

DIRECTION

No. 2, Feb. '41, 15 cents

American Number



All American Number

In 1917 and 1918, 123,000 young Americans died for democracy. For democracy another 190,000 were wrecked and maimed physically. Nobody has bothered to count how many were mentally wrecked for democracy. We know how much democracy resulted from this human sacrifice. How many of us today, after that lesson, and the lesson of the two decades following, have any clear understanding of the word which we speak and hear more than any other except swell and nuts?

Theodore Dreiser

We wanted to make this number full of humor and Americana, an optimistic reflection of the American scene. But when our material started to come in, we found it was all pretty serious stuff. The artists, writers, and critics of today are deeply concerned with one thing, which indeed hangs over us all—the threat of war. When Rockwell Kent sent us his stirring anti-war poster, we felt it was too important to use anywhere else but on the cover. When Theodore Dreiser, instead of sending us a definition of Americanism, asked us to repeat this challenge from his book *Democracy Is Worth Saving*, published this month, we felt that the keynote of a truly American number at this critical time must be *Save America from War*.

We earnestly believe that the interests of our country can best be served by keeping out of the war in Europe. The interests of the American people are identical with those of people all over the world. Two alternatives—a victory for Britain or a victory for Germany—are daily presented to us in the press. But they are by no means the only alternatives. We must not get hysterical at the mere thought of the possible collapse of a part of the British Empire, but remember that the whole of Europe, including hundreds of thousands of people trapped inside Germany and Italy, are awaiting the day when they can arise and throw off the tyranny of the Fascists. We believe that this revolt of the peoples will come sooner or later, with or without a victory by Britain.

It is not the foreign scene which alarms us the most. It is what will happen and what is already happening in our own country, under the excuse of war. Civil liberties are being attacked on every side. Cultural activities: WPA Arts Projects, Educational Groups, Youth Orchestras, etc., are everywhere being scrapped. Many millions in our country still live without proper food, clothing and health conditions. Yet we are turning all the physical and creative energies of the nation into the production of materials for war. We certainly believe that our defenses should be strong, but what most alarms us is the simultaneous building up of aggressive powers and a war psychology which, if continued, is sure to lead us into foreign venture from which there will be no turning back. Such a program can only bring about physical and spiritual poverty that will degrade our great country.

But let us see how our writers and artists feel about this. Let us see how the ordinary man, such as the mechanic or the relief client who have written in this issue, feel about conditions in this country. Is it easy to make a living here? Have we a successfully functioning democracy? Or is this precious democracy of ours a promise we have only half fulfilled? How can we best bring it to fulfillment? Let us consider Mr. Dreiser's definition of democracy which appears in the chapter quoted above:

*The extent to which plenty can be distributed among men.
is the extent to which democracy may be envisioned.*

Let us think about all this, before it is too late. We believe that our first duty is to defend democracy in our own country, and develop it here so that we may become not an *arsenal* but a nation actually producing democracy and bread for the suffering people of the world.

Which Way America?—Maurice Becker

Who's Who

Theodore Dreiser, Kenneth Burke and Erskine Caldwell need no introduction to readers of *DIRECTION* nor indeed to any one who knows American literature. These men are outstanding not only as writers but as cultural leaders, blazing the trail of the future.

Our documentary character sketches start off with the reflections of Fred Berensmeier who is a skilled mechanic working for one of the big bus lines in San Francisco. German born, he came to this country as a young man. This is his first published work.

Ralph Hunter is thirty years old. He has worked with a circus, in North-western logging camps, as a newspaperman and a series of tragic events finally landed him in jail. He is inmate-editor of a lively magazine *The Agenda*, and is also selling regular dramatic programs to some of the big radio stations.

Denis Plimmer is a young writer and playwright, whose work has appeared in the *American Magazine*, *Friday*, etc.

Ed Falkowski won second prize in our documentary writing contest last year. He lives in Ohio. He collects factual material for newspapers and magazines.

John Martin, distinguished dance critic for the *New York Times*, is familiar to our readers in the metropolitan district. He has written three books on dance.

John Prentice is a roving newspaperman who has made a study of propaganda in various fields. He has listened to radio with *aversion*, he says, for many years, and this article is part of a larger work he is projecting.

Douglas Moore is professor of music at Columbia University and himself a composer. He has written music especially for film.

Cartoonists are listed on page 11.

Americanism

Patriotism in General, Americanism in Particular, Interspersed with Pauses

(Kenneth Burke)

When is a man *genuinely* and *exclusively* a patriot? When he confronts an issue (negatively) in terms of national defense and (positively) in terms of national welfare.

There are many other kinds of terms in which a man can reasonably confront an issue. He can confront it, for instance, in terms of private gain, in terms of his family, in terms of his locality or region, in terms of his occupational class, of his philosophy or his God. But he is being wholly or exclusively a patriot when he confronts an issue in terms of national interests alone.

So there is a sense in which the "perfect patriot" is the Nazi or Fascist totalitarian. We refer here not to the conspirators who train or finance the large-scale production of totalitarian mentalities, conditioning them with the reflexes that would make them ideal instruments for the purposes of imperialist exploitation. We refer to the sincere participants in this fabulous conditioning, the naïve who are all primed for "sacrifice." Such figures are the ultimate, the absolute completion, of nationalistic attitudes.

Democracy, on the other hand, is not in essence nationalistic or patriotic in this totalitarian sense. It is humanistic; historically, it has roots in religious theories of substantial equality; and when carried to its conclusion it leads, in the secular scheme of things, to ideals of international brotherhood. It thinks of national welfare as a part of universal welfare.

A pause for correction here: or rather, a pause to forestall a possible misunderstanding. To confront an issue in democratic terms is not merely to consider it in universalistic terms. It is, at the same time, to think of it in the narrower terms: terms of private gain, of family, of locality or region, of occupational class, of nation.

In the totalitarian scheme, patriotism is the beginning, the middle, and the end of all terms. In the democratic scheme, patriotism is but part of a dialectic series—an integral and necessary part, but not the one source of reference, or even the major source of reference, for all moral values and commands.

The role of the nation, in the totalitarian scheme, is nothing other than the

role of a god having the attributes of the devil. (Perhaps there is more accuracy than we thought in Machiavelli's title, *The Prince*.) For what are the "perfect" Machiavellian relations that prevail between nations, considered as corporate persons, out for what they can get? They are: a strong nation is to a weak one as a bully is to a coward; a weak nation is to a strong one as a coward is to a hully; and any nation is to any other nation as a liar is to a liar. To fawn, to dissemble, to threaten, to plot, to spy, to bribe, to kill—such are the motives that nationalism draws upon insofar as it becomes the *exclusive* source of our values.

And if such are the attributes of the nation, in its role as a totalitarian substitute for God, what might we expect of those nationalists who would be created in the image of their God?

Again pause. We have been excessive. Actually, nobody is a "pure" patriot. For there are very few situations in life which can be confronted in terms of nation alone. To a degree, even the most thoroughly conditioned Nazi or Fascist totalitarian will confront issues in terms both wider and narrower than those of national defense and national welfare. He will think of private benefits (hoped for, at least). He will surely retain something of the old background that thought of things in terms of "home and mother"; and he will make some not very exacting attempts to place his nationalism in terms of a wider philosophic frame, perhaps even telling himself that enslaved populations will in the end be "better off," once they have been taught how to be "good" slaves.

But there is an important difference of emphasis here. The "total" or "totalitarian" patriot would make nationalism the very center of his thinking, with all else deduced from it. The "democratic" patriot would consider his national identity as one in a hierarchy or graded series of many identities, all of them requiring their full consideration when he is confronting issues and making decisions.

And such full consideration is possible only when the issues are confronted and the decisions weighed in a dialectic that has a fully developed series of terms, whereby the national interests may be seen as taking their proper place along a whole sliding scale of interests.

Again pause. We have been excessive in another way. Up to this point, we have left the "democratic" patriot in too hunkydory a position. We did this by the usual method: While making a great fuss about handing vices to the "totalitarian," we incidentally, on the side, and without charge, handed all the virtues to the "democrat." Hence, correction:

Whereas the great temptation in the totalitarian approach is for the patriot to be created in the image of the nation, the great temptation in the democratic approach is for the patriot to create the nation in his image. This superhuman task he performs in the easiest way imaginable: by simply assuming that his interests and the nation's interests are identical. God for a sailor represents the ideal sailing, but God for a beachcomber represents the ideal shipwreck—and so with democratic nationalism, the temptation is that whatever group can afford to hire enough vocalizers will be able to fill the air with vocables proclaiming its interests and the nation's interests as one.

Which might be a good point at which to turn from patriotism in general to Americanism in particular.

Americanism, as democratic patriotism, should be the possession of no one occupational class. It should be the possession of all occupational classes. Yet the business class, both directly by reason of its financial power and indirectly by reason of the influence that such power exerts, has been able both directly to hire and indirectly to enlist the services of a priesthood (mainly journalists and publicists) that does its best to persuade us all, including the businessmen, that "America" and "business" are synonymous, that our country "means" nothing more or less than business, and that we cannot properly consider ourselves "Americans" if we question the desires of businessmen, even though we might, in questioning them, have thoughts of national welfare prominently in mind.

We should certainly recognize that business, as "busyness," performs a useful and exemplary economic function. And we may freely grant that, in this capacity, businessmen may properly identify their interests with those of the nation at large. But what are we to think when we recall that this class has, as its leaders and spokesmen, men whose activities go far beyond the humble and ad-

Americanism is not flag waving and singing "God Bless America." It is the belief in the brotherhood of man, and a feeling of kinship with the world: in a word, internationalism.

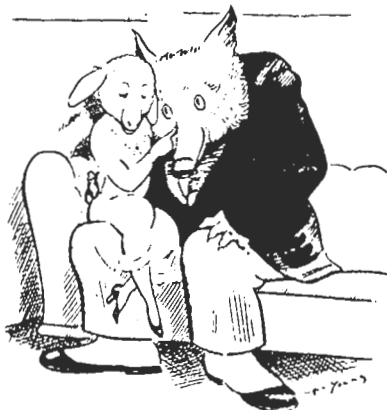
mirable role of "busyness," indeed whose policies led them and us into the World War, into the crisis of 1929, into acquiescence and even assistance in the rise of Mussolini and Hitler, the destruction of Spanish democracy, and the strengthening of Japan against China? The unenviable record could be greatly extended. And when you recall that these leaders and spokesmen, by and large, got and are getting the kind of national and international policies they asked for, I consider this record to be sufficient evidence that no one who considers himself a democratic patriot should allow the concept of "Americanism" to be kept within the bounds these leaders and spokesmen would set upon it.

These thoughts are prompted anew by the recent releases put forward by the National Association of Manufacturers. These releases, in part, and similar utterances that have been becoming more profuse of late, got me to thinking of a very ironic situation, thus:

A businessman, in his business dealings, is subtle and pliant and imaginative. He makes all sorts of ingenious adjustments. But when he hires his priesthods, does he ask that they match his ingenuity, subtlety, pliancy, with a corresponding ingenuity, subtlety, and pliancy of utterance? Most decidedly not. Instead, he wants a batch of sheer sloganizers, headline writers, unctious-spillers, obfuscators, and downright liars who write with about as much complexity as a traffic signal. And this is the sort of corruptionist he lets loose upon the people, to contribute what he can towards their confusion whereas the nature of our extremely complex economic plant requires the maximum of sophistication and understanding. And I suspect that the effect of such a priesthood does not stop at confusing the people—I believe that it even gets the businessmen themselves into a state of mind where they see things bluntly and askew.

Now what nation could possibly profit, as a nation, by being deliberately coached to see things in inaccurate and irrelevant terms? What nation has profited, as a nation, when great time and money and effort are expended deliberately upon the task, usually not of presenting blunt falsehood, but rather of getting people in the habit of using inferior conceptual instruments? For there is the point at which the really tragic terror enters: the

businessman's philosophy of human motivation is, even at its best, far too limited in scope; the priesthood that puts forward this philosophy usually gives it in a version that is far inferior to even this inferior best; and as a result, as much as is humanly possible is being done to establish vocabulary, a terminology for the naming of human motives and



*Mr. Big Business: I'll always love you.
Miss Lamb Public: Always is a long time.*

Mr. Big Business: Well, at least 'til after the war.—Cartoon by Art Young

necessities, that is far too feeble and hunt for the discerning and measuring of truth. It is as though all the love of precision had been drained off into the making of purely material tools, whereas our accumulation of precise physical instruments can only be kept going by a society that can learn to match it by equally precise mental instruments. To attempt managing our acute industrial plant by a blunt social terminology is simply in the end to make for such world confusion that, in the general destruction, no class will benefit.

The irony is that the strictly business vocabulary of motives, through being too materialistic behind the counter, must make amends by being too idealistic when away from the counter. Hence, the businessman continually requires that his private materialistic motives be translated into a public idiom marked by great spirituality. This is not a mere matter of "hypocrisy" with him. He instinctively realizes that all men are moved by much richer motives than those merely of their account books—yet the closest approximation that he can get to this, by

his vocabulary of motives, is a blunt shift between two disrelated idioms, everything that in the private idiom falls under the head of "profit" being presented in the public idiom under the head of *duty, sacrifice, and service*. And insofar as our people are encouraged to be content with such bungling conceptual instruments, they cannot possibly have the grasp of human resources, motives, realities, and necessities that will prepare the way for wise decisions, taken from the standpoint of our national welfare.

Hence, I feel that it devolves, as never before upon those who are earnestly concerned with the arts of education and expression, in contrast with the mere mercenary bands that make up too much of the publicity priesthood, to equate patriotism and Americanism with an artistic and critical idiom much more penetrating than that which the business leader seems content with. That will be the form of busyness by which they may contribute to the national welfare, in widening and broadening the national consciousness far beyond the dictates of one class.

Just before closing, I might pause once more, to report an incident concerning my friend, Mr. Fairfacts, who conducts a column, *Advice to the Hatelorn*. Recently he received a letter, which ran as follows:

Dear Mr. Fairfacts:

My daughter has to write a theme for school, on something to do with Americanism. A young man of her acquaintance said why didn't she do something on the World War—and she said what—and he said do something on The Great Dollar-a-Year Men, all about the big patriots in the last war who came to Washington and worked for only a dollar a year except maybe what they could pick up on the side. It seems like it might be a very inspiring theme, but we don't like the young man and he seemed to smile kind of funny when he said for her to do it—and somebody said it would be un-American to write something like that, but didn't say why.

Mr. Fairfacts, do you think it would be un-American?

Signed, Perplexed

To which my friend answered:

Dear Perplexed:

I don't think it would be un-American. But I do think it would be very untimely.

Direction V. 4 (Dec. 1941) 3-5

Where Are We Now?

Kenneth Burke

Writers usually have a kind of "working attitude" towards their contemporary situation. Some rules of thumb, more or less clearly formulated, for gauging what is going on. Herewith I offer some, not as new, but as selections made from the many hunches going the rounds.

* * *

As things now stand, the ideal situation for Britain and the United States would be one in which they could use Russia against Germany as they have used China against Japan. I.e., giving just enough assistance to keep them effective, but not enough to make them too effective. There is a group in the United States that would also like to put Britain in this class, but the British so far have succeeded fairly well in shunting the major glory of the role to Russia.

Ironically, now, the Russian army is functioning for Britain and the United States as the mightiest and cheapest mercenary army in all history—doing the work for much less cost than bare subsistence—and with such ingenuity and tenacity as no mercenary army in the literal sense of the word could even remotely approach.

The whole thing becomes a very classical affair, an attempt to maintain the golden mean between too much and too little help to Russia.

* * *

U. S. morale? I understand that the psychologists were convoked in Washington, to propose ways and means of remedying the morale. So these experts have assembled and pondered, doubtless laying aside their experiments with animals, to help us Respond to their Stimuli in such socially beneficial ways that we may be cheated for our own good.

But what worries me is this: We have been trained to think of capitalism (at the moment a less frequently used synonym for "democracy") as motivated by the desire for private gain. Its glory, we were trained to believe, derived from this motive, of individual self-interest. In this resided the very center of economic productivity. It was due to the capitalist incentive of "production for profit" that the great ambitiousness and ingenuity and application of the American worker put us so far ahead of economies built on the collectivist principle of "production for use."

Yet in proportion as we shift our economy from the production of peace-time goods to the production of war-time goods, we must find it necessary to abandon the orthodox capitalist motive. When you are asking people to produce more and more ammunition, and to get less and less consumption goods in return for their efforts, you can hardly be talking to them about the glories of private gain. They know enough about wars under capitalism to know that there is going to be a big haul made somewhere; but it can't be they who are to make it, otherwise there wouldn't be this talk of "sacrifice."

Now, the important thing about individual sacrifice as a motive is that it moves us into the area of the *collective*. The man who is being asked to sacrifice is being asked to forget the typically capitalist way of reckoning gain (by *quantitative* tests of profit and loss) and to adopt instead a *qualitative* point of view, involving future hopes for his country as a *whole*, hopes that may even involve the loss of his own health or life *individually*.

The only genuine solution I could see for this prob-

Reprinted with the permission of Marguerite T. Harris
KRAUS REPRINT CO.

A U.S. Division of Kraus-Thomson Organization Limited
New York

lem would be a zealous return to such slogans as we heard at the time when the New Deal was in its first bold stride. Thinking at that time had a collectivistic ring. And some collectivistic emphasis is the only ground, either rational or emotional, for the motive of individual sacrifice (unless, of course, you can persuade people that they'll get usurious returns in heaven for consumption postponed here—but five centuries of capitalism have effectively destroyed this appeal as a proper Stimulus to elicit the desired Response today). Thus, the Nazi rulers prod the people to great personal sacrifice by the use of collectivistic slogans.

The Nazis, of course, use such slogans with total cynicism. But the ironical situation in America is that, although I am sure there are many who would have no objection to the cynical use of collectivist slogans *per se*, they are afraid of such slogans, even when cynically employed. They are afraid that the slogans might work too well, like Finland at the moment. They had their scare during the first stride of the New Deal—and they don't want to run the risk of releasing such possibilities again, possibilities that, in the explosive times sure to follow the present conflict, might not be so easily harnessed.

And there you have the problem of morale (I mean, morale as a problem in engineering).

Looking back over the early New Deal days now. I should say that the one genuine "watershed moment" came with Roosevelt's policies for the support of the tottering banking structure. At that moment, I believe, nearly everybody was in a mood to agree to the nationalizing of the banks. For the whole structure was hopelessly bankrupt—and capitalists are never averse to the nationalizing of their *debts*. That is one thing at least they are perfectly content to have considered from a collectivist point of view.

Now, banking is the "purity" of capitalism. It is its essence, the generating principle in which all the ramifications of motive have their source. Change the spirit at this point, and you change the spirit through all the motivational structure that is deduced from it. Thus, Roosevelt's decision here was at the watershed moment—and once it was made, and so made that the old slope, rather than a new slope, was chosen, from then on everything could be but a matter of rolling down the old slope again.

Until the next time.

As to labor. I line that matter up thus:

I think that Roosevelt is genuinely anxious to preserve labor as an independent force capable of serving as a powerful pressure group in behalf of its own peculiar interests. Anybody who thinks that Roosevelt wants to neutralize the force of labor simply

doesn't understand Roosevelt. Similarly, no one understands Roosevelt who thinks that Roosevelt is not genuinely determined to preserve democracy. He is. And for a very good reason.

Roosevelt is completely at home in democracy. He has proved himself a perfect master of the game of politics as played under those rules. Why, then, should he want other rules (rules that contain a totally different destiny, totally different possibilities, all sorts of situations which the experiences that formed him would not prepare him even dimly to anticipate)?

In brief, his very ability to work his will by manipulating the traditional forces of democracy is a sufficient reason why he should want to preserve democracy. And a democratic leader has as strong a motive for the coaching of factionalism as the dictator has for suppressing factionalism. So long as there are fairly equally balanced weights at both ends of the seesaw, the democratic leader has the power, as "candlestick," to move the seesaw this way or that. But remove one of the weights, and the "candlestick" has lost its independent power, and can but fall to the side of the weight that remains. A ruler, in such a position, is no ruler at all, but a mere function of the one set of forces.

Thus, I think that Roosevelt is genuinely interested in seeing labor preserved as a force that he can either use or threaten to use for his purposes. But again, of course, the situation suggests that matter of Finland. He can't have labor perform its oppositional function too well.

Of course, besides the oppositional function, there is a different kind of function: the "all out" function. The part allocated to labor in the "all out" function is, I admit, something quite different. We might get at it thus:

In orthodox capitalism, in peace times, the worker has two roles, and they are flatly at odds with one another. In his role as *wage-earner*, he is distrusted, and even slandered. The great publications present his case at best very skimpily, and usually with unfairness. But this same man, as prospective *purchaser*, is flattered and pampered and wheedled and cajoled like a jaded Oriental monarch. He is given papers and magazines that sell at much below manufacturing cost, purely that he may be manoeuvred into reading the advertisements. He has but to turn the dial of his radio, and a hundred free sideshows are hegging of him that he do them the great kindness of merely listening to them. It would be hard to believe that the same man could contain within himself such strikingly different roles: the hated role of *wage-earner*, and the envied role of prospective *purchaser*.

Under a war economy, however, the worker's status

changes. In proportion as production shifts to a war basis, there is less and less need to appeal to the worker as a consumer. There is no problem of sales, since the war itself is the big consumer, ready to take as much goods as are there to take. And the ideal worker under those conditions is a man who produces a maximum and consumes a minimum. In this sense, we must recognize bitterly, "all out" means the solving of the earner-purchaser duality.

As far back as the Spanish War, when many who are now in the present administrations in both Britain and the United States violated international law in order to help the Fascist faction defeat the democratic faction, I used to complain that our capitalists are not realistic enough.

In the Spanish issue, it seemed to me that they were choosing sides not in accordance with the real material interests of property, but in accordance with the *sentiments* of property. For it seemed so obvious that a Fascist Spain would, by reason of its prestige in South America, give them all sorts of trouble there—and yet here they were deliberately building up such trouble for themselves.

Indeed, Franco and his apologists were publicly promising themselves nothing less than a new Spanish Empire—which is to say, a new competitor in an already over-crowded field.

It seemed to me that a genuinely realistic group of capitalists would favor, in every nation but their own, not a fascist economy, with its "dynamic," imperialistic logic, but an economy that would provide maximum encouragement for the development of a relatively *static* condition, as regards international expansion.

The industrialists behind Hitler are doubtless operating along these more realistic lines. The last thing in the world they are going to encourage is rival imperialisms. Could they get to perfection what they would order, I think it would be practically this: Germany as a dynamic industrial core, with as much of the world as possible subordinated to the role of a static agrarian province.

But our own capitalists ought to have enough experience with capitalism by now to know that it is a turbulent economy if there ever was one (even in the "peaceful" nineteenth century, peace was mainly due to the fact that the "backward" peoples, including our Indian "wards", couldn't put up much of a fight against modern arms and organization). Hence they might at least, thinking realistically rather than by the mere sentiments of property, try to see to it that they kept such turbulence for themselves, using their power and influence to visit more peaceful modes of livelihood upon the rest of the world.

In a generally static world, there would be room



Kenneth Burke

for one big mobile function, to intermediate among the static parts. Our boys might reserve that for themselves.

Maybe, alas! all I'm saying is that I think it's going to be done and I'd rather see our boys do it than the Hitler outfit.

There is also, in the back of my mind, an ironic hope. I'm thinking that, when things got settled again, it wouldn't take a great while for intelligent people to begin to discover how much better it was to live in the "static" economy than in the "dynamic" one. So after that, all the thoughtful would filter into the static areas, and they could send law-breakers back into the dynamic area instead of sending them to prison.

Looking this over, I fear it may sound pretty mean. It wasn't supposed to sound mean at all. I began with the intention of simply trying to state how I thought things really are.

Certainly, what is needed are some hopeful developments. A very hopeful development would, I think, be an eventual termination whereby Russia has a strong voice at the peace table, when, as, and if hence, all should plug for maximum aid to Russia, and to Britain insofar as the British people are allowed to help Russia. If the defeat of Germany merely meant that we would put the same old scientifically disunited Europe back again, I think you'll have to admit that Hitler's project of unification is, by comparison, true "progress." (I rhetorically exaggerate.) Yet if Russia does not have a strong voice at the peace table, is there any hope of anything but a Versailles peace? And the delicacy with which the Finnish matter has been handled is to me *prima facie* evidence that there is not much enthusiasm, in British and U.S. administrative circles, for a strong-voiced Russia at the peace conference.

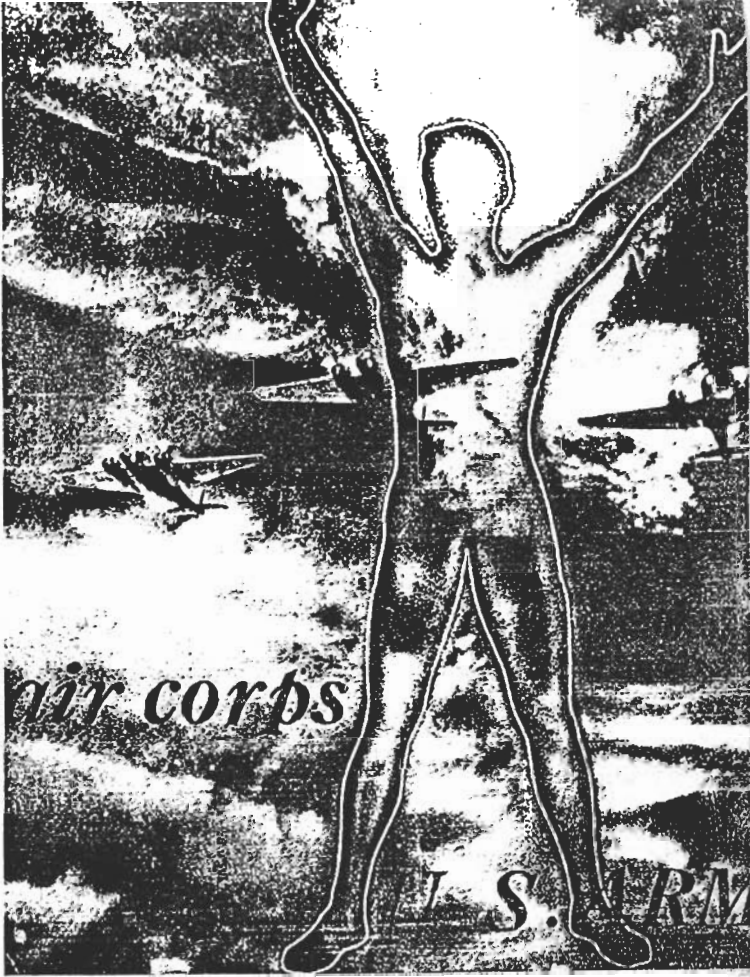
radios, we feel as close to our men on those battlefields as our forefathers felt to the men who fought at Gettysburg or who stood there listening to the words of Lincoln. We are close to our men because of the new interdependence of their military effort with our production effort at home. We are closer to them because the danger of swooping planes or crashing bombs may come to us on any day or any night, as it comes to them. The world battle is as near to us all as a civil war.

Nor is the world situation more complex or darker today than the dead-lock between North and South to Lincoln and his followers. The confusion of issues and paradoxes of human behavior which have brought us to this crisis also existed in Lincoln's times.

Whatever our weaknesses have been, they will be tried now, in the fire. We need have no fear of what will happen after the war is won. Even our most conservative citizens are talking about the new world which must be built after the destruction is over. Much that is bad in our habits and ways of thinking will also be swept away. But no matter what difficulties may rise, what changes become necessary, we can trust that the democratic temper and health of the American People will be adequate to meet them.

Direction U. S. (Jan 1942): 5

Poster by George Platt Lynes, New York, which received Merit Award in the Museum of Modern Art Competition for Posters for National Defense, last summer.



When "Now" Became "Then"

In *The Meaning of Meaning*, by Ogden and Richards, there is a supplement by Bronislaw Malinowski that has always struck me as unusually illuminating and important.

In this essay, Malinowski shows very clearly how words depend for their meaning on the "context of situation" in which they are uttered. It is not simply in the words themselves that the meaning resides, but in the non-verbal situation forming a scene or background for the words.

I have often had occasion to recall this essay. But never has its significance struck me so forcefully as with its application to my notes, "Where Are We Now?" in the last number of *DIRECTION*. For these notes were written in one situation; and read in another. They were written when our country was still at peace; they are read when our country is at war. And no step could be wider than the step from peace to war.

As a result of this momentous change my words were, to put it mildly, repellently false in tone; and they literally make me wince, in their complete failure

to convey my feelings and attitudes, as these feelings and attitudes have been shaped by the new turn of events.

We are now in what is surely to be the mightiest war the human race will ever experience. God only knows how much of the world's productive and distributive equipment and organization is to be rendered useless before it is ended. And in this solemn situation, our first duty to our nation and to ourselves is to approach every problem, to conceive of every issue, in terms that will make for the maximum of national unity, and so for the maximum of effectiveness against our Axis enemies.

Criticism, there still should be. For the virtues of democracy reside in its ability to profit by latitude of opinion. Admonition, there should certainly be. For it is by admonition that we help one another to guard against the possibility of untoward developments. But absolutely every utterance should be put forward and considered only in ways that contribute, most exactly, towards unity of action—unity of action among ourselves, and unity of action with our international allies. Not plaint now, but the firm sense of unity.

Kenneth Burke