

# High and Wide In Boulder, Colorado

MARYA MANNES

THEY FLEW IN from everywhere: diplomats from Washington, U.N. officials from New York, Navy and Air Force officers from the Pentagon, physicists and molecular biologists from laboratories, professors of social sciences and the humanities from the universities of Britain and America, economists and civic leaders, and—finally—writers. It was because of this last small inclusion that I, an expert in nothing, was invited to attend a Conference on World Affairs at the University of Colorado in Boulder, and to join these experts in bombarding the young with ideas. Any initial feelings of inadequacy (and they persisted) were overridden by this challenge and the irresistible appeal of a free trip.

A Sunday with a bright sun and a temperature near eighty showed me what a dazzling place Boulder is, set on a mile-high plain against jagged, firred, and pinnaced foothills still creased with snow, and they in turn set against higher, blunter mountains pure white against an incandescent blue. The house where I was billeted with a doctor and his sociologist wife and four children was part of a new development at the foot of the Flat-iron rocks, and each house was entirely different in its newness from the next one; a blessed change from the Levittown stencil that blights this country from coast to coast. There was experiment here, and a great sense of freedom.

## Crazy but Unbeat Elite

My own sense of freedom, however, was sharply curtailed by a look at the program of the conference, where I saw to my dismay that I was scheduled for two panels a day for five days and was expected to speak—not merely talk with others—on each one. A second glance at the names of the other sixty-four participants reminded me again that I had no business being at the con-

ference in the first place. The stature of my colleagues, whether ambassadors, scientists, or teachers, was awesome.

I met a number of them for the first time on Sunday night at the house of a lady who for years has been a spark plug of this bold Boulder venture. She was young, blonde, and pretty, and severely afflicted with mumps. Although she was in bed and the door to her section of the house was adorned with a large sign saying "Mumps! Keep Out!," it was wide open to the stream of her friends who flocked to admire a fetching blue blouse that came up to her nose, disguising her chipmunk cheeks, and to keep her company. It was only later that certain male guests, mostly under forty and mostly English, began to realize the implications of this exposure. For the moment it was fine to drink and eat and swim in Mrs. Westfeldt's heated pool while the cool pure air of the mountains stung your cheek. If there is such a thing as a crazy elite, we felt that way Sunday night. Monday was a long way off.

## Words Winged and Otherwise

But not long enough. The four nice children at the house where I stayed saw to that, their voices in full cry outside my door from seven on, and a neurotic white toy poodle coming to kiss me on the mouth soon after. My door was chronically (through some defect) ajar. I like dogs, but not that early and not that ardent.

The first order of that first day was a plenary session at Macky Auditorium, addressed by Ambassador Chagla of India. We walked across the campus sweltering in an eighty-two-degree sun, and I found the combination of native redstone buildings and gray-green trees attractive if not beautiful. There was, again, this air of lightness and freedom typical of the Rockies.



I heard very little of what Ambassador Chagla said because every time he made a point he banged his ringed fists on the lectern, accompanying himself—as someone said—with percussion. The operative words were lost in a shattering electronic roar. I left in frustration and wonder at his ignorance of this effect, and went to hear a panel called "On the Road: Where?," in which Malcolm Bradbury of *Punch*, the poet John Wain, John Vaizey the economist from Oxford, and Anthony West of the *New Yorker* indulged in the popular sport of baiting the beatniks. Their student targets took this first round with reasonable equanimity: it was, after all, their first glimpse of the animals. But by the fourth day, when the same panel plowed gustily into "Beatitudes and the Zen Bit," the young people were sullen with hostility. I could not restrain a pang of pity for them, for this was their bad season. The Chamber of Commerce has urged male Coloradans to grow beards in honor of the coming Boulder Centennial Celebration, thus forcing a number of beatniks to shave theirs to avoid confusion with squares.

IT MUST BE EXPLAINED at this point that I was quite properly confined, along with my writing colleagues, to the more frivolous areas of the conference, and that while others in other rooms were discussing the cessation of nuclear tests, the recognition of Red China, or the future of NATO, we ranged and dabbled in social commentary, communication, morals, and what is known as "The American Scene." There were twenty different panel discussions a day of almost equal interest and importance, and each of us shared the common frustration of having to speak when we would have liked to listen. I would rather have listened to "The Writer as

Witch Doctor," for instance, than talk on segregation; to "The Making of a President" or "The British University" or "The Biological Consequences of Nuclear War" instead of sweating out definitions of my own. And I was furious at missing John Wain on Gerard Manley Hopkins, and Max Hayward, the co-translator of *Doctor Zhivago*, on "The Intellectual in Russia." But there it was: you came to impart even if you needed to learn.

We were all free, however, to hear Tom Mboya of Kenya address a plenary session. This young man has a princely dignity, a superb command of language and phrasing, and a quiet implacability that is deeply impressive. He spoke, of course, of a free Africa. After he was through—to a standing ovation—a few of us questioned only two elements in his speech. One was the overnight speed in which he envisioned African freedom, the other was the uneasy juxtaposition of a statement that free Africa would be a democratic Africa with the familiar threat: If you, the West, don't help us, we will turn elsewhere. But what else could he say?

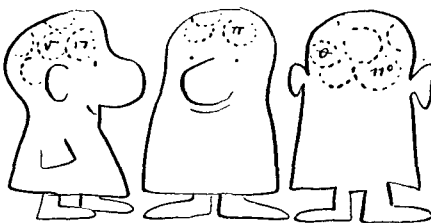
The British, who viewed Mboya with some pride as a product of their colonial system, were moved by his presence and performance. The German and Netherlands representatives rejected him and his words with visible annoyance.

### On Circumscribing Nymphets

On the first day, any students, faculty, or townspeople who had survived any of the previous panels turned up at 4:10 to hear "Whom Could *Lolita* Corrupt?—a British Problem." There they faced a platform on which I sat apprehensively with Brian Urquhart of the office of the secretary-general of the U.N., John Vaizey of Oxford, Donald MacRae of the University of London, and Esme Brooks, a highly cultivated and reticent Bostonian.

With his usual fastidious clarity (his speech on nuclear testing was one of the most eloquent at the conference), Urquhart explained the situation in England and the dangers faced by the firm of Weidenfeld and Nicolson should it publish *Lolita*. Assuring his audience that *Lolita* had failed to corrupt

him, he attacked with eloquence any form of censorship in a civilized democratic society. In my turn, I said that *Lolita* hadn't corrupted me either, but that I wished Mr. Nabokov had not felt compelled to use his great talents to tell this particular story, that it was part of a general sickness, and that one should let sleeping lusts lie. There was general agreement on this, along with full appreciation of Nabokov's descriptive genius and satirical force; but John Vaizey, the neat, collected, clear-edged young economist, came out bluntly for censorship in instances where ideas were harmful to the public good, such as *Mein Kampf* in Germany. The rest of us jumped on him hard, although I said that there might be an area (with which I had been very familiar) where some kind of censorship was warranted: violence mass-produced for children, as in comics, and any other obscene literature.



At this point the discussion generated a lot of heat on both sides of the platform until a young man with an open shirt, a beard, and a very high voice said he didn't see anything unusual in the relationship of Mr. Humbert to *Lolita* in the first place: it was a perfectly natural affair.

Thus ended my first exposure to university life in Boulder and to a Conference of World Affairs anywhere.

### Tired but Communicado

The next days were tougher. Starting at ten, each of us had two panels a day separated by a lunch at the Student Center at which all sixty-five of us importees shared the innocuous collegiate diet with faculty members and wondered what in hell the titles of our panels meant. Apart from two sober panels on segregation, North and South, I was confronted, usually with my writing colleagues, by sessions called "In and Out," "Really Top Drawer," "Rev-

erence: The First Step Toward Totalitarianism," and "The Lily White Boys in America and the Girl with the Ping Pong Ball." Compared to them, "The Way of the Satirists" and "Brave New World Revisited" were overexplicit.

These titles, we learned later, were dreamed up over highballs by a corps of imaginative spirits from the University of Colorado inspired by Howard Higman of the department of sociology—the man most responsible for the manner in which these conferences are held: a blend of superb efficiency and untrammelled fantasy new to me. Madness and method are so mated in Higman that the line between is indefinable, and an added flavor of malice—intellectual if not personal—completes the mixture. It is the last ingredient, I think, that made him withhold the purpose of our panels until we were thrust on stage, then forced to translate these snatches of beat talk, magazine sociology, and *Auntie Mame* into something concrete and communicable.

Thus, "In and Out" became a discussion of fads; "Really Top Drawer" (a phrase I have not heard in years) concerned itself with class distinctions here and in England; and "The Lily White Boys in America and the Girl with the Ping Pong Ball," far from being an examination of homosexuality and sport, as most of us had supposed, was simply devoted to conformity, a word we were to grow rather tired of.

As the days wore on and we wore out, our approaches gained in assurance, born sometimes of desperation, and our audiences gained in numbers. By the last two panels we had to move from the cozy clutter of Old Main Chapel to the vast reaches of Macky Auditorium, where amplification gave our cracking voices new resonance. And each of us settled into our own styles and attitudes, now recognized with varying degrees of amusement or displeasure by the student body. Malcolm Bradbury of *Punch* was the clown—a frail and gangling young man of hesitating if inexhaustible speech, who would alternate extremely funny and penetrating observations with a shapeless, almost somnambulist rambling; Anthony West was the soft-voiced, hard-

minded hewer to reason, his statements structural and in depth; John Wain was the impassioned but organized poet, contemptuous of categories and abstractions; Buckminster Fuller, the New York architect who designs geodesic domes, was the practical dreamer whose vision constantly outreached his words (and his listeners); Professor Will Moore of Oxford was the delightful voice of knowledge without pretense, of a mature society; and I—how do I know what I was to the students except that I felt happily conscious of direct communication with them, whether or not they accepted what I said?

### Dishing It Out

Throughout the week, we were highly critical of things the students were brought up to revere. The American Way of Life got a rough going-over, from the cult of popularity to the cult of nonconformity, from pseudo-religious piety to women who, next to their families, liked Tide better than anything. And one of the lines that got the biggest approving roar of derision was "Families That Pray Together Stay Together." The kids aren't buying that.

I got into a few hassles along the way. In one panel on segregation in the North, I made the observation that I myself had met no Negro leaders who assumed any responsibility whatever for the circumstances and manner in which their people lived, blaming their various difficulties wholly on the white community; and I added that the Negro press in New York, venting this blame intemperately, was more of a hindrance than a help.

This got a fiery rebuttal from a co-panelist, Franklin Williams, secretary-counsel of the N.A.A.C.P. in San Francisco, a handsome and angry man who denied that the Negroes bore any responsibility for their condition and asserted that the Negro press was a good press, its bitterness justified. He added that my comments were typical segregationist thinking. He got the applause.

I tangled with him again on "Brave New World Revisited" (he admitted that he hadn't read the book). After the rest of us had lib-

erally doused our listeners with some serious doubts as to the direction of our civilization, Williams rose and said he had a pain in the neck from listening to us all week, and as far as he was concerned everything from identical suburbs to Perry Como was fine with him, and he ended with an eloquent defense of installment buying and mortgage financing.

I told him to go massage his neck. My own was rather hot; and the audience applauded us both loudly.

### Fun and Games in the Snow

The second day of the conference, the temperature dropped from eighty to seven and snow started to fall. It didn't stop for four days: the heaviest storm in Boulder in thirteen years. This dense, relentless blanketing was only another insulation from reality, another test—superbly surmounted—of the generous people who fed us, led us,



transported us, suffered us, and sustained us for seven whole days and nights. This alone was a triumph of organization and kindliness.

Each night another member of the community or faculty would give us a party: food and drink for a hundred was standard procedure. It seemed to me, in fact, that as the week wore on and our fatigue increased, the quantities ingested grew progressively larger, the hours later, the talk headier—the result, perhaps, of altitude and isolation. The fear of mumps burgeoned to such an extent among the men that most of them flocked to the doctor who was my host and had him make

skin tests; by the fourth night, attention was centered on the fortunate fellows whose arms showed a rosy bump and the alarmed whose arms showed nothing. Affection for the mumps-ridden hostess of the first night waxed or waned accordingly, and there were dark mutterings of revenge among the threatened.

Neither mumps nor snow, however, deterred a hardy dozen or more of us from repairing to Mrs. Westfeldt's heated pool at eleven or so and continuing both refreshment and conversation in hot water while the snow frosted our hair. The only exception we made to this form of therapy was a night when we listened to John Wain read some of his poems. They were what poetry should be: moving and singing.

Not all of us wholly survived the rigors of this life. The circles deepened under our eyes and our voices grew hoarse. For John Vaizey, who shared a room with *Zhivago's* translator, Max Hayward, even sleep was denied: his roommate mumbled in Russian much of the night. Poor young Bradbury collapsed from exhaustion at the last party, and I was beginning to suffer from mirages in which I crawled through deepest snow toward the receding image of a New York-bound plane and my own bed.

YET I FIND IT amazing and wonderful that such a conference should be held anywhere. The more I think of it, the more inspiring, the more adventuresome, and the more creative it seems. For the first time in their lives these young people on their high plateau—these clean, sturdy, bland young boys and girls kept safely within their continent and their customs—are hearing the voices of a world in conflict, of civilizations being born and societies dying, and the sound of things falling from the sky. They are exposed to strange ideas and new forces, to people who do not speak or think alike or like them, and who are not afraid of them.

And for us, the outsiders, we got to know each other, we refreshed each other—and more important still—we smelled the strong air of the Great Divide and looked at new distances.



## VIEWS & REVIEWS



### *The Book That Became 'War and Peace'*

KATHRYN FEUER

OUR IMAGE of Tolstoy is fixed—bearded, ascetic old Lev Nikolaevich, pacifist, vegetarian, and Christian anarchist, the sage of Yasnaya Polyana. It broods over all his works, especially over *War and Peace*, which in its reputation for venerable profundity is matched only by the Book of Job. The image, of course, has really nothing to do with the novel, whose author was young, clean-shaven, and robust in his pleasures, a veteran who sometimes longed to go to war again, an aristocrat jealous of his rank and privilege. If one reads *War and Peace* without predispositions, much of this portrait of its author is apparent; it is, as F. Scott Fitzgerald wrote to his daughter, “a man’s book.” And, as the manuscript drafts of the novel reveal (they were finally published in Russia a few years ago), in its origins *War and Peace* was a young man’s book.

Tolstoy was, in fact, just thirty-five when, in 1863, he began work on the novel which he was to finish seven years later. The early manuscripts in particular belong to a book youthful in its attitudes, in its

sensationalism, in its grandiose conception, and in its polemic fervor. These drafts are of two quite different types: political discussions and lyrical family-life scenes, with the latter type predominating. For a year and a half Tolstoy wrote almost nothing at all about the war (only a version of the Battle of Austerlitz), and when he did deal with it, in 1865, he was concerned not with its philosophic or historical meanings but with its effects on his individual characters. And even later still, Tolstoy’s conception of his work was something other than the book we know; its title, he wrote to a friend in May, 1866, would be “All’s Well That Ends Well.”

THE EARLY MANUSCRIPTS are far more sensational than the final version. In the very first drafts and outlines, we find Old Prince Bolonsky with a serf mistress and several illegitimate children, whom he dispatches to the orphans’ home; we find Helene (Pierre’s wife) in a suggested incestuous relationship with her brother, Anatole, and the mistress of, among others, the Tsar.

Here Natasha is *really* seduced by Anatole (while in the final novel she only suffers all the consequences of seduction, remaining technically chaste). Here Pierre has many duels and many love affairs; he kills some of his opponents and one of his mistresses dies in childbirth. And here Nicholas Rostov, the novel’s triumphant model of a virtuous nobleman, whose priggishness is as impregnable as his stupidity—Nicholas Rostov has a dancing-girl mistress, provided him by his loving and solicitous parents.

All these episodes disappear very quickly, once Tolstoy has really begun. And yet, in what we might call the later early drafts, the tone of the novel remains far more extreme, its expressed emotions are more intense, than anything we find in the final version. Characters experience passion and exultation, despair, hatred and remorse, and they express these feelings in powerfully effective soliloquies, interior monologues, and, occasionally, in curiously moving dreams. These passages seem to have been written by Tolstoy with spontaneous ease; they are in the vein of eloquent and undisciplined self-revelation that so often marks the youthful work of great novelists.

THE POLITICS, too, of the first drafts was much more explicit and polemical. Indeed, *War and Peace* seems to have been first planned as a political novel, the first volume of a trilogy that would center around the Decembrist uprising in 1825, crushed by Nicholas I, in which a group of nobles, chiefly former army officers, sought to gain a constitution and other reforms for Russia. Volume I was to have taken place in 1812, a formative time in the lives of the Decembrists, many of whom became admirers of western European culture and political ideas during their service in the Napoleonic Wars. Volume II would probably have been set in 1825, the time of the uprising; while Volume III would have described the return of the Decembrist hero in 1856, when the exiled conspirators were amnestied by young Alexander II.

Tolstoy began with the third or 1856 volume, which, it is important