domestic crises forced on the Southern aristocrats with whom he found himself in great sympathy.) Thus also Mark Twain recalls to their mother country those American missionaries whom he had ridiculed and attacked in the first of these later polemical essays, "To the Person Sitting in Darkness." He had come full circle; what he had at first felt to be the old world's evil imperialism, he then discovered right at hand in the new world's burgeoning colonialism and racism. The cycle was completed.

This is not to say, however, that he had by any means finished writing in this vein of radical social criticism which the literary scholarship of the Cold War period would find so regrettable, offensive and unaesthetic. Samuel Clemens knew that he had discovered an altogether new vein of inspiration in his later periods of writing. Returning to such themes as colonialism and racism would ever renew his fancy and carry it to new and higher flights of brilliant, ironical, angry and often quite hilarious passages of polemical prose, both of its own time and timeless. With a sounder sense of art and life than either his contemporary or his future critics—who were becoming ever more intimidated by the increasingly repressive nature of their culture—he would return to this golden vein of his art until the end of his life, taking a diabolical pleasure in it, purging his turbulent spirit, refreshing his genius.

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Belles-Lettres



A Galbraith Reappraisal: the Ideologue as Gadfly

AMERICAN CAPITALISM. *Boston: Houghton Mifflin. (1952)*

THE AFFLUENT SOCIETY. *Boston: Houghton Mifflin. (1958)*

THE NEW INDUSTRIAL STATE. *Boston: Houghton Mifflin. (1967)*

PERHAPS IT IS NOW TIME, when America has come to face the complexities of empire, that her best minds begin to shed their innocence. It was all there, in embryo, with our 19th century novelists: the innocent, naive, goodhearted chap up against the slippery European sophisticates. Perhaps in those days it didn't much matter; the sensitive American plopped back, exhausted, uncomprehending of the new forces which faced him. More than a little of Henry Adams' bemusement prevails even today.

But today the United States carries out *la mission civilatrice* in every part of the globe. The sun never sets on her network of military bases or her multinational corporations. There are revolts, too, on the far frontiers. The generals need troops immediately; more taxes must be raised; the children of the intellectuals—the sensitive ones—will have to put down their books and learn to fire a mortar. The rat-bitten ghetto children will have to wait their turn; the peasants will have to tighten their belts. The social machine is not working well. There's a harsh clatter and roar from the engine room. So many problems. So much misery. So many needs. How can it be changed? Who can even describe it?

There is at least one man among us who feels qualified to describe the way things work. Professor John Kenneth

Galbraith's credentials are impressive indeed: he is chairman of the Americans for Democratic Action (ADA), former ambassador to India, professor of economics at Harvard, former head of the Office of Price Administration, a Far Eastern art expert and a novelist both satiric and nostalgic. And Professor Galbraith does not lack prominent backers and admirers. The former editor of *Encounter*, Irving Kristol, presently of *The Public Interest*, compares Galbraith with Ralph Waldo Emerson, to the former's advantage. Galbraith, according to Kristol, goes beyond liberal reformism: he "ingeniously combines the tradition of moral-social criticism with a professional and plausible economic analysis."

Arthur Schlesinger Jr. chummily praises Galbraith's militancy in fighting "unrelenting guerrilla warfare in support of the public sector." President John Kennedy, also an admirer of guerrilla warfare, thought highly enough of Galbraith's *The Affluent Society* (1956) to make it an explicit issue in the 1960 presidential campaign. And a recent *Time* cover story ("The All-Purpose Critic," February 16, 1968) found Galbraith a most quotable and possibly the most influential critic of U.S. society.

Chosen by Air Force Secretary Thomas K. Finletter in 1952 to participate in a small Stevenson brain trust, Galbraith was the first prominent Stevensonian to switch to Kennedy in 1960. He remained in the Kennedy entourage until the assassination, serving successively as a member of the task force on foreign economic development, as ambassador to India and as a top speech writer ("let us

never negotiate out of fear; but let us never fear to negotiate").

After Kennedy's death, Galbraith's adjustment to the new Johnsonian order may have been a little too quick even for the "Irish mafia." William Manchester reports that "Galbraith outraged everyone within earshot by announcing that he had written 'a very good draft overnight' for the new President." Galbraith himself has described this *contretemps* as a reflection of the division between the Kennedy loyalists and the Kennedy "realists," in whose camp he remained until after the Johnson-Goldwater campaign. At any rate, Galbraith now holds a portfolio in Senator Robert Kennedy's shadow cabinet.

THIS IS A MIGHTY GOOD RECORD for an economics professor, certainly good enough to make his academic peers gnash their teeth, for Galbraith is successful in a thousand ways that they cannot be (and he writes *novels* too). But his colleagues might ask just *what* an American intellectual gets when he gets "power." They would learn that it is little indeed. Without an independent base in the trade unions or in the ethnic communities, without a private fortune or control of a political machine, the intellectuals who sniff after power are forced to follow in the camp of any political army which has even a slight chance of seizing Washington with a minimum of bloodshed and looting.

In fact, the sole asset of men like Galbraith (unless they are willing to fill a bureaucratic pigeonhole) is their ability to develop ideology and present it as social criticism. Republicans don't care

by Robert Fitch