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144 W. 10th St.
New York, N.Y.

Feb. 17, 1955

Prof. Leo Szilard
University of Chicago
Chicago, Illinois

Dear Professor Szilard:

In the days that have passed since I read your letter I have grappled with the familiar enigma of what I might do beyond silently and in isolation agreeing.

I have no answer yet but this--to offer such capacities as I have, making the offer through you to whatever person or group may provide the organizing structure that might use them toward the ends you have sketched.

The capacities include some ability to cut to the principles that can harmonize one set of symbols with another, some knowledge of the genealogy of the present crisis, some detailed knowledge of the way our contemporaries behave when confronted with the responsibility of a principle, some discrimination between real attempts to come at the nature of the crisis and the kind of attempts which are not really intended to succeed, some skills as a publicist, and some conditioning in how to work outside prevalent institutions.

I don't know how to organize these capacities for a breakthrough or I would have done so before this. But I am more than eager to offer what I have to a coalescing movement that could in some way use them.

Sincerely yours,

R.V. Cassill
R.V. Cassill

The University of Chicago
Chicago 37, Illinois

February 25, 1955

Mr. R. V. Cassill
144 West 10th Street
New York, New York

Dear Mr. Cassill:

I wish to thank you for your very kind letter of February 17. I do not yet know whether any concrete course of action will be adopted as a result of the publication of my letter in the New York Times, even though the initial response seems to be quite favorable. However, if you would care to write a little bit more about yourself, I would keep your letter on file and come back to it if any concrete steps are taken where your help might be of value.

Sincerely yours,

Leo Szilard

144 W. 10th St.
New York, N.Y.

Dr. Leo Szilard
University of Chicago

Feb. 28, 1955

Dear Dr. Szilard:

I very much appreciate your prompt response to my other letter. In the hope that some sufficient course of action may be opened and that in one way or another I can be of use I'm jotting down some vital statistics and a summary of basic opinions. I hope you'll keep this matter on file in case you wish to call on me some time.

Some of this may be irrelevant, but at this point I assume that we can use only the loosest of categories in selecting relevancies.

Age: 35

Citizenship and Place of Birth: Cedar Falls, Ia. U.S. citizen.

Military Service: 46 months in the U.S. Army. Highest rank 1st Lt. Honorable discharge.

Education: BA and MA, State University of Iowa.

Teaching Experience: 2 years at Monticello College, Godfrey, Ill.
3 years at the State University of Iowa.
(I taught in the Writer's Workshop of the English Dept. at SUI. I was an Asst. Prof. at the time of my resignation in 1952.)

Prizes, Distinctions, etc.:

Phi Beta Kappa, SUI
Graduated with high distinction.
Pre-doctoral fellowship SUI 1948-49
Fullbright scholarship for research at the U. of Paris, 1952-53.
Iowa-Rockefeller Grant 1954-55.
2d Prize Atlantic Monthly "First" Story Contest, Dec. 1947.

Publications: Novel The Eagle on the Coin--Random House, 1950

Approximately 20 short stories in literary quarterlies and the Atlantic Monthly. A number of these have been anthologized in The Best Short Stories (ed. Foley), Prize Stories (The O. Henry awards) and in texts on the short story.

Two paperback "original" novels, Dormitory Women and Left Bank of Desire, the latter in collaboration with Eric Protter.

Publications (continued)

A series of articles for a paper of opinion (T & T) published by Louis Adamic in 1947-48. I am enclosing one of these which I thought might be of interest to you.

As for basic opinions, most of these center around the assumption that alleviating the international crisis is completely dependent on first alleviating the national crisis. We can not talk to Russians or anyone else until we know how, effectively, we talk to ourselves and among ourselves. If I had money and assistance for a crash program I would throw it in a single blow into a program for ~~the~~ study and modification of the existing system of mass communications. The principle of contradictions in its most naked and basic form has to be re-established in the American community of intellectuals. The limits to an individual's right to an opinion must be re-stated. The reliance on fact at the expense of method and system has to be modified. I don't think these corrections can be made at the top level only. The top intellectual level is always too vulnerable--to replacement or brute pressure--to maintain principles. The principles must be struck in as far down the intellectual strata as there is a capacity to receive them, and as they are planted they should be used as the basis for a critique of the means by which we have communicated ~~with~~ ourselves since the death of Roosevelt.

I believe that the language of the directors of Russia is a mystery to us--but hardly more so than ~~the~~ language we have passed current among ourselves. If we could with some rational understanding hear ourselves at the business of muddling through to the present I think we would be on the way to learning a method of interpreting what the Russians and others mean.

I think that nothing depends on the Russians taking the initiative in an attempt to achieve a common language. What their principles of political, economic, and military behavior are would be susceptible of determination to the degree that we clarified our own, and would be describable to Americans responsible for decisions to the degree that our internal communication had been brought under the discipline of a rational description of our own.

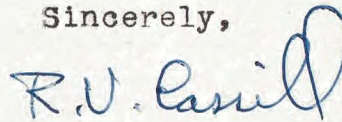
Key terms are defined by mass communication otherwise than they are defined by law, "usage" in the sense of the grammarians, or in private communication, and we have gone too long on the assumption that the mechanical processes of definition were negligible--were not part of the meaning of the terms. A correlation of these definitions will alone make the mass of us intelligible to the few of us (any few) and vice versa.

, by itself,

I don't believe that a "study" of mass communications would be of any value whatsoever nor that social scientists and journalists are capable of making such a study, though their techniques would have some supplementary value. I think a power program with a schedule of objectives that would modify the superficial content of the mass communication media would be necessary to free the theorists and scholars from the internalized censorship (by various fears and adaptive self-deceptions) that have neutralized most attempts to examine the media.

Theory can only advance here in the area cleared by modifying certain current practises. The laws of libel would be most seriously tested. There would have to be an immediate and continuing assault on the power of the press to punish the reader of opinions subversive of the present taboos standing in the way of self-consciousness. At the same time the assault would have to be most discreetly defined and limited, for two reasons. (1) Mismanaged, it could boomerang and cause a deeper freeze of the present situation. (2) If it overshot its mark, it might create a monstrous situation worse than what it was aimed to remedy. I think that one of the functions of reason must be to establish its own limits as a director of either personal or social living.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "R.V. Cassill". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large loop at the end of the name.

R.V. Cassill

THE COMPLEX AMERICAN CRISIS AND THE PROGRESSIVE PARTY

By R. V. Cassill of Illinois—specially written for T&T:

As Americans we live in times which increasingly offer less area for choice, less time for choices to be made on faith and modified by experience until they suit our tastes and reality's demands. Among the thoughtful and the instinctively intelligent everywhere there is a feeling of time running out. We are driven by a sense of opportunities gone and careless years wasted in indecision to plunge after some final settlement whose shape we cannot clearly see. Opinion from all levels bears out consciously or unconsciously the remark of Thomas Mann that the destiny of our times will be written in political terms—and suggests that those terms will be chosen soon, must be chosen soon. There is a desperate—though often hidden—fear of choosing wrong. And the fear and haste tend to shallow out our notion of what politics should mean and to produce mere partisanship, increasingly empty.

Since the value of the new Progressive Party depends on the substance and content of its program, it faces the double battle of resistance to the Right-wing parties and of probing a complex social and psychological dilemma for which constructive politics can offer aid. We of the new party are not engaged only with a machine in the hands of Machiavellians, but with the souring mainstream of American life. The task of any politics is not to *give* but to *permit*: and to permit the natural goodness and skill of this nation to move creatively in freedom, we must see and name the whole crisis, spell backward the enchantment in which we dream evil, self-destructive dreams.

How big that job is we cannot even afford to ask. I write this at a time when it is still uncertain what force of numbers or talent will be mustered by the Progressive Party. *If it should be too weak to meet its task, the task is not changed. If a lion attacks you, your job is to get the beast whether you are armed with a heavy rifle or a slingshot. If you have the slingshot instead of the rifle you need, it doesn't help to pretend the lion is only a loco rabbit.*

The crisis has produced full-dress Fascism in many countries, and may produce it in America. As we near the halfway mark in our century, we would defy history to say that the past 50 years have produced anything more

likely to make them memorable than this siren deathhead. And the formulas and gestures of Fascism—racism, militarism, herd-morality, sadism, anti-intellectualism—erupt like boils from our cities, communities, families and government to reveal that the underlying tensions which made Hitler are endemic in present American society.

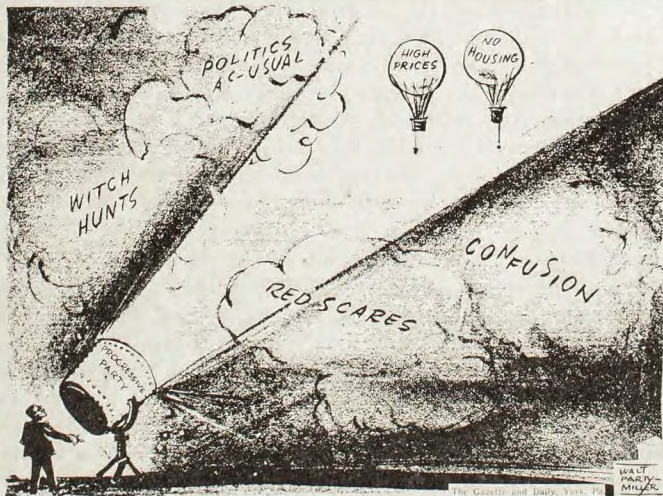
We have seen that Fascist manifestations express national or personal attempts to return to the imagined past, there to recapture the imagined security of that lost time. (Note the Nazi reinstatement of Teutonic rites; note Americans of '48 flocking to see the magic paper and ink carried by the Freedom Train.) Again and again the appearance of Fascism has been recognized as the yielding to a wish for death of the mind or body. But we have not yet explained why this morbidity should come so close to dominating our times, nor what paradox explains the difference from the last century.

For all its suffering and darkness, the 19th appears to us as an ascending century. In this time which lay, figuratively and roughly speaking, between the American and French Revolutions and the first successful airplane flight, our world lived by its struggle for more light and more life. Privilege and superstition were being hacked and battered or worn away until their imminent disappearance seemed assured.

At the end of that century of science and hope man learned to fly, and perhaps in flying we may see the symbol of the beginning of change, of the beginning of the fear of being free. Then it seems as if man freed of external compulsions had suddenly been jerked up short to be sent spinning by inner needs not yet suspected—as if a pilot leaving the runway should find his own fears dragging him suicidally back to crash, though the machine's wings were lifting him steadily. Only a short time separates the first "conquest of the air" and the appearance of national Fascism. Probably there is a close psychological connection between these two phenomena which needs to be examined and explained.

Yet both these seem to be only antithetic symbols of change in the heart of people, some gestation that might mean life or death. We have lived for a long time "between two worlds, one dead the other powerless to be born," retarded too long in forming the knowledge or decision that could give the new world birth. While we paused too long, Fascism appeared as the outward and armed symbol of our fears that cried, "Go back, go back," diverting us—like a lunatic in an operating room—from proper studies and the work that had to be done.

Maybe the crime of Fascism which is worse than its Buchenwalds is the diversion it imposed on us all at a time when the human crisis demanded the greatest application. Honest men must be guided by one principle first of all—that "the vindication of the obvious is more important than the elucidation of the obscure." Crude Hitlerian lies have to be answered as often as they are repeated, though answering means that subtle men must leave their work to go state publicly the truths that decent school children could supply as well. Today in America the honest man has no choice but to stand up and say *No!* to the hired delinquents of the big-money press and the big militarists. The obvious *must* be vindicated. Two and two *do* make four. Justice depends on a single standard. Love is better than hate. Peace is better than war. All school children know



—Walt Partymiller, The York (Pa.) Gazette & Daily, by permission.

The platforms for the Presidency of These States are simply the organic compacts of The States, the Declaration of Independence, the Federal Constitution, the action of the earlier Congresses, the spirit of the fathers and warriors, the official lives of Washington, Jefferson, Madison, and the now well-understood and morally established rights of man, wherever the sun shines, the rain falls, and the grass grows.

Much babble will always be heard in the land about the Federal Constitution, this, that, and other concerning it. The Federal Constitution is a perfect and entire thing, an edifice put together, not for the accommodation of a few persons, but for the whole human race; not for a day or a year, but for many years, perhaps a thousand, perhaps many thousand. Its architecture is not a single brick, a beam, an apartment, but only the whole. It is the grandest piece of moral building ever constructed; I believe its architects were some mighty prophets and gods. Few appreciate it, Americans just as few as any. Like all perfect works of persons, time only is great enough to give it area. Five or six centuries hence, it will be better understood from results, growths.

The Federal Constitution is the second of the American organic compacts. The premises, outworks, guard, defense, entrance of the Federal Constitution, is the primary compact of These States, sometimes called the Declaration of Independence; and the groundwork, feet, understratum of that again, is its deliberate engagement, in behalf of the States, thenceforward to consider all men to be born free and equal into the world, each one possessed of inalienable rights to his life and liberty, (namely, that no laws passed by any government could be considered to alienate or take away those born rights, the penalties upon criminals being, of course, for the very purpose of preserving those rights). This is the covenant of the Republic from the beginning, now and forever. It is not a mere opinion; it is the most venerable pledge, with all forms observed, signed by the commissioners, ratified by the States, and sworn to by Washington at the head of his army, with his hand upon the Bible. It is supreme over all American law, and greater than Presidents, Congresses, elections, and what not, for they hurry out of the way, *but it remains*. . . .

The true government is much simpler than is supposed and abstains from much more. Nine tenths of the laws passed every winter at the Federal Capitol, and all the State Capitols, are not only unneeded laws, but positive nuisances, jobs got up for the service of special classes.

The whole American Government is itself simply a compact with each individual of the thirty millions of persons now inhabitants of These States, and prospectively with each individual of the hundred millions and five hundred millions that are in time to become inhabitants, to protect

A NATION OF NATIONS

. . . In the history of the earth hitherto the largest and most stirring appear tame and orderly [alongside the Americans'] largeness and stir. Here at last is something in the doings of man that corresponds with the broadcast doings of day and night. Here is not merely a nation but a teeming nation of nations. Here is action untied from strings necessarily blind to particulars and details magnificently moving in vast masses. . . . — *Walt Whitman*.

From the preface to the 1855 Edition of *Leaves of Grass*; written approximately in the same period as the political paper here reproduced.



—Walt Partymiller, *The York (Pa.) Gazette & Daily*, by permission.

each one's life, liberty, industry, acquisitions, without excepting one single individual out of the whole number, and without making ignominious distinctions.

Whenever the day comes for him to appear, the man who shall be the Redeemer President of These States, is to be the one that fullest realizes the rights of individuals, signified by the impregnable rights of The States, the substratum of the Union. The Redeemer President of These States is not to be exclusive, but inclusive. In both physical and political America there is plenty of room for the whole human race; if not, more room can be provided.

The times are full of great portents in These States and in the whole world. . . . The horizon rises, it divides I perceive, for a more august drama than any of the past. . . . Frontiers and boundaries are less and less able to divide men. The modern inventions, the wholesale engines of war, the world-spreading instruments of peace, the steamship, the locomotive, the electric telegraph, the common newspaper, the cheap book, the ocean mail, are interlinking the inhabitants of the earth together as groups of one family — America standing, and for ages to stand, as the host and champion of the same . . .

Everything indicates unparalleled reforms. Races are marching and countermarching by swift millions and tens of millions. Never was justice so mighty amid injustice; never did the idea of equality erect itself so haughty and uncompromising amid inequality, as to-day. Never were such sharp questions asked as to-day. Never was there more eagerness to know. Never was the representative man more energetic, more like a god, than to-day. He urges on the myriads before him. . . . He re-states history, he enlarges morality, he speculates anew upon the soul . . .

What whispers are these running through the eastern Continents, and crossing the Atlantic and Pacific? What historic denouements are these we are approaching? On all sides tyrants tremble, crowns are unsteady, the human race restive, on the watch for some better era. . . . No man knows what will happen next, but all know that some such things are to happen as mark the greatest moral convulsions of the earth. Who shall play the band for America in these tremendous games?

these things, but no sage has the right to stop repeating them while maniacs in control of the Government and in possession of the means of communication deny them.

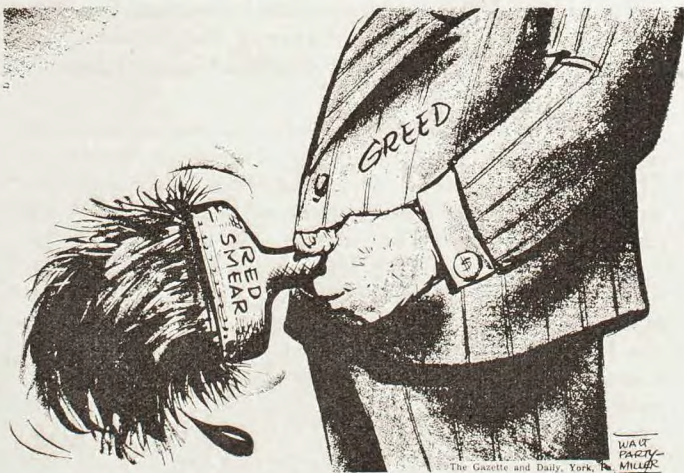
But the time that's wasted, the life that's wasted in vindicating the obvious! Can we afford it? Are we so rich that we can go on and on this way, letting the complications of new times pile up unstudied? *Every day new mail comes in. Can we let it go unanswered while we defend endlessly our rights to receive it? The "elucidation of the obscure"—bold, intricate speculation that goes to the extremities of the modern crisis is also necessary if we are to live.*

How shall we resist on the one hand and still maintain the poise and energy for creative thinking and action? This is the challenge to Americans and the responsibility which the Progressive Party must be the first to assume. We must elect to relieve the crisis which produces Fascism as well as the crisis which Fascism has produced.

About the integrity of the convention of the Progressive Party in Philadelphia we need not trouble ourselves with questioning. In spite of pressure, intimidation, and lack of financial means, we had come there—3000 men and women, many young, some middle-aged, some old—to stand as the inheritors of the traditions of Jefferson and Lincoln, of Paine and Altgeld, of Whitman, vindicating by our presence certain truths which have been called self-evident—the obvious truths of American principle which other parties juggle, slice, and distort.

But were we (and those we had come to represent) a beleaguered relic or a seed in the ground? The extent to which we are germinal is going to depend on our analysis of the crisis which brought us there and kept other Americans away. We must question its psychological, economic, and mechanical bases and their interrelations; and since we lack the mechanical means of power, we must learn to play the situation like a fiddle—through art liberate the power of people once more conscious of their direction.

A means of communication must be developed. Not only are the existing channels of press, radio, and movies arbitrary and antagonistic—worse, they build and elaborate stereotypes of so-called thinking which at least temporarily unfit their victims for thinking realistically about their personal or political problems. A progressive weekly paper capable of developing a circulation of at least 500,000 is needed desperately.



—Walt Partymiller, *The York (Pa.) Gazette & Daily*, by permission.

TOO MANY TOO LOYAL

Washington spy hearings are worrying many government officials—because U. S. employes are “too loyal.”

State of anxiety among these high officials is reported by the ardently anti-Communist Washington Times-Herald, in a story describing inquiries by the GOP-controlled House Appropriations Committee into Uncle Sam's loyalty investigation.

“Many officials are worried about the present situation in which many bureaus will have to report ‘zero’ loyalty dismissals,” the paper says.

“They are telling their heads that unless their agencies do better on the loyalty picture, the committee will take it out on their fiscal hides when they ask for new budgets.”

In other words—unless your agency can fire some people as disloyal, the GOP won't give you an appropriation. And if there aren't any disloyal people, presumably you'll have to call some disloyal—to make the statistics look right.—*Aug. 16 CIO News.*

In connection with this, *language must be re-examined*, not only semantically, but in relation to the mechanical means for reproducing it which are special in our time. What ratios exist between the meaning of the word *Communist* and the number of times it strikes the ear of a potentially rational man? *What are the antidotes to Goebbels-like volume propaganda?*

What language means can be evolved that educate as they persuade? (Reaction has never tried anything but persuasive language—whether in the mouthwash ad or political wooing—with consequent damage to the understanding of the whole people, while a certain kind of liberalism has been content to be right or to offer theories and opportunities which people have been conditioned to dislike. We must understand that persuasion and education move together.) What language means will be effective in adjusting collective thinking (which is a reality) to collective living (which is also an observable reality, though strangely the maxims of our present collective thought deny it)?

The real work of our new movement hasn't yet begun.

In re-establishing a responsible sort of communication we must make it possible to bring into the light and air certain liberal premises which have been hugged so zealously that they have nearly smothered. “Too long a sacrifice can make a stone of the heart,” says Yeats. And too long a defense can make liberalism tight, narrow, unrealistic in thought. There has come to be a cultishness, an exclusiveness about some liberal groups. One feels that there are certain things that can not be said to them.

And yet the questions heretical-to-liberals must be asked too. *We must ask whether it is not true—as Dostoevsky has it*—that man's basic needs are for miracles, mystery, and bread.* That miracle and mystery are really necessary has seemed dubious and a “reactionary” thought. An assumption to be rejected. Yet can we not see the artless search for miracle of the sports fan or of the man cheering under the dictator's balcony? How can the occasional popularity of a Truman be accounted for except by assuming

*The chapter entitled “The Grand Inquisitor” in *The Brothers Karamazov* should be read, re-read, pondered.—*L. A.*

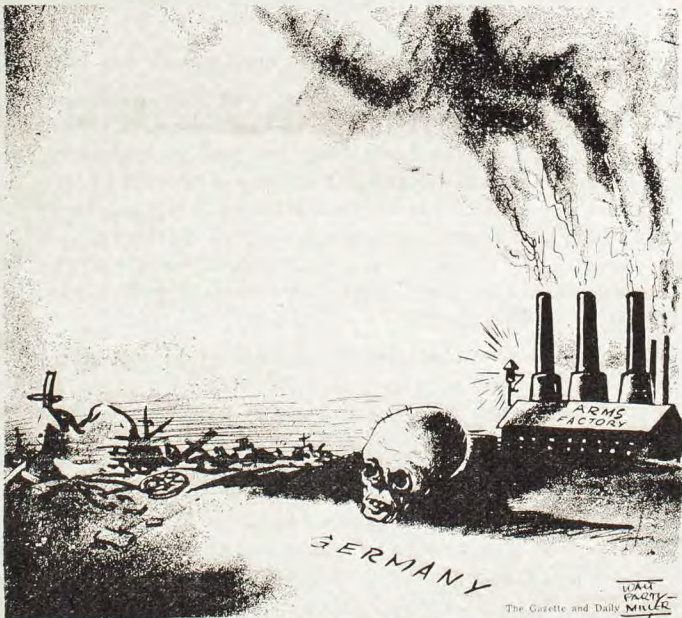
that his unpredictability is in a strange way satisfying? *If the need for miracle and mystery exist, why not recognize it and define those areas where mystery and perhaps miracle really exist?* In that way we might at least keep mysteries from growing back like weeds in the areas of public knowledge which should be logical.

We need to be quickly through with the notion that the voice of the people is the voice of God—when more generally it is an unimaginative echo of Luce, McCormick, or Hearst. And yet we will believe that the people's real voice, whether it comes from one man or many, is not silent at any time and must be listened to. In speaking of the goodness of "the people" it is easy to forget to distinguish between valid ethical descriptions and psychological or social observations. Effective politics which furthers principle is based on this distinction.

For instance, *examine the desire for war.* Recent polls indicate that the "ordinary American" may not be averse to another war: there is much in the air to give one the sense that a positive desire for war is shaping in the minds of millions, a lynch spirit that can not be wholly accounted for as the effects of war-mongering propaganda. In the face of this gathering evil, we must stand up and call it evil and yet see the lynch spirit as a perversion of the desire for good, a blind stampeding out of the oppressive present. In Norman Mailer's novel *The Naked and the Dead* there is a Sgt. Croft whose actions against all other men are incredibly brutal. Yet through the novelist's art the reader comes to see that the brutality springs from a pitiful (and admirable) desire for some good which his situation cannot give him. *It is that kind of perception of our whole people—the perception of latent good being borne off course—which will give us a base to work from and still save us from endorsing the deeds of the people that we know to be bad.*

It is the kind of perception that can only be won by establishing a certain continuity of communication among the politician, the free journalist, the honest lecturer, the private man, and the novelist.

We must study out the peculiarities of people bedevilled



—Walt Partymiller, *The York (Pa.) Gazette & Daily*, by permission.

by an unhealthy culture. Since Negroes get the hardest bumps from every national imperfection, their lives and attitudes may help shape our practical political views more than anything else. For, as I already suggested, politics must be a tool to relieve both political and non-political oppressions.

The way Negroes vote in the coming election will offer many lessons; some of them, I suspect, a rebuke to our present naivete. I suspect that many Negroes (pitiful from a distorted lifetime) feel and will show a kind of contempt for the Progressive Party because it has foregone the race-baiting rule of divide and conquer which is such a pillar of political power in this country. (Could we make a tragic axiom of this—that the oppressed tend to admire their oppressors? Fortunately it is not a general rule.)

The Progressive Party has assumed a battle on the last cliff at the end of the world. If we struggle here against the majority of Americans then it is likely we will all go over together. But if we do what we must, the majority will join us. With them to help we could create first time enough, then means enough to build a future.

WHO IS SHAPING AMERICA'S POLICIES?

America is sharply divided into two camps. There is a small but powerful group making for war and there is a larger but less influential sector striving for peace. The war-making forces are composed of three powerful groups: first, a certain type of trigger-happy brass in our armed forces; second, a ruthless clique of monopolists and international bankers who are pulling the wires of the American press; and, third, the headquarters of Catholic Action, operating under the innocent name of National Catholic Welfare Conference in Washington.

Among the 4 secretaries of our armed forces are two Catholics: Air Force Secretary Symington and Secretary of the Navy Sullivan. James Forrestal is the son of Catholic immigrants. Known as Catholics and ardent followers of the Vatican are such influential figures as Admiral Leahy, policy adviser in the White House; General Walter Bedell Smith, U. S. ambassador to Moscow; some top generals in Germany and Austria, who are working for the resurrection of a strong German Reich; and the very powerful deputy chief of staff, General Joseph Collins.

Critics in Europe have declared that America is using the Vatican to further American interests. The contrary is true. It is the Pope who uses the American administration as a sub-agency for Vatican world politics. The outstanding fact is that the Vatican, in close tie-up with international cartels, wields today a decisive influence over the Truman administration. The exchange of letters between the Pope and Mr. Truman last year committed this country virtually to the power politics and international conspiracies of the Vatican.

—From an editorial in *The Churchman* (June 1, '48)

(See the article on next page.)

4
The University of Chicago
Chicago 37, Illinois

Denver - March 8, 1955

Mr. R. V. Cassill
144 West 10th Street
New York, New York

Dear Mr. Cassill:

I want to thank you for your letter of
February 28, giving me your data. I shall keep your
letter on file in case a situation develops which
might be of interest to you.

Sincerely yours,

Leo Szilard