

PARTISANS RE-VIEWED

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ABSTRACT

The following thesis is a case study, a history, of a magazine, Partisan Review, over a period of twenty years (1934-1954) treating it as a series of texts together constituting a transforming discourse. A discourse constructed in and against a discourse of *Americanism*, itself constructed through an interplay with representations of *Europe*.

Partisan Review was initiated in 1934 within the institutional and intellectual framework of the American Communist Party as an organ of the John Reed Club. In 1937 formal links with the Communist Party were severed and the magazine reappeared as nominally independent but with clear Trotskyist sympathies. After a period of non-alignment without any explicit political programme, an editorial in 1952 declared a neo-Liberal and anti-communist support for "Our Country and Our Culture".

It is asserted that these shifts did not constitute radical *breaks*, but were constructed gradually. The thesis attempts to make the discourse and its process of transformation *intelligible* to the reader by mapping the emergence and inter-relations of key concepts (including Aestheticism, Alienation, National, Intellectual, Science.) It is argued that each concept or *element* was defined both by its opposition to an antithetical concept and its place in the discourse - by the specific combination or *articulation* of the elements.

Three editorial texts from 1937, 1941 and 1952, are taken as exemplars, momentary crystallisations of this transformatory practice, and each is subjected to an analysis which attempts to unpick and to gloss its changing component elements and the transforming articulations between elements.

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Underlining is used for titles of books and for emphasis. *Italics* are used to indicate theoretical concepts, for quotations used to preface sections, for extracts from the three exemplary texts, and for phrases from other languages.

PART ONE

METHODOLOGICAL OVERVIEW

INTRODUCTION

This project is a case study of a magazine, Partisan Review, from its inception in 1934 as an organ of the American Communist Party's organisation of artists and intellectuals, the John Reed Club, to a point in 1954 when the magazine had identified itself with a post-war anti-communist Americanism epitomised in the assertions of its 1952 symposium "Our Country and Our Culture."

The issues of the magazine are conceived of as a series of *texts* (see page 13 for a discussion of the terms text and context) which together constituted a *discourse*. A discourse which changed over time. Not an evolution - a serial transmission of an essentialist content - but a constantly mutating articulatory practice. A discourse constructed at particular historical conjunctures, in a *context* - socio-political (the economic climate, the state of left-wing politics, the rise of Fascism and Stalinism, the Second World War), intellectual (specifically reformulations of Marxism) and aesthetic. The Self-definitions of American artists and intellectuals and their conceptions of theory and practice during the period were, it is suggested, constructed in and against a discourse of *Americanism*, itself constructed through an interplay with representations of Europe.

PR was a discourse which worked on events' and debates of the period and played a part in constructing a set of discourses within which contemporary cultural products were "read". Thus PR was constructed in

and from a *context*. and at the same time helped to constitute the events which comprised the context and the interpretations which constituted the experience of the context.

The methodological focus is on the *intelligibility* of the discourse, an intelligibility provided by a mapping of the sequential appearance of key concepts (or "nodal points"²) and their cultural referents.

Three editorial texts are taken as exemplars, momentary crystallisations of transformatory practice. It is suggested that only for a brief period in 1937/38 had the discourse of PR the possibility of being coherent in its own terms. That is, that the specific articulation of elements of the discourse did not rest on contradiction³. In its early years it was not possible to valorise 'good'⁴ literature within the terms of the Party position on "partisan" literature; in 1952 it proved impossible to unify the elements within a new discourse of Americanism. The Trotskyist position - as expressed in the IFIRA manifesto of 1938 - allowed a coherent literary and political discourse, weaving together elements of an intellectualist and vanguardist collectively interventionist politics with commitment to a semi-autonomous individualist modernism.

This examination of PR over a twenty year period rests on the following assertions :

1. that it was a *discourse* comprised of a series of *texts* which overflowed their borders to take their identity from the inter-relation of *text* and *context*;
2. that this *identity* is not given but a product of interpretative procedures. The reader/researcher constructs the *intelligibility* of the text;
3. that, in the case of this researcher's interpretation, this *intelligibility* is derived from the mapping of the sequential character of the central concepts in the discourse, their articulation and their cultural referents;
4. that it was a discourse which, except for a brief period, was *delimited* by the political discourses or *apparatuses* within which it was located, and thus incoherent.

* * * * *

Discursive Moments : A Methodology

".... I have asked myself on what their [Medicine, Economics or Grammar] unity could be based. On a full, tightly packed, continuous, geographically well-defined field of objects? What appeared to me were rather series full of gaps, intertwined with one another, interplays of differences, distances, substitutions, transformations. On a definite, normative type of statement? I found formulations of levels that were much too different and functions that were much too heterogenous to be linked together and arranged in a single figure, and to simulate, from one period to another, beyond individual oeuvres, a sort of great uninterrupted text. On a well-defined alphabet of notions? One is confronted with concepts that differ in structure and in the rules governing their uses, which ignore or exclude one another, and which cannot enter the unity of a logical architecture. On the permanence of a thematic? What one finds are rather various strategic possibilities that permit the activation of incompatible themes, or again, the establishment of the same theme in different groups of statement. Hence the idea of describing these dispersions themselves; of discovering whether, between these elements, which are certainly not organized as a progressively deductive structure, nor as an enormous book that is being gradually and continuously written, nor as the oeuvre of a collective subject, one cannot discern a regularity: an order in their successive appearance, correlations in their simultaneity, assignable positions in a common space, a reciprocal functioning, linked and hierarchized transformations."

(Foucault, 1972, p37.)

Partisan Review has been written about extensively elsewhere - the subject, for instance, of Writers and Partisans by James B. Gilbert, 1967 and, more recently, The Rise of the New York Intellectuals : Partisan Review and Its Circle, Terry A. Cooney, 1986; several of its editors have written autobiographical works in which it figures prominently (William Phillips, A Partisan View : Five decades of the literary life; William Barrett, The Truants : Adventures Among the Intellectuals; Dwight Macdonald, Memoirs of a Revolutionist) and it makes appearances in most articles and books about, and by, the "New York Intellectuals", recently in Radical Visions and American Dreams, Richard Pells, 1973, Prodigal Sons : The New York Intellectuals and Their World, Alexander Bloom, 1986, and The New York Intellectuals : The Rise and Decline of the Anti-Stalinist Left from the 1930s to the 1980s, Alan M. Wald, 1987.

Why should a literary magazine attract such attention and in what way can it be deemed to be a discourse?

The conventional view is of the magazine as a privileged point of condensation; of a consciously constructed discourse controlled by its main editors William Phillips and Philip Rahv and broadly representative of the discourse of a group of intellectuals, those characterised as the "New York Intellectuals" - indeed, one definition of "the New York Intellectuals" is "one who wrote for, or read, Partisan Review" (Norman Birnbaum, quoted in Wald, 1987, p9.) The nature of the group may be questioned, and their ties may have been ambivalent (of opposition as often as solidarity), but it had, or has acquired, sufficient identity

to be characterised as a "family" (albeit warring). Those so designated usually deny the coherence of the group, yet, as Irving Howe points out (c.f. W.I. Thomas), "That people 'out there' believe in the reality of the New York group, makes it a reality of sorts." (Howe, 1970, p214.) Serge Guilbaut in his study of the Abstract Expressionists, comments that PR in the thirties and forties "served as a barometer of the political climate among radical intellectuals" (Guilbaut, 1983, p165) and Bloom suggests that it was around the 'new' PR of 1937 that "the community first gathered", and that it "grew to represent the New Yorkers" (Bloom, 1986, p375) and in the post-war era it still remained, according to Richard Hofstader, "a kind of house organ for the American intellectual community" (Hofstader Anti-Intellectualism in American Life, 1963, quoted Cooney 1986, p4)

Partisan Review has also attracted attention because a number of original contributions have subsequently come to be viewed as initiating or constituting the terms of debate in their field (on art, cinema, politics, sociology, as well as literature). For instance, Clement Greenberg's articles "Avant-garde and Kitsch" (1939) and "Towards a Newer Laocoon" (1940) which are generally held to have laid the foundations for the post-war self-referential discourse of New York Modernist painting; the Riviera/Breton manifesto and a solicited letter from Trotsky on "Art and Politics"; a major series of articles on Soviet cinema by Dwight Macdonald, as well as his political editorials and articles in 1939 and 1940 on the U.S. role in the war; contributions to Marxist theory and philosophy (which inflected American communism with "Western Marxism") including contributions to the debate on dialectical

materialism (notably from Sidney Hook and Edmund Wilson) and to class theory (notably, Macdonald's version of "bureaucratic collectivism" and James Burnham's view of The Managerial Revolution first published in PR in a condensed version in 1941).

It is not intended however that this analysis should represent PR as the expression of a set of essentialist 'subjects' - the (in Harold Rosenberg's famous epithet) "herd of independent minds" who have been represented and re-presented as the crystallisation of the trajectory of the American intellectual history of the thirties, forties and fifties.⁵ - but rather as a shifting discourse constituted by, and playing a part in constituting, "the group".

The discourse is not viewed as the (inevitable) product of a set of external historical circumstances/social relations, nor as the creation of immanent individual subjects. It is not a reflection of a consistent logic or principle - the teleological unfolding of an underlying imperative. Nor is it a reactive product of changing social conditions - it must be understood in relation to its "surfaces of emergence" but is not unproblematically determined by them.

While it is not denied that the editors did explicitly exercise control as authorial subjects ("A magazine is a form of criticism. By its selection of manuscripts, by its emphases in criticism, and by the tone it adopts, its position is defined." Phillips and Rahv, 1934, p9), this analysis will not be treating the magazine as the expression of pre-constituted subjects, but rather as a *discourse*⁶. The question then

becomes, What constitutes the identity of that discourse? Wherein lies its unity?

The unity of a discourse is not given, its character is determined by the relations between elements, by their *articulation*, or more precisely, their articulation as identified/interpreted by the researcher⁷. The researcher who conducts an interrogation of the text and context which makes the discourse of a given moment *intelligible* at another moment.

If we assert, as here, that there is no unified, pre-determined, given text, then we also accept that the text overflows any border-lines (Derrida) and, logically, that there is no text/context distinction. This however leads us into philosophical domains which I do not intend to attempt to enter, let alone resolve, here. For strategic reasons, the terminology of *text* and *context* will be retained as follows :

Text - used as a shorthand term meaning something 'read', a site or locus⁸ of meaning. An object of and product of the reader's (socially conditioned) procedures of interpretation. While anything/any thing can be a text, this discussion is restricted to objects perceived as in some way produced by human activity.

Context - the social world in which we experience the text and from which we interpret it. The historical conjuncture.

A text is not closed. A *discourse* is produced as text and context inter-relate, and the PR discourse was in a continuous process of modification, of articulation and re-articulation, responding to other discourses and to events. To "events"³ i.e. a set of processes including their discursive incorporations, rather than "advents", i.e. inevitable expressions of historical necessity. Events may occur outside a particular discourse and are then incorporated into it (possibly requiring a significant reorganisation of the discourse) but they are never extra or non-discursive. Everything in the social world is experienced within/through discursive categories'⁴ - with the consequence that these categories help to constitute experience and have 'material' effectivity (e.g. gender). Meaning is socially produced and "discourse" is not merely linguistic or a mental operation, but incorporates the performative (c.f. Wittgenstein).

However, while texts are not closed, fixed, readable in only one way, in our reading we close them. Conventionally, we operate as if there is a 'truth', a correct meaning, to be derived from the author's intent and from the reader's interpretation of the author's intent and/or (by using the authorial product) to be extracted from 'behind the back of' that intent. We operate as if there is a truth conveyed by (perhaps despite conscious intent, but through) the text.

We allocate *intelligibility* to texts when we decide (immediately or after long deliberation) that we understand a text, we have closed it - not permanently, but for that moment. And if we are researchers we

attempt to persuade others of the correctness of our version of the text; our closure.

The question is, what methods do we - on a day to day basis, or as researchers - use to impose that resolution, that closure? While some readers assume that the meaning is unproblematically in the text, others search for the traces, the surfacing of a consistent driving force (see pages 30-54 for an examination of other approaches to PR.)

In this analysis, it is proposed that the text is the object of an exercise in constructing intelligibility and that the key to that construction is to map the composition of the component elements, their history, their articulation with each other and their changing cultural referents.

* * * * *

First published in 1934 as an "organ" of the Communist Party, twenty years later, the magazine (still controlled by its two founding editors Philip Rahv and William Phillips) had moved, via an anti-Stalinist alignment with Trotskyism in the late thirties, to a Cold-War anti-communism' and an acceptance of "our country and our culture". This dramatic change has been represented elsewhere as either a series of breaks or ruptures, or alternatively, as the surfacing of a consistent intellectual drive or a consequence of the (contradictory) structural location of the American Intellectual. Neither the shifts in the discourse nor its consistency should be overstated. It was neither an

evolution of a consistent position, nor a succession of distinct positions.

While the PR discourse changed dramatically over time, the changes were transformations, not breaks or ruptures. Elements and the relations between elements changed; rearticulations of old elements with 'new' elements imported from other discourses constituted fresh moments. The elements of (the concepts employed in) the PR discourse were not unique to that discourse but they take their meaning in that discourse from their (changing) relation to each other at different times. The specificity of those relations formed the discourse at a given moment.

Laclau and Mouffe in their analysis of the concept *Hegemony* have identified their terms as follows :

"... we will call *articulation* any practice establishing a relation among elements such that their identity is modified as a result of the articulatory practice. The structured totality resulting from the articulatory practice, we will call *discourse*. The differential positions, insofar as they appear articulated within a discourse, we will call *moments*. By contrast, we will call *element* any difference that is not discursively articulated."
(Laclau and Mouffe, 1985, p105)

Here however, I am using *elements* to refer to aspects of, parts of, the discourse - that which can be/is articulated - and *moments* to refer to specific articulations - to 'versions' of a changing discourse. It does not seem useful to distinguish between unarticulated elements (or "floating signifiers") and articulated since this seems to imply extra-discursive elements (as opposed to elements outside a particular discourse). Nor, here, is a *moment* the final form of a discursive development, it is the discourse as articulated at a moment in time.

Thus, rather than describing elements in an articulated discursive totality as "reduced to a *moment* of that totality" (op cit., p106) or "transformed" into moments (op cit., p107), moments are viewed as made up of particular configurations of elements which in a process of rearticulation into another moment will acquire a new identity - in other words *elements* is retained for articulated as well as unarticulated components of a discourse.

Laclau and Mouffe stress that a discourse can never be closed but only partially fixed, striving for closure, for crystallisation. To distinguish terminologically between articulated and non-articulated elements obscures this. Moments here are therefore conceived as temporary crystallisations - literally momentary - with elements or concepts partially fixing meaning and operating as "nodal points".

Thus in the use of *moment* our attention is focused on temporality; on the sequencing of elements and on the play between past, present and future through which we extract meaning from the text, from which we construct its *intelligibility*.

Noujain (1987) proposes (in an application of the terminology and concepts of "elementary set theory" to Foucauldian genealogy) that history comprises a linear ordering of "discrete (or discontinuous)" elements in which each individual element comprises a "meaningful concatenation of components" made up of new and old components. Thus each component is both antecedent and precedent. As an element succeeds its predecessors it "inherits" from them some of its components¹². Thus

the meaning of, the *intelligibility* of, an element is derived from its genealogy and we can map the way in which a "practice" such as psychoanalysis is defined by the temporal intersection of its component elements.

Here, we are not examining the historical construction of a practice, but rather of the mutation of a discourse as exemplified in a series of texts (Partisan Review). Three exemplary texts are chosen representing three moments. Three points at which the relation or articulation of the elements can be examined. At which, it is argued, they can be made intelligible by identifying the ways in which components were excluded, included and realigned. It is in their articulation that meaning is sought, not in any originary givens. Nor are we concerned only with the linear relation between the components of a (delimited) text. The components must be read in the context of events and other discourses to which they refer, which they feed off. Here again temporality is crucial - simplistically, an event cannot be discursively incorporated before it happens.

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Partisan Archaeology

"... it is easy to grasp 'intuitively' the relationship between this scientific mutation [the clinical discourse in medicine] and a certain number of precise political events.... The problem is to give to this still vague relationship an analytical content."
(Foucault, 1972B, p241.)

"In a history in which the objective is a reconstitution of the past, the question of evidence is controlled by that [the principle] of exhaustiveness. Are there other or more sources of evidence which would change the narrative, modify the generalisations or undermine the conclusions? With a case-history, we may say that the question of evidence is handled in terms of its intelligibility. For evidence is related to the problem which is to be investigated. These two principles, of exhaustiveness and intelligibility, result in a different criterion of adequacy of evidence. In this sense a case-history never produces evidence in the form which satisfies historical canons of proof and demonstration. This does not discredit it for it operates with its own canon, that of intelligibility. A case-history will never adequately instantiate a general proposition, nor will it exhaustively reconstitute a segment of the past."
(Cousins and Hussain, 1984, p3.)

This analysis of PR, this "genealogy" (Foucault) focuses on the interplay of continuity and discontinuity. Three exemplary texts are taken and attempts made to excavate the sedimented layers on which each of these discursive moments rests. The role of the researcher is to make the discourse intelligible. To make evident the specificity of the articulations between elements, the ways in which the discourse was composed, de-composed and re-composed; the elements incorporated, modified and expelled. To construct a "polyhedron of intelligibility", the number of whose faces is not given in advance and can be taken to be infinite.

Elements or concepts which in their articulation compose the discourse operated as "nodal points" partially fixing meaning at a particular moment, but they had no given identity. As Foucault notes, concepts are continuously transformed and displaced, they do not develop in a linear progression - Canguilhem, he argues, has shown that :

"... the history of a concept is not wholly and entirely that of its progressive refinement, its continuously increasing rationality, its abstraction gradient, but that of its various fields of constitution and validity, that of its successive rules of use, that of the many theoretical contexts in which it developed and matured."

(Foucault, 1972A, p4.)

Nor did individual "concepts" (e.g. *Aestheticism, America, International, Intellectual, Science, Experience, Alienation, Socialist, Liberal*) represent the definition of a single aspect of social experience, rather they represent convenient codifications of a set of references. Further, each concept was usually characterised in terms of a binary opposition or constitutive difference¹³ - whose nature and

positive or negative valuation shifted over time - but the discourse as a whole was not binary, it was a continuously creative combination of couplets. The couplets were not autonomous or discrete, they were crucially interdependent and the identity of each concept/couplet was specified at a given moment both through the nature of the (explicit or implicit) opposition posed and its relation to other oppositions; they overlapped. In Laclau and Mouffe's words, they were "articulated not like pieces in a clockwork mechanism, but because the presence of some in the others hinders the suturing¹⁴ of the identity of any of them." (Laclau and Mouffe, 1985, p104)

Thus, for instance, Americanism was constructed in conjunction with conceptions of Europe; Nationalism with Internationalism, Art with Propaganda. Neither the concepts nor the oppositions were given or permanent. Individualist might be opposed negatively to Collectivist/Party in the early thirties, or positively in the fifties. Or the nature of the opposition might shift as the evaluation shifted, for instance, Masses versus Bourgeoisie (with masses positively valued in the early and mid thirties) and Intellectual versus the Masses (with the Mass of Mass Society derided in the late forties and early fifties). Alienation was positively counterposed to incorporation both in the partisan thirties and in the individualist, yet still oppositional forties, and negatively counterposed to integration in the nationalist early fifties when "our country and our culture" were embraced.

Thus, each concept derived its specificity from both the alternative counterposed to it, and the other sets of oppositions in circulation, that is, from its place in the *articulated* discourse.

Elements of a discourse, were changing, not in tandem, but tangentially. Colliding and bouncing off one another and, with each intersection of their paths, realigning the pattern that comprised the overall text presented in the magazine.

* * * * *

Throughout its publication, and most overtly in its early years, PR attempted to unify a creative and critical aesthetic practice and an interventionist political philosophy. Explicit or implicit within the communist and anti-communist discursive apparatuses with which they were associated in the thirties and fifties was an assumption that the social formation is composed of sub-systems and that it is possible to be "modern" or avant-garde in one area and "traditional" in another but that the different(iated) areas can be subject to a driving principle, to the primacy of one aspect of social experience. Thus, in the early thirties the American Communist Party while claiming to be modern¹⁵ in its politics promoted "proletarian literature" which valorised content and used conventional or easily read form and required that literary considerations be subordinated to political, that in order to advance the politics, art should not be modern. The anti-communists saw modernity as embodied in American democracy and (while they were split over the value of modernity in art, often valorising mass culture) again

perceived art as a way of advancing the project of American hegemony. The PR discourse was however premised on a unity, an integration of art and experience, aesthetics and politics and thus when in the thirties it was operating within the over-arching framework of the Communist and then, in the fifties the anti-communist, apparatuses the discourse was fractured and incoherent.

For its first two years (1934-6), PR was connected, if somewhat ambiguously, with the Communist Party; its partisan project a presentation of proletarian literature and Marxist criticism. In the Autumn of 1936, following some months of manoeuvring, publication was suspended and when the magazine reappeared in December 1937 it was as an "independent" journal with clear Trotskyist sympathies. Rahv and Phillips had been joined by four other editors, most significantly Dwight Macdonald who was the main link with Trotsky and the American branch of the Fourth International. By the late forties this association (both with Trotskyism and Macdonald) had been severed and the discourse was anti-communist Liberal aligned with the American Committee for Cultural Freedom (affiliate of the CIA sponsored Congress for Cultural Freedom).

The PR discourse was initially constructed in and against the Communist Party discourse or "apparatus"¹⁶. A discourse which aspired to the status of an explanatory and totalising meta-narrative, which was organised around a strategic principle, which subordinated other elements of the discourse to Party Interest and, as such, operated as an "authority of delimitation" Foucault, 1972A, p41/2) on the PR discourse.

The PR discourse had no consistent moving principle, no pivot around which the discourse was organised. It was both contingent - insofar as it creatively incorporated, modified, or expelled, elements from other discourses - and *necessary* or self-referential - insofar as it exposed discursive elements/concepts and their inter-relations to tests of their intellectual/scientific adequacy by reference to intellectual premises which were embedded in the discourse.

The alignment with a Communist Party apparatus which subordinated the aesthetic to the directly political therefore inhibited the attempt made in 1934-6 in the PR discourse to construct a unified aesthetic and political practice. Since this was impermissible within the terms of the Party discourse a "reorganisation" (op cit, p155) of the PR discourse was necessary in order to try to hold together the discursive elements present, to make it 'coherent'.

The contradiction (or antagonism, in the sense that Laclau and Mouffe use it to mean a limit entailed by one proposition on another, Laclau and Mouffe, 1985, p122-7) thus set up within the PR discourse was, it is proposed, the major factor in their rejection of the Party in 1936/7.

The use of the term "contradiction" here does not refer to two assertions about the same phenomenon which cannot both be correct, nor two opposing forces which, if connecting, would eliminate one or both or dialectically modify, but rather, a contradiction intrinsic to the discourse. For Foucault, an "extrinsic" contradiction is one that represents an opposition between distinct discursive formations while an

"intrinsic" contradiction is "deployed within the discursive formation itself". (Foucault, 1972A, p153). This analysis is not however using the concept in quite this way. The use of the term does not refer to two ways of forming statements about a phenomenon, but to the fact that the discourse is attempting to theorise a unified practice across two social fields and failing. The aesthetic practice implied within the discourse would not advance the political principles asserted, and the construction of *the people* and *the political activist* advanced could not permit the form of aesthetic practice that was desired. Each limited the operation of the other.

Their identification with Trotskyism was, it is suggested, a resolution of an intellectual contradiction. That is, within a Trotskyist framework they were able to present a discourse which allowed for both an avant-garde art practice and vanguardist politics, positions which were incompatible within the Communist Party paradigm.

This is not intended as a judgement on the validity of the enterprise, nor to assert that the editors were institutionally involved (although Macdonald at least was) or subscribed to Trotskyism *tout court*, but rather that, insofar as the discourse during this period was identified with a political position, the Trotskyist apparatus proffered a framework within which in 1937/8 the elements of the PR discourse could be unified - weaving together the elements of an internationalist, intellectualist vanguardist politics with an internationalist, intellectualist and avant-garde art. While the Communist Party apparatus had been disabling, the Trotskyist apparatus was (temporarily)

enabling. This was not however a decisive break since most of the elements of the discourse were already in place; it was a reorganisation not a creation.

However, by 1946 the PR discourse was anti-communist rather than anti-Stalinist. During the Second World War and immediate post-war years, elements of the discourse premised on the historical role of the proletariat and the vanguard party were expelled. No new political alignment was initially constructed however. The attempt to close the discourse of the Communist and Trotskyist periods - to unify the political, intellectual and aesthetic commitments - to identify with a "meta-narrative" of enlightenment is lacking, expressed at the time as a sense of intellectual "homelessness", a "wasteland feeling".

Science had been a key element in the PR discourse (for an analysis of their redefinition of Marxism conceived as a method of analysis and mobiliser of social change, not as a description of a predicted/predictable set of events, see page 186-189) and in the mid forties they described other intellectuals as suffering from a "failure of nerve", failure to challenge irrationalism. They themselves, holding on to a conception of the marginal and avant-garde *intellectual*, constructed a position resting increasingly on individualist *alienation*. If post-modernism is definable as "an incredulity toward meta-narratives" (Lyotard, 1984, pxxiv) the pages of PR in the late 1940s perhaps reflect this "post-modern condition", but by the early 1950s they had aligned themselves (uneasily) with a new narrative. A new commitment, a new *Liberalism* and "Our Country and Our Culture".

Marxism was increasingly rejected, for the editors it had failed as science; it was utopian and had proved itself corruptible (perhaps inherently so) and unimplemented (probably unimplementable). In its stead, a new anti-communist Liberalism was constructed - a liberalism stripped, in their view, of its utopianism; a hard-headed, pragmatic, empirical, rational liberalism which provided a "vital centre" (Schlesinger) between competing ideologies of left and right. Despite the terminology of "the centre" however, the opposition was a polarisation. In Laclau and Mouffe's terms, in a "logic of equivalence" (see page 60/61) left and right "totalitarianisms" were equated and counterposed to the new liberalism. As a historical subject the universal proletariat had been replaced by a new totalising force - the West, more specifically, America. The rhetoric was of freedom, but the world view was still an oppositional one : East/West, USSR/USA had replaced capitalism/socialism, bourgeoisie/proletariat and the meta-narrative was still emancipatory - the Enlightenment might have failed, but a new Enlightenment was in prospect.

* * * * *

The contradictions in the discourse of the early 30s, that is, the demands of the Party for a partisan "proletarian" art which were incompatible with a modernist aesthetic, necessitated a reorganisation of the discursive field which took the form of an alignment with Trotskyism which allowed a unification of the political and aesthetic principles¹⁷. The shift to an alienated individualism in the forties allowed for an adequate theorisation of an avant-garde aesthetic

practice but elided political vanguardism; and the assertion of a new liberalism and Americanism of the fifties carried with it logically a new construction of the Mass and valorisation of popular art which echoed the contradictory discourse of the early thirties.

The brief period of involvement with Trotskyism in the late 1930s provided a moment when commitment to both a radical art and a radical politics could be theorised. Andreas Huyssen suggests a distinction between *modernism* - which was based on "aestheticist notions of the self-sufficiency of high culture" (Huyssen, 1986, pvii) and the *avant-garde* (the "historical avant-garde" of Burger) - which did not insist so strongly on "the great divide" and which resulted from the clash of the modernist autonomy aesthetic with revolutionary politics. It may, I suggest¹⁸, be useful to conceive of this moment in the history of PR as avant-garde rather than modernist, a moment of integration, a moment when the discourse was coherent and the expressed positions on aesthetics and political activity were not contradictory. Wald argues that the New York Intellectuals did little more to develop a relationship between Marxism and modernism than to house both in the same journal for five or six years and continues "it is difficult to locate a sustained and consistent theoretical statement about the origins and political significance of modernism." (Wald, 1987, p222) This is indeed the case, there was no consistent statement - there was an attempt to work out a form of Marxism that could be unified with modernism. The rejection of Marxism was not unproblematic or abrupt; it was a lengthy process of formulation and re-formulation, conducted in the context of a tension between conceptions of Europe and America.

While it is certainly the case that the PR discourse gradually shifted from one contained (if uncomfortably) within the parameters of that of the American Communist Party, via Trotskyism, to a new Americanist Liberalism; that trajectory cannot adequately be represented as a progressive rejection of, first Stalinism, then Marxism. Rather, the move from Stalinism to Trotskyism, should be understood as a creative "Europeanisation" of American communism - that is, to inflect a populist, activist and "nativist" form of communism with a more sophisticated theoretical gloss. Europeanisation - in both political theory and critical and aesthetic practice - being synonymous in the PR discourse of the mid and late thirties with creative and intellectual adequacy. (See Chapters One and Two.) Rejection of Marxism accompanied the "Americanisation" of the forties. (See Chapter Three.)

Coherence or Contradiction?

Essentialist Theses on Partisan Review

"The history of ideas usually credits the discourse that it analyses with coherence. If it happens to notice an irregularity in the use of words, several incompatible propositions, a set of meanings that do not adjust to one another, concepts that cannot be systematized together, then it regards it as its duty to find at a deeper level, a principle of cohesion that organizes the discourse and restores to it its hidden unity."

(Foucault, 1972A, p149)

Recent accounts of the activities of the "New York Intellectuals" and of Partisan Review have, I suggest, represented the magazine as the product of a, perhaps ambiguous but nonetheless consistent, drive; its trajectory described as a "journey"¹⁹, guided by underlying principles and, by implication, with an inevitable destination. Indeed, a journey defined by its destination. The propositions advanced about the nature of the drive vary, but the presumption of destiny, latent if not manifest²⁰, is common.

The end, they propose, is in the beginning, pre-ordained : a view encapsulated by William Phillips' 1967 claim to consistency :

"... I would like to note one thing that struck me on rereading myself: the almost obsessive repetition of certain themes and attitudes. Of course, there have been shifts and developments, and hopefully a more mature grasp, but it is as though one were confronting oneself all at once to see it all there from the beginning - like an egg."

(Phillips, 1967, pix, emphasis added.)

Taking a sample of the retrospective accounts of the New York Intellectuals (Aaron's 1961 Writers on the Left; Pells' 1973 Radical Visions and American Dreams; Cooney's 1986 The Rise of the New York Intellectuals; and Bloom's 1986 Prodigal Sons), I suggest that these have in common a view of "the Intellectuals" as a given rather than a constructed social role. A role that is contradictory - the critical intellectual as an "outsider", as alienated, but ultimately desirous of identification with his (sic) society, with "America". Since this role is presented as given there is no need in these analyses to focus on its specifics, no need to examine how it is constructed at a particular *moment*. The role is conceived as a universal one and therefore its

manifestation or representation at a particular conjuncture can only be a variation on a theme. All these accounts portray the intellectuals as motivated by a drive, by a need to identify, by a set of common values, by a need to resolve their contradictory status. "Marxism" (conceived as having an unproblematic and consistent identity) and the Communist Party are represented as offering the promise of collective identity, fulfilment of the need or drive to belong and when that turns out to be a hollow promise, the American heritage fulfils an equivalent function.

These accounts imply that the content and referents of *America* and *Americanism* were fixed, while I will be arguing that they were shifting constructions and were an object of cultural struggle.

* * * * *

Daniel Aaron's Writers on the Left "a social chronicle of the Left Wing Writer from 1912 to the early 1940s" (Aaron, 1977, pxvii) was the first major exercise in reporting the cultural history of the period by a non-participant (he was marginally involved in the forties). Commissioned in 1955 as part of a set of studies of Communist influence on American life for the Ford Foundation and first published in 1961, this account was the first attempt to recover what had become (after the movement of the, then anti-communist, New York intellectuals to centre stage in the U.S. academic, aesthetic and political institutions) their repressed "secret history" (Harrington, 1968, Introduction, no page numbers). Aaron's approach focuses on the role of the writer as social critic, but

but as, at least in America, a role whose limits, in his view, are defined by inherent contradictions.

American writers were, and are, he argues, both affirmative and critical. Living in a society which honours "action rather than contemplation" (Aaron, 1977, p12), which distrusts intellectual (and physical) endeavour which serves no obvious purpose, and thus constantly obliged to justify their role; American writers, he argued, have resorted to didacticism and evangelism. However :

"paradoxically, the American writer's running quarrel with his society, his natural inclination to admonish and to castigate in the guise of entertainment, may have sprung as much or more from his identity with that society as from his alienation. He has never been easy during his rebellious moods, never able to divorce himself from the cowards, scoundrels and vulgarians he attacks, Indeed, the very intensity with which insurgent generations of rebels have assaulted the unkillable beliefs of the bourgeoisie suggests an attachment to their enemy the rebels themselves have hardly been aware of. Made bitter by rejection and despising a milieu so uncongenial for the creative artist, the aberrant or misfit writer still yearns to be reabsorbed into his society, to speak for it, to celebrate it. And the history of rebellious literary generations, which is in one sense the history of the writer in America, is a record of ambivalence, of divided loyalties, of uneasy revolt." (op cit, p2, emphasis added).

American cultural history from the Nineteenth Century to the present is, for Aaron, a history of periodic revolt followed by incorporation²¹.

Aaron's outline is striking in its assumption of the inevitability of cycles ("The history of American literary communism is the story of one more turn in the cycle of revolt." (op cit, p4)); and of a playing out of 'natural' impulses, of inherent contradictions. He makes no distinction between the various groups of "literary rebels" or their

opponents, using the term "philistines" indiscriminately for all those opponents and eliding any specificity :

"The 'Philistines' appear under a number of guises : as the 'Men of Understanding' in Emerson's day; as the 'Plutocrats' in the Gilded Age; as 'Puritans' in the half-dozen years before 1918; as the 'Booboisie' or 'Babitts' in the Menckonian twenties; the 'Bourgeoisie' in the Marxist thirties; as the 'Middlebrows' in the fifties; and perhaps the 'Squares' today."
(op cit, footnote, p 3)

For Aaron, "Marxism" is a another foreign ideology applied (without sufficient adaptation, to American conditions in the pursuit of (consistent) "American intellectual purposes." (ibid.) Further, Marxism is presented by Aaron and other American cultural historians as a totalising theory which offered 'the answers' (see pages 87-92 and Appendix One for an analysis of Marxism as "foreign".) It is often represented as a *political religion*, or in more secular terms, as a psychic refuge from *anomie*. As such, stripped of its philosophical/political and historical specifics, it is easily interchangeable with other common value codes - other 'religions'²² - notably *Americanism*²³.

Even in the twenties and thirties, religious terminology was used by some participants to describe their involvement with radical causes - "faith", "conversion", "crusade" - as it was in their Criticism, particularly criticism of the "doctrine" of the dialectic (started in 1926 by Max Eastman and picked up in PR in the late thirties, see pages 128 and 187) - and its use is marked in the retrospective analyses by both the ex-communists and their historians. Communism was The God that

Failed (ed. Crossman, 1949); The Naked God (Fast, 1957); the ex-communists were "apostates" and Prodigal Sons (Bloom, after Bell.²⁴)

Aaron, while sympathetic to the Left writers, and concerned to show that they were not dupes, or intellectually gullible, nonetheless, consciously or unconsciously, used this religious terminology extensively. To do so is to submerge the specificity of the critique being advanced against capitalist society and the conditions under which it was offered; the conditions which enhanced its appeal.

In another version, the ideas are dismissed by some as mere "mood". Mark Krupnick, reviewing Sociological Journeys²⁵ comments on Bell's earlier essay "The Mood of Three Generations" (in The End of Ideology) that "the most striking feature of 'The Mood of Three Generations' apart from its preoccupation with the politics of cultural power, is its emphasis on 'mood'." (Krupnick, 1981, p107). Why, he asks, doesn't Bell distinguish among the "ideas" of the three²⁶ generations? and provides his own answer : "The answer is that it is not positions or formulated ideas which separate them. The difference is 'mood.'" (ibid.)

"In the end", Krupnick suggests, "we may decide that the writing of the New York Intellectuals is primarily valuable as a record of their successive moods". To do so is, I suggest, to elide the specificity of the ideas that were being discussed, of the nature of the organisations and parties of the period, of the national and international events. With Wald (author of an another account, see pages 47-53), I would contend that the "apostastcy" of the ex-communists was not inevitable.

* * * * *

Richard Pells in an analysis of the Radical Visions and American Dreams (1973) of the intellectuals of the depression period argues that the apparently dramatic changes of direction in their journeys are unsurprising. Their destination immanent in their point of departure. Like this writer, Pells believes that the work of the intellectuals of the depression was based on contradiction, but, for him, a contradiction which was ongoing and a consequence of their role as intellectuals rather than the formation of a particular discourse(s) (see page 24/5 for my use of the term *contradiction*.) Like Aaron, Pells perceives the role of the writer as social critic, at least in America, as one whose limits are defined by these contradictions.

For Pells, while the intentions of these intellectuals were radical, their ideas were premised on an underlying conservatism. Pells contends that this was not unique to that era :

"... intellectuals in the 1930s were both radical and conservative, ideologically sophisticated and hostile to social theory, artistically experimental but also hungry for popular acceptance, at once critical and supportive of traditional American ideals. In the end, however, these contradictions were by no means unique to the depression experience; they are at the very center of the American intellectual's continuing ambivalence toward his native land."

(Pells, 1973, pxii)

While Pells concedes that American cultural history can be conveniently characterised by "decades"²⁷ (a common rhetorical device in histories of the period), he suggests that it is better conceived of as an ongoing and unresolved series of tensions and conflicts. The radical visions of

the American left were, he suggests, if not directly, indissolubly, tied to the American dream, and the attractions of the "Soviet experiment" lay in its potential as a replacement for "the dying American dream" (op cit, p62). As a metaphor for a new New World. And the attractions of Marxism were, he argues, for these very American intellectuals, "not its understanding of social crises but its recognition of the need for personal action and commitment" (op cit, p126, emphasis added.)²⁸. For the artists, Marxism offered an avenue for "their traditional sense of mission" (op cit, p152); proletarian literature providing not just a solution to the needs of the masses, but those of the intelligentsia for a sense of importance and of integration. Thus, in his view, the same consistent drive for identification led to alignment first with the Party, then the Popular Front and then to a rediscovery of their national heritage and alignment with the cultural and political status quo. (In the following analysis I will argue that, on the contrary, while those associated with PR may well have desired personal identification, they constructed an alternative version of Marxism when the 'orthodox' American version failed as a tool of social analysis and prediction - as, in their term, *Science*.)

PR, he suggests, represented a more sophisticated minority, more intellectualist, more concerned with aesthetics, more cosmopolitan and internationalist, but ultimately they too simply restated the arguments of the Progressives of the 'teens (notably Croly and Van Wyck Brooks). And, despite the fact that they were the quintessential Jewish outsiders, their ultimate embrace of the American dream was, in his view, unsurprising :

".... the gradual metamorphosis of Partisan Review from a position of militant Marxism to a virtual acceptance of established social arrangements was neither surprising nor altogether unintentional. Once the journal's editors and contributors began to question the value of revolutionary activities in the wake of the Stalinist experience, and once they began to re-emphasize the traditional liberal belief that ideas and individuals should be totally free, it seemed natural for them to transfer their loyalties to America as the main defense against the totalitarian menace both of Germany and the Soviet Union.

Even more important, however, the intellectuals at Partisan Review were never quite as alienated as they liked to appear."
(op cit, p345)

Thus, the specifics of the forms of Marxism advanced and the specifics of the PR discourse itself are neglected in the shadow of the consistency asserted in the nature of the intellectuals' ambivalent position in society and personal longings for influence, power and identity - their "transfer of loyalties" conceived as "natural".

If we look again at the paragraph above we see that Pells has said "once" the journal's editors and contributors began to question the value of revolutionary activities and to re-emphasise liberalism.... Certainly, once they had it did seem natural that they should transfer their loyalties to "America". The specifics of American intellectual history made a recuperation of liberalism a viable (but not inevitable) course. What was not "natural", predetermined, or even obvious, was that they would take the first step, nor having done so, did they have no alternative courses of action. Indeed, these accounts imply a turn from "Marxism" to "Americanism" (dichotomising the two) ignoring the fact that the Communist Party had promoted - and the PR discourse rejected - an identification with the American proletariat and American proletarian literature (see Chapter One and Appendix One) and that the

PR critics moved from Communism to anti-Stalinism and Trotskyism and not directly to anti-communism (see Wald's alternative account, pages 47-53 and Part Two.)

These retrospective narratives are premised on an assumption of their closure, thus, their 'end' is made to appear to be inevitable or "self-evident". In order to avoid this I will attempt to approach history in a spirit of "eventalisation" (Foucault) - showing that it was not a matter of course that certain social responses were made; uncovering the

"connections, encounters, supports, blockages, plays of force, strategies, and so on which at a given moment establish what subsequently counts as being self-evident, universal and necessary."

(Foucault, 1981, p6)

* * * * *

Terry Cooney focuses specifically on PR in his description of The Rise of the New York Intellectuals (1986) and takes the thesis of essentialist drives further. Rather than pointing to the conservative potential of the dominant themes of the early thirties, he posits a persistent and consistent set of values, which he designates cosmopolitanism, as a motive force. Like Pells, Cooney stresses the formative influence of the Progressives (notably Van Wyck Brooks and Randolph Bourne.) Both emphasise the attempts of the Progressives to synthesise "theory and practice, liberty and community, self and society" (Pells, 1973, p8); yet nonetheless they suggest that the intellectual values and the socio-political practice of the American intellectuals themselves were not synthesised and appear to assume that

they could not be. (See my assertion that the PR discourse was attempting to unify the two.)

Cosmopolitanism, Cooney argues, was secular, scientific, rational, urban, international, sophisticated, inclusive and rejected the religious, mythic, rural, narrowly national, popular, simplistic and restrictive elements of culture. The shifts in political allegiance of the Partisan Review circle were part, Cooney suggests, of a constant search for a milieu in which these values could be realised.

"Cosmopolitan values and the literary vision with which they were closely associated quickened the radical hopes of the early Partisan Review; and the same values led the controlling editors of the magazine toward their break with the Communist Party. Cosmopolitanism provided a set of attitudes, references, and ideas that helped bring together the emerging New York circle in 1937.... Later, amidst the tensions brought on by World War II, cosmopolitan values again supplied a framework for complaint and justification and a fundamental set of standards for condemnation or praise. The continuity of values within the Partisan Review circle made up the essential fabric, while the bright colors of political twist and distinctive turn furnished the dramatic design."

(Cooney, 1986, p8)

Rahv and Phillips, Cooney argues, brought with them on their early journey leftward, three "intellectual commitments" : to a literary critical tradition flowing in particular from the early work of Brooks; to "cosmopolitanism"; and to a conception of history as a "complicated, continuous, open-ended process demanding that intellectuals give as much serious attention to the merits of the past - particularly the literary past - as its demerits." (op cit, p52.) Their work in PR, he suggests, was dominated by a desire for synthesis in culture and in politics. A synthesis between high and low brow cultures; between European and American; between theory and practice/experience; between consciousness

and environment; between the past and the present. In the early thirties, he suggests, "Marxism" appeared to offer such a unifying philosophy, a context for implementation of cosmopolitan values and a way of respecting the past within a model of change.

Cooney, like Pells, focuses on the attractions of "action" and a desire to belong (particularly important to the "outsiders" he suggests the first and second generation Jewish immigrants felt themselves to be), both of which needs the Communist Party offered to fulfil. When they turned from Stalinism, Cooney argues, it was not because their values had changed, but because they had lost faith that they could be realised within the Communist Party. The subsequent moves are all represented as impelled by an attempt to realise these values.

Thus each political association formed by the editors is viewed as a response to a consistent drive. Having identified cosmopolitanism as their 'motor', Cooney traces it through from Rahv and Phillips' earliest articles. He does this, however, at the expense of other elements of the literary/political context; in particular, what Cooney identifies as a debt to Brooks' concept of a "usable past" is in my following analysis constructed as one to Trotsky's "cultural continuity". Neither Pells nor Cooney give sufficient consideration to the literary and political theory which was being debated in the pages of other magazines and Party papers at the time. This, I suggest, can be attributed to their conception of the PR intellectual discourse which posited it as a product of consistent drives rather than as a discursive formation that is not by necessity :

"unified either in the logical coherence of its elements, or in the a priori of a transcendental subject, or in a meaning-giving subject à la Husserl, or in the unity of an experience."
(Laclau and Mouffe, 1985, p105)

It was a discourse in which the rearrangement of its components and its inclusions and exclusions - its representations of events - was in process. A process of articulation and re-articulation that modified the identity of the components. As such, I argue, there can be no consistent drive.

Cooney ends his exploration in 1945 and only deals with the post-war period in a brief epilogue where he acknowledges that "the hopes and commitments that had their common foundation in a loyalty to cosmopolitan values were noticeably fading" (Cooney, 1986, p270), and their critical vitality correspondingly diminished. "Cosmopolitan values remained significant, but their significance was now moderated, confined, tamed into a defense of virtues newly discovered or comforts recently gained. Once an engine of rebellion, cosmopolitanism was now a settled tradition" (op cit, p271). Success had exacted its price, "transformation of character" (op cit, p272).

While the journey was guided by an enduring set of values, the destination seems to see their abandonment. Cosmopolitan values had been granted an explanatory power throughout the formative period of the New York Intellectuals, yet they simply fade, apparently leaving the group in some 'post-modern' hiatus. By identifying a commitment to "America" as a key value for the group from the start Cooney underestimates the depth of the change most of them evidence in the mid

and late forties. Homberger, in a recent survey of American Writers and Radical Politics 1900-39, says of their fellow-traveller (and temporary "Fellow Traveller") Edmund Wilson, "America was his Ariadne's thread which led him back to a more natural and congenial liberalism". But "America" was not a fixed concept. Nor was there one thread, one "winding passage" (Bell) through which prodigals journeyed. Their conceptions of *America*, *Americanism* and the role of politicised and politicising *intellectuals* were not consistent. While it may seem "self-evident" now, there was nothing "natural" in the Liberalism of the New York Intellectuals, they constructed a new liberalism and new Americanism in a context of post-war U.S. hegemony.

* * * * *

Alexander Bloom, Prodigal Sons : The New York Intellectuals and their World (1986), examines the lives of three "generations" of New York Intellectuals²⁹. the first, which "coalesced in the late 1930s around the 'new' Partisan Review", included Rahv, Phillips, Lionel and Diana Trilling, Meyer Schapiro, Clement Greenberg, Harold Rosenberg, Dwight Macdonald, Elliot Cohen and Sidney Hook. The second, who became part of the group during its period of transition at the end of and after the Second World War as it moved to a central place in American intellectual life, included Irving Howe, Irving Kristol, Daniel Bell, Delmore Schwartz, Leslie Fiedler, Seymour Martin Lipsit, Nathan Glaser, Alfred Kazin, Robert Warshow, Melvin Lasky, Isaac Rosenfeld and Saul Bellow. And a third, who became asociated later as the group lost its cohesion, included Norman Podhoretz, Midge Decter, Steven Marcus and, more

peripherally, Norman Mailer, Philip Roth and Susan Sontag (Bloom, 1986, p6).

Bloom does not posit an underlying consistency in the political values of the group, but focuses on a proposed continuity in their perception of themselves as intellectuals,

"The New York Intellectuals began as radicals, moved to liberalism, and sometimes ended up as conservatives. But they were always intellectuals."
(op cit, p6)

and distinguishes between the extent and speed of change in their manifest politics and more subtle changes in cultural positions; positing an implicit dichotomy between the two discursive fields, with their politics historically contingent and their cultural position fixed.

"Partisan Review started as a magazine dedicated to radical literature and then rededicated itself to radical culture, only outside the world of proletarian literature and Communist party politics. The New Yorkers held out for the preeminence of art, not devoid of social context but reflective of it. They resisted both the perceived limited scope of the New Critics and their notion of the programmatic nature of proletarian literature. They brought the modernist heroes of the 1920s into the world of radical politics, without sacrificing cultural standards or radicalism, they believed. Furthermore, they held strongly to ideas about the special and crucial role for critics and for intellectuals in general. In the end their politics, rather than their cultural ideas or intellectual position, underwent the most dramatic changes. And with those changes they moved to the center."
(op cit, p6/7)

For Bloom, their abandonment of their political commitments and alienation (from the dominant social formation) of the thirties in favour of social integration was not a consequence of changing self perception, but rather that "they applied the personal requirements they

had marked out in the 1930s to the new social realities of the 1950s, and found a more congenial place for their ideas to take root." (On the "Our Country and Our Culture" symposium, op cit, p199). Their conception of the intellectuals' place had changed, not their conception of their role :

"The apparent contradiction between the pre- and post-war attitudes actually turns on questions of appropriate forums rather than on a changed concept of role"
(op cit, p200/1)

Their changing positions, he suggests, reflected differing solutions to the tension between their desire to preserve their own intellectual uniqueness from the encroachment of mass society/culture and their drive to establish a dominant social role for intellectuals (op cit, p202) :

"They had been men of protest, and in that former world, they felt, their intellectual aims had failed or been neglected. In the postwar years they moved from opposition to participation, once again claiming their own special role. The roads to influence had changed since the 1930s, as had political realities. The constant remained the ambitions of the New Yorkers and their conception of the importance of intellectual life. The change was in the area where they could ply their trade most successfully. The deflation of hopes in the radical movements lessened not their intellectual resolve but their radical commitment. Armed with a new liberal political philosophy, a new attitude toward the positive virtues of American society, and a new sense of their own self-worth, they succeeded after World War II in creating the kind of intellectual environment they had always desired."
(op cit, p207/8)

Again therefore, this account has the participants turning to potential solutions to a fixed need, here, the need to be an "Intellectual". Whilst accepting Bloom's emphasis on the centrality of intellectualism to the perceptions of Self of the group, I suggest that their conception of an intellectual and the role of an intellectual was not fixed and

that Bloom has emphasised personalities - The Intellectuals - at the expense of the intellectual discourse.

For Bloom they were also specifically Jewish Intellectuals and their status as Jewish outsiders is treated by Bloom as a central explanatory variable. Certainly the group was predominantly Jewish and of poor origins - and male³⁰ - and a convincing argument can be made for attributing their careers to the desire for power, status and security of the marginalised - from their early desire to be part of a/the Party, their political and intellectual elitism, to their later commitment to "our country and our culture", a commitment accompanied Bloom suggests, by continued *status anxieties* (c.f. Lipsit and Bell) which reflected their ambitions³¹ and, in the forties, to a need to 'make sense' of the holocaust. However, as Wald points out (while Bloom's approach "like all exaggerations" has a "strong element of truth", Wald, 1987, p9), a disproportionate number of intellectuals in all the radical movements in New York in the thirties were upwardly mobile Jews (including those that did not become anti-Stalinist and anti-communist.) The New Masses and New Leader writers were not, he suggests qualitatively different from those associated with Partisan Review.

This treatment is not concerned to present biographies. That has been done elsewhere (most thoroughly by Bloom), and in the autobiographical works of many of the protagonists. Whether the group were "genetically" Jewish (c.f. Webster, see footnote 30) is not the issue. The reality or otherwise of the social world is not in question, what is in question is the way characteristics, objects, events, are constructed at a given

historical conjuncture in such a way as to have material effectivity. "Jewishness" was itself a discourse which modulated over the years.

Nor, I suggest, was it an element explicitly present in the PR discourse of the thirties and rarely more than implicitly in the forties. Direct assertions of Jewish identity by contributors were primarily confined to the post-war years and to other texts³². It is of course possible to identify *significant absences* in a discourse, but I have not chosen to dwell this or on other such absences, including sex/gender relations.

* * * * *

The final account considered here takes a different approach, one which does not presume that the anti-communist turn was "self-evident".

Most of the recent American cultural history can be criticised for glossing over (virtually ignoring at worst and underestimating at best) the extent of the left-wing commitments and activities of the group, and most of the autobiographical accounts by protagonists have suffered from extensive "political amnesia"³³. Alan M. Wald's The New York Intellectuals : The Rise and Decline of the Anti-Stalinist Left from the 1930s to the 1980s (1987) is committed to redressing the balance in American cultural history and to helping to cure this "amnesia" which, he argues, has limited the possibility of the contemporary left learning from the experience of that earlier generation. In an analysis informed by his Marxism and his sympathy with "political commitment" (Wald, 1987, p22) he intends to make a political intervention.

Intellectuals for Wald are not a class, but their "social function is class dependent" (op cit, p363), they ally themselves with class forces. A view comparable to that based on Trotsky's "law of social attraction" (toward a ruling or rising class) used in PR during their Trotskyist phase (see pages 214/5) :

"In this book the term 'intellectual' is used rather specifically. An intellectual is defined not by personal attributes but by social function; an intellectual is one who is occupationally involved in the production and dissemination of ideas. As Karl Mannheim, Joseph Schumpeter, and others have emphasized, intellectuals are not a class; they are bonded together by their education and have some group attributes but tend to ally with more powerful social forces. While there are many intellectual workers (in distinction to manual workers) in our society, authentic intellectuals are the creative sector among those intellectual workers who produce intellectual products. Most often an intellectual will be an interdisciplinary generalist as opposed to a narrow specialist or technician. In this study I will almost always be referring to people in the professions of teaching, journalism and editing intellectual magazines, or in a few instances, 'political intellectuals', that is, full-time party members whose task is to disseminate ideas. Everyone, of course, uses his or her brain to indulge [sic] ideas, so everyone is intellectual to one degree or another. However, it is not true that everyone who is intellectual performs the social function of an intellectual. Antonio Gramsci, one of the leading theoreticians of intellectuals, provided a useful analogy in the section of his Prison Notebooks on intellectuals : all of us cook or sew to one degree or another in our daily lives, but few of us have the social function of being cooks or tailors."
(op cit, p22/23)

In their radical youth the intellectuals allied with the working class in a movement for change, in their later years those who became neo-conservatives "took the opposite stance" (op cit, p362/3).

While focusing his analysis on the intellectuals as a group he does not consider their political trajectory unique. The deradicalisation of Twentieth Century American intellectuals paralleled that of other groups, they were just more extreme and more articulate :

"the same pattern appears among a cross-section of an entire

generation born in the first two decades of this century, including white-collar workers, radicalized owners of small businesses, and industrial workers. What distinguishes intellectuals from the others is not the overall direction of their movement but the suddenness of their shifts, the extremes to which they went, and the fact that, as intellectuals, they articulate their new views at every stage, sometimes blithely contradicting what they had earlier professed."

(op cit, p4)

In Wald's view, the most common manifestation of political amnesia was a "modification of the past to validate some present political conviction" (op cit, p145). All historical research is faced with issues of validity of data and interpretation; these are probably compounded when the past in question is what Aaron described as the "visitable past" (Aaron, 1961, px); when the protagonists are alive, providing not only a source of data but an audience for the history constructed during the "excursion".³⁴ Wald concluded :

"The point is not that one version of the past is wholly true and the other wholly false; it is that sometimes the past is remembered selectively, in accord with the needs of the ideological outlook one has at a given moment or had at some significant moment in the past. The contemporary cultural historian must try to recreate a whole through the use of all available evidence - documents, publications, and correspondence - as well as a wide range of personal interviews, and not be misled by an affinity or dislike for one or another political person."

(op cit, p15)

The answer then, for Wald, lies in use of a range of evidence. And yet, as he acknowledges³⁵, he too interprets the evidence from a particular position. He describes in detail the organisational and theoretical commitments of the various groupings on the Left from the 1930s and interprets them in the light both of subsequent events and his version of Marxist theory. Wald emphasises the "networks and associations" (op cit, p21) of the Left intellectuals. Accomplished writers and artists,



full-time scholars, he found, had little time for political activism but were linked to movements through more activist friends, and, behind the friends were committees and behind the committees the Parties and behind the Parties the "press of social forces and historical events" (op cit, p21). And, in addition there were the "mediating factors" like "family background, personal loyalties, sexual attraction, psychology (especially the desire for attention and for security), and accident." (op cit, p21). Thus Wald does not rely on his subjects' public statements or memoirs alone³⁶ but attempts to reconstruct their personal relationships and the background of political activity.

Wald is insistent that a distinction be made between communism and Communism³⁷; between authentic anti-Stalinism (a position available to revolutionary Marxists) and liberal anti-communism. The deradicalisation of the New York intellectuals³⁸ was not, he argues, inevitable. For Wald, it was not a consequence of any immanent characteristics of the group, nor of anti-Stalinism per se, but of a "host of historical and social factors" (op cit, p10) and it must be understood in its specificity. The revolutionary nature of their early anti-Stalinism distinguishes the group from the "pure and simple" anti-communists, and it was their abandonment of this opposition "on anti-capitalist premises" (op cit, p5), to Stalinism that deprived the movement of its positive qualities. Wald opens his account with a sketch of Sidney Hook's "political odyssey" (Hook was a key theoretician of the PR circle) and notes how it does not "exemplify the 'God that failed' motif" (ibid). Indeed, he says, while what might appear to be :

"Hook's personal idiosyncrasy vis-à-vis the mainstream radical intellectuals of the 1930s turns out to be paradigmatic for the

formative years of the group known today as the 'New York Intellectuals'. It is precisely the attempt by the founders of the tradition of the New York intellectuals to develop an anti-Stalinist revolutionary communism that distinguishes them from the pure and simple anti-Communists of the 1930s and after, despite the efforts of some in later years to obliterate, to trivialize, or to misrepresent this crucial episode of their lives."
(ibid)

While other historians, and the protagonists themselves, stress an underlying consistency in their positions over time and underestimate the significance of the Trotskyist period, Wald stresses the "turnabouts and gyrations" (op cit, p6) and the precise nature of the different political positions adopted :

"A good example of an inaccurate representation of this history is contained in a 1984 letter to the New York Times Book Review by Sidney Hook and Arnold Beichman. They argue for the centrality of the New Leader in the tradition of the anti-Stalinist left, in response to a piece by Nathan Glazer, which recognized Partisan Review's right to that role. From the perspective of the political frame of reference used by the New York intellectuals themselves during their formative years, a frame of reference that is resurrected and embraced in this book, the New Leader was generally regarded as a halfway house for right-wing social-democratic anticommunists from which virtually no one returned. If the New Leader had actually been central to the anti-Stalinist left from its inception, then Clement Greenberg's oft-quoted remark that 'anti-Stalinism... started out more or less as Trotskyism' would be false. There would, in fact, be little difference between the anti-Stalinism of Hook and his associates in the 1930s and their views in the 1980s, a myth that some might like to foster for the sake of appearing to be politically consistent rather than acknowledging the subsequent sequence of turnabouts and gyrations in their orientation. Obscured would be the profound difference between anti-Communism (originally opposition by revolutionary Marxists to Soviet Communism, after the rise of Stalin, as a deformation or perversion of socialism) and anticommunism (in the United States, an ideological mask for discrediting movements for radical social change and supporting the status quo by amalgamating these movements with Soviet crimes, expansionism and subversion).
(op cit, p5/6)

Emphasising the Trotskyist orientation of the Anti-Stalinist intellectuals:

"Simply put, without Trotskyism there would have never appeared an

anti-Stalinist left among intellectuals in the mid-1930s; there would have been the anticommunist movement already existing, one associated with the essentially Menshevik politics of various social democratic organizations..... But it is inconceivable that Menshevism had the power to inspire such young writers as Sidney Hook and Philip Rahv, who were drawn to the Russian Revolution, because Menshevism denied the validity of that revolution while Trotskyism, despite its opposition to Stalin's policies, celebrated its significance and achievements. Trotskyism made it possible for these rebellious intellectuals to declare themselves on the side of the revolution (as opposed to the side of the social democrats who had just then succumbed to the Nazis without resistance), and yet also to denounce Stalin from the left as the arch betrayer of Lenin's heritage."
(op cit, p6)

Anti-Stalinism, he argues, "in and of itself", had a dual nature - it could open the way either for a return to classical Marxism, or a move to the right, depending on individual circumstance and context (op cit, p157). Properly analysed, the rise and decline of anti-Stalinism in the U.S. has a message for today's left in what has been called "Cold War II"³⁹ :

"... only by understanding the peculiar nature of their transformation can one come to grips with the most contradictory and confusing aspect of the New York intellectuals : that a group of individuals who mainly began their careers as revolutionary communists in the 1930s could become an institutionalized and even hegemonic component of American culture during the conservative 1950s while maintaining a high degree of collective continuity. This pendular evolution by so many New York intellectuals suggests, from a radical point of view, that their politics were deceptive from the beginning. Politically oriented members of the generation of the 1960s and 1970s find it hard to believe that such neoconservative and right-wing social democratic figures among the New York intellectuals as Kristol and Hook once considered themselves genuine Marxist revolutionaries and at the same time expressed an uncompromising opposition to Stalinism. The contemporary generation of the left fails to understand that it was not anti-Stalinism per se that was responsible for changing these intellectuals into Cold War liberals in the 1950s and neoconservatives in the 1970s, but a host of historical and social factors that terminated their revolutionary socialist perspectives. Thus it is crucial to demonstrate that the political and cultural content of the group's anti-Stalinism meant different things at

different times."
(op cit, p10, emphasis added)

Thus, Wald's account is the closest to the approach being taken here, insofar as it does not consider the move from anti-Stalinism to anti-communism as inevitable or "self-evident" and recognises the changing character of the group's expressions. While not examining PR as a text (very little attention is given to issues of the magazine) or to the concepts which it is suggested here were articulated and re-articulated in a shifting discourse, Wald draws attention in general terms to the relationship between the changing "doctrine" and the changing context - a relationship in which :

"... certain doctrinal elements appear to remain the same in form while being utterly transformed in content..."
(op cit, p11)

that is, while the terms remain the same, their referents, their 'meaning' changed⁴⁰.

His assumptions are therefore similar, but at the end of the day his conclusion is :

"In sum, the primary determinants in the deradicalization process were the political situation in the nation and the world in addition to the ascension of the intellectuals in status."
(op cit, p368, emphasis added.)

My own analysis will not assume these factors were "primary determinants", but rather that the national and international political "events" were incorporated into the discourse over a period in ways which ultimately made possible the ascension in status.

* * * * *

Wald fills in the gap left by the other accounts examined by emphasising the role of the Parties, specifically the Trotskyist Parties through which he says Trotsky's influence was mediated :

"Despite their small size, such groups were often the aquifer of currents of political thought among the intellectuals; like the small magazines of that time and after, they were sometimes the source of ideas and analyses that trickled upward to nourish the political thinking of unaffiliated radicals."
(op cit, p21)

This account will focus on one, almost certainly the most influential, of those small magazines. It will attempt to map the construction of the ideas and analyses that "trickled out" to influence others - and were fed back into the discourses to modify it again. It will not view the series of texts as sufficient unto themselves, but neither will they be viewed as the product of a consistent drive impelling the authors.

The texts form a discourse, a discourse which was in process. A continuous modification as elements were articulated and re-articulated, incorporating new elements and events. There was no essential drive, nor were there fixed concepts. At any given *moment* the 'meaning' of the text is fixed by the reader's imposition of intelligibility, and here, that attempt to attain intelligibility will rest on a mapping of the history of the elements present in the text and their relations to the social context.

PART TWO

TEXTUAL ANALYSIS

INTRODUCTION

"A magazine is a form of criticism. By its selection of manuscripts, by its emphases in criticism, and by the tone it adopts, its position is defined."
(Phillips and Rahv, 1934, p9)

This analysis of Partisan Review will focus on selected texts through which the transformation of certain themes or *elements* of the discourse can be traced. The texts comprising an issue, and the series of issues, will be taken as creatively weaving together elements, in changing configurations, to produce a continuously modulating discourse. Constructed in and from a context, and at the same time helping to constitute the events that comprised the context and the interpretations which constituted the experience of that context.

No attempt is made to conduct a systematic content analysis, but rather to examine the ways in which key concepts and themes modified over time. Most of the texts under consideration were written, singly or jointly, by the editors - throughout the period by Rahv and Phillips and in the "New PR" by Greenberg and Macdonald. This is not intended to unduly privilege the authors, but is because it is felt that these texts best exemplify the discourse at a given moment. Nonetheless, this is not arbitrary; texts do not, in the view of this writer, "write themselves" - inscribing their cultural moment - but are conscious creations of human agents. This is not to say that they transparently mirror their author's conscious intentions, but, in a magazine which was always intended to be a deliberate critical intervention, the words of the editors will here be held to be the crystallisation of the PR discourse.

Three editorial texts are taken as exemplars of the discourse, the transformatory practice of the magazine. A discourse which had started in 1934 within parameters set down by the Communist Party policy; parameters which inhibited or delimited the construction of a modernist

aesthetic. A discourse which shifted ground in the late thirties with a re-working of the 'orthodox' Marxism promoted by the American Communist Party into a form of "Western Marxism", culminating in a break with the Communist Party and alignment with Trotskyism. A discourse which moved, through individualist alienation, toward an alignment with "our country and our culture" in the fifties when the parameters were set by anti-communism - a political form with, again, a pivot or organisational principle to which elements were subordinated and which inhibited the integration of a modernist aesthetic into the discourse.

A distinction is made here between an integration of elements and, what I will call, an attempt to totalise. *Integration* refers to a coherent articulation in which the inter-relationship of the elements produces meaning; in which positions taken with regard to one area of social life (i.e. political, aesthetic, economic) are not only not contradicted by those in another, but feed into and advance the possibility of action in all the fields. Alternatively, a *totalising* discourse has an imposed unity, it has a single pivot or organising principle to which other elements are subordinated to produce a totality which inhibits the possibility of action, of progress, in other fields in favour of action in the primary field. Partisan Review was, it is argued, initiated within one totalising apparatus and, having rejected these delimitations in the late thirties, was delimited again from the late forties by another.

Partisan Review can be characterised for simplicity as moving through four broad phases :

1. The years of association with the Communist Party (1934-36)
2. The years of alignment with Trotskyism (1937-9)
3. The years of dis-association (1940-47)
4. The new Americanist Liberalism (from 1948)

During each of these phases, a discourse was constructed and reconstructed in a creative interplay with the socio-political context.

PR in 1934-6 was not simply an organ of the Communist Party reflecting its current literary policy, but was created out of both the tensions between that policy (proletarian art) and the aestheticist traditions and free-wheeling radicalism of New York's pre First World War "Bohemia" and the Marxism of the American Communist Party (itself a product of tensions between European theoreticism and American activism) and the revisions of the Marxism of the Second and Third Internationals that became known as Western Marxism.

The early issues and those of the subsequent phases were all constructed out of tensions between diverging attitudes to *America/Europe*, *City/Country*, *Theory/Action*, *Rationalism/Utopianism*, *Individualism/Collectivism*, *Intellectual/Mass* and *Aestheticism/Propaganda*. Oppositions which shifted as received traditions were reinflected and new positions constructed in response to social conditions, notably the changing economic conditions (the inter-war depression and the post-Second World War economic boom), and the shifting cultural and political relations with Europe and the Soviet Union defined in the context of the Second World War. The oppositions, or individual binary couplets, were not necessarily posed explicitly,

but it is argued that the framework within which the PR discourse was presented was constructed by a combination of explicit and implicit oppositions. (The identity of each concept being derived from both the nature of the opposition posed and the relations between, or combination of, the oppositions.)

In 1937, the PR discourse was aligned with Trotskyism, largely I suggest, as an intellectual resolution of the inhibitions placed on a theorisation of aesthetic practice by the Communist Party's expressed cultural policies'.

By 1939/40, the European War had encouraged doubts on the part of Rahv and Phillips which crystallised in 1941 with their rejection of the Trotskyist non-interventionist policy. During the 1940s, while still rejecting the American Government's "official art", they were abandoning Marxism of any kind and the discourse in PR was increasingly one of personal alienation, of the artist as neurotic individualist.

By the late forties, this discourse, in the context of the post-war affluence and a perception of the US as world leader locked in ideological combat with a totalitarian USSR, was transformed from anti-Stalinism, to anti-communism. Twenty years after PR's inception, a new "Liberal" Americanism was in place. While this new Americanism did not formally set parameters, nonetheless it too inhibited the successful articulation of a unified political and aesthetic discourse; American populism was as threatening to an avant-garde art as proletarianism had been.

Laclau and Mouffe (1985) have distinguished between populist and democratic politics. In the populist discourse a "logic of equivalence", by equating objects (e.g. class fractions) elides differences between them in favour of counter-posing the equated objects to an alternative, thus constructing an oversimplified discourse premised on polarity, on two camps. This logic, they suggest, is particularly likely to emerge during conditions when there is a clearly defined enemy. It will be argued here that the Communist Party paradigm of the thirties and the post-war anti-communist paradigm both rested on such a logic of equivalence and that the PR discourse of the thirties and early forties was attempting to escape this and to construct a more complex "logic of difference", only to succumb ultimately to a new populism.

The three exemplary texts which will be examined are :

1. The editorial published in December 1937 after the break with the Communist Party which focuses on the proposed literary and political role of the magazine independent of the Stalinist requirements for "official" art.
2. The editorial published in November/December 1941 which focuses on the question of avant-garde versus "official" art in a context in which official art was both that of the Stalinists and that promoted by the United States Government.

3. The May/June 1952 editorial introducing the symposium "Our Country and Our Culture" in the context of the Cold War and anti-communism in which "American culture" was accepted.

* * * * *

The New York intellectuals' construction of their anti-Stalinist, and subsequently anti-communist, positions are both historically specific and creative articulations, constructed out of tension and contradictions. The elements of the rhetoric have no fixed identity; they are transformed both in their use and in retrospective interpretation.

In the current analysis, the evidence is most crucially the magazine itself and complementary texts, rather than retrospective (re)formulations by the producers of the texts. Clearly, however, the texts are interrogated and interpreted from within a current intellectual framework and with the 'knowledge' provided by 'History' and thus the narrative provided is a construction rather than an unproblematic history and should be presented as such - ignorance of the conditions of one's own discursivity (Laclau and Mouffe, 1985) is no excuse.

* * * * *

Partisan Review is a magazine that has continued to publish over a period of more than fifty years but neither that, nor the consistency of

its editorial control give it an a priori unity other than at an arbitrary level. Its unity as a discourse lies in the relations between elements of the discourse, their articulation, their *intelligibility* when taken together. That intelligibility however is itself the product of the interpretative operation undertaken by the researcher.

This interpretation has the 'benefit' of hindsight but is concerned to avoid making the assumption that the transformations were inevitable, were "self-evident". It is argued that each moment of the transforming discourse was one in which the pattern of the discourse was gradually being modified as elements were realigned, expelled and incorporated in such a way as to make the discourse meaningful and intellectually adequate in the view of its authors. It was a process that was both *contingent*, in that it responded to *events*, and *necessary*, in that it was intellectually self-referential.

* * * * *

The PR discourse was constructed in a social context. A context composed of events and processes calling for a discursive response, an incorporation into the discourse - an incorporation which frequently required the reorganisation of the discourse.

PR's origins were in a context defined by the discursive apparatus of the American Communist Party and in turn by the origins of that Party. Thus, elements of the initial PR discourse : *Europe, America, Theory, Action/Practice, Intellectual, Mass, City, Country*, were, as it were,

taken on, with a previous discursive history which had to be acknowledged.

The diagram below attempts to summarise the trajectory of each of the main intellectual constructs or *elements* of the PR discourse.

Represented first are the main elements which comprised the discourse(s) of "Bohemia", the pre First World War site of New York's "lyrical left" with its two groupings "Renaissance" and "Revolution" (see pages 78-86). From the Revolution tendency emerged the post war Americanist Communist Party with its cultural policy of *proletarian literature* and it was in and against this milieu that PR was initiated in 1934.

It is argued (see pages 20-22) that in PR the discursive elements were defined at any given moment by both their opposition to an antithetical concept and their place in the articulation, in the specific combination of elements.

Thus, each exemplary editorial - 1937, 1941, 1952 - is taken and the main elements identified [in capitals] with their opposition. Some examples may serve to illustrate the principles of the construction of this visual summary.

Examination of the diagram will reveal that the only opposition which remained virtually stable [indicated by a solid line between the three texts] was that between *City* and *Country* where the City remained the locus of artistic and intellectual creativity. *Science*, on the other

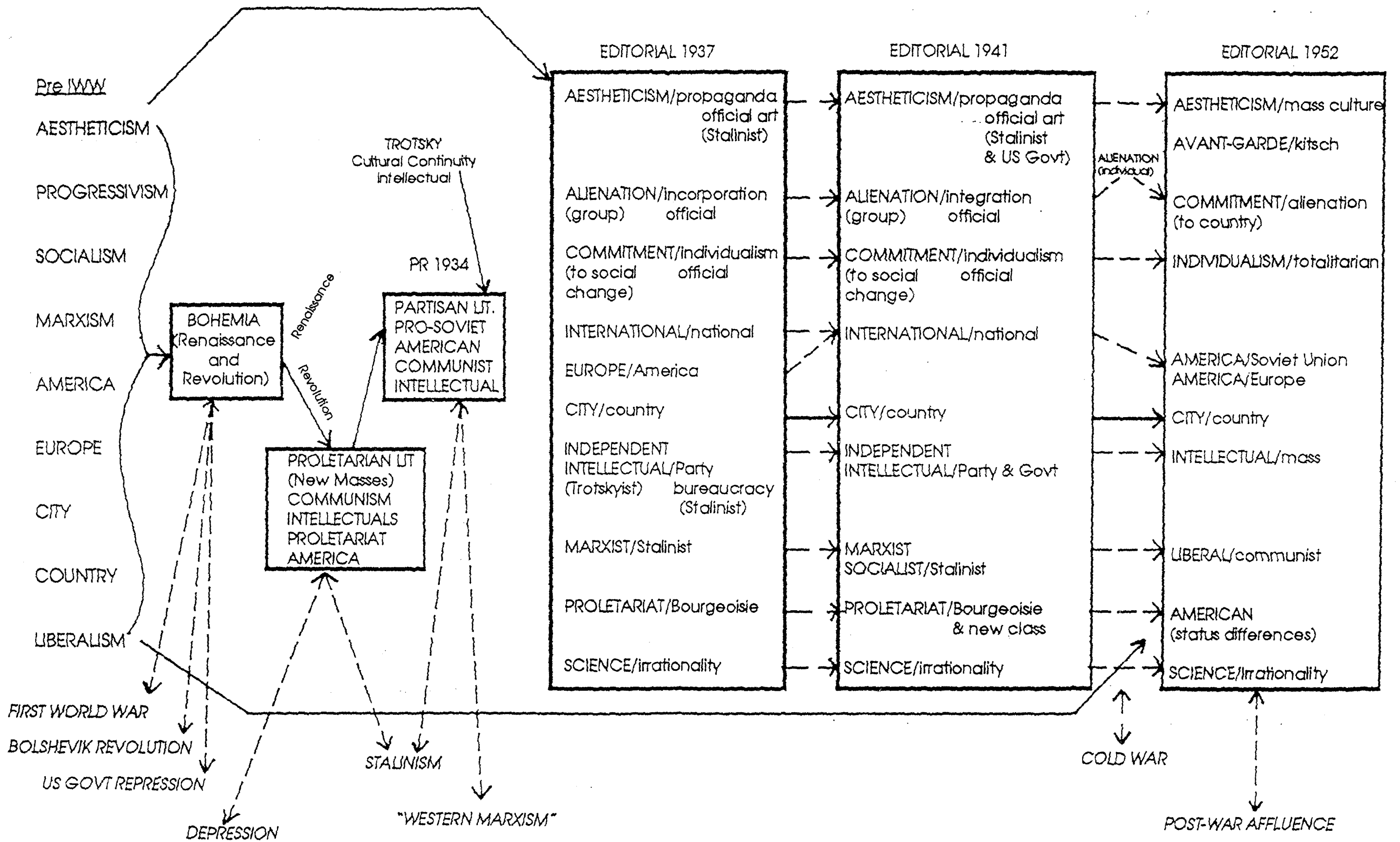
hand, while it is consistently opposed to irrationality, is not a stable concept since what constituted *Science* changed - the term was stable, but not its content. Similarly, *Aestheticism*, while it is persistently valorised, is not a stable concept. It is defined not in and of itself, but by its opposition to first *official art* and then *mass culture*. Further, in 1937, the opposition is to Stalinist cultural policy while, in 1941, it is both Stalinism and the US Government's attempt to promote a "positive" nationalist art. (By 1952, while supportive of a positive attitude to America the implications of this for culture are still rejected as mass culture.)

Nor can *Aestheticism* be considered solely in terms of its oppositions. In the interests of visual clarity, the diagram is simplistic but it is not intended that the couplets be conceived of as discrete; each opposition also takes its meaning from its *momentary* relation to, or *articulation with* the other pairings. The conception of *National* or *America*, for instance, can only be understood in the light of the relations between all the elements. In 1937, *Europe* and *International* were both valorised and Europe was the site of, and was equated with, *Intellectual* and *Aestheticism*. By 1952, Europe was perceived as having narrowly escaped the fascist threat, but in danger of being absorbed by Soviet totalitarianism, and the site of artistic and intellectual creativity had been shifted to the USA, specifically New York; America was the world leader. Since it was the world leader (and since "internationalism" was suspect as a code for being pro Soviet), the opposition of national/international became redundant in the discourse and is removed from the diagram.

The relationship between the *context* and the *texts* is one of reciprocity rather than determinacy, indeed (see page 13), there is no a priori distinction between text and context, rather limits are imposed by the researcher. The context is composed of *events* rather than *advents* (see page 14) and the relationship between selected events and the texts is thus represented by the device of broken, two-way arrows.

The following chapters will attempt to unpick and to gloss the components of the three exemplary texts - to make them *intelligible* to the reader by tracing the emergence and transformations of the concepts.

DIAGRAMMATIC SUMMARY OF THE KEY DISCURSIVE ELEMENTS



CHAPTER ONE

A SENSE OF THE PRESENT / A SENSE OF THE PAST

"... the goal of the interpretative sciences of man is to make at first imperfectly understood activities appear completely natural, by describing enough of their contexts so that they seem perfectly sensible to us."

(Schatzski, 1983, p131)

"I did not at all take this sudden change... as making a result at which one's analysis could stop. I took this discontinuity, this in a sense 'phenomenal' set of mutations, as my starting point and tried, without eradicating it, to account for it. It was a matter not of digging down to a buried stratum of continuity, but of identifying the transformation which made this passage possible."

(Foucault, 1981, p5)

Partisan Review first appeared in early 1934 as a "bi-monthly of revolutionary literature" published by the John Reed Club of New York and for approximately two years was publically associated with the American Communist Party.

The Party in its contemporary form had emerged during the years 1919-29, from two splinters from the Socialist Party which clearly represented, on the one hand, European theoreticist and, on the other, native-born activist, traditions. These combined under orders from Moscow in 1921 and subsequently split, in an echo of the initial schism, to the Left (the Trotskyist internationalists) in 1928 and the Right (the Lovestonenite American exceptionalists) in 1929.

These tensions between European theory and American activism had by 1934 been largely resolved in favour of the latter but surfaced sharply in PR as Rahv and Phillips promoted an intellectualist criticism. During the first years of the magazine, as the editors increasingly came under attack for over-intellectualising literary criticism, they hardened their antipathy to the anti-intellectual Americanism evident in the Party and it became increasingly impossible to attempt to construct a unified discourse, *delimited* as they were by Party policy.

In December 1937, after over a year of non-publication, PR printed the following editorial marking its reappearance as an "independent" journal and, rather than start at 'the beginning', we will (with the advantage offered to the historian) start with this text and subject it to a forward and backward reading.

The editorial is a text which apparently represents a decisive break or rupture - formally expressing the split from the Communist Party and a political and cultural realignment. Alternatively, the text may (is by many) be interrogated for evidence of an underlying continuity - a surfacing of the 'real' concerns of the editors. Neither, I suggest, is appropriate. Rather, it represents a particular, historically specific discourse; a momentary freezing of a continuous transformation.

Editorial Statement

"As our readers know, the tradition of aestheticism has given way to a literature which, for its origin and final justification, looks beyond itself and deep into the historic process. But the forms of literary editorship, at once exacting and adventurous, which characterized the magazines of the aesthetic revolt, were of definite cultural value; and these forms PARTISAN REVIEW will wish to adapt to the literature of the new period.

Any magazine, we believe, that aspires to a place in the vanguard of literature today, will be revolutionary in tendency; but we are also convinced that any such magazine will be unequivocally independent. PARTISAN REVIEW is aware of its responsibility to the revolutionary movement in general, but we disclaim obligation to any of its organized political expressions. Indeed we think that the cause of revolutionary literature is best served by a policy of no commitments to any political party. Thus our underscoring the factor of independence is based, not primarily on our differences with any one group, but on the conviction that literature in our period should be free of all factional dependence.

There is already a tendency in America for the more conscious social writers to identify themselves with a single organization, the Communist Party; with the result that they grow automatic in their political responses but increasingly less responsible in an artistic sense. And the Party literary critics, equipped with the zeal of vigilantes, begin to consolidate into aggressive political-literary amalgams as many tendencies as possible and to outlaw all dissenting opinion. This projection on the cultural field of factionalism in politics makes for literary cleavages which, in most instances, have little to do with literary issues, and which are more and more provocative of a ruinous bitterness among writers. Formerly associated with the Communist party, PARTISAN REVIEW strove from the first against its drive to equate the interests of literature with those of factional politics. Our reappearance on an independent basis signifies our conviction that

the totalitarian trend is inherent in that movement and that it can no longer be combatted from within.

But many other tendencies exist in American letters, and these, we think, are turning from the senseless disciplines of the official Left to shape a new movement. The old movement will continue and, to judge by present indications, it will be reinforced more and more by academicians from the universities, by yesterday's celebrities and today's philistines. Armed to the teeth with slogans of revolutionary prudence, its official critics will revive the petty-bourgeois tradition of gentility, and with each new tragedy on the historic level they will call the louder for a literature of good cheer. Weak in genuine literary authority but equipped with all the economic and publicity powers of an authentic cultural bureaucracy, the old regime will seek to isolate the new by performing upon it the easy surgery of political falsification. Because the writers of the new grouping aspire to independence in politics as well as in art, they will be identified with fascism, sometimes directly, sometimes through the convenient medium of 'Trotskyism'. Every effort, in short, will be made to excommunicate the new generation, so that their writing and their politics may be regarded as making up a kind of diabolic totality; which would render unnecessary any sort of rational discussion of the merits of either.

Do we exaggerate? On the contrary, our prediction as to the line the old regime will take is based on the first maneuvers of a campaign which has already begun. Already, before it has appeared, PARTISAN REVIEW has been subjected to a series of attacks in the Communist Party press; already, with no regard for fact - without, indeed any relevant facts to go by - they have attributed gratuitous political designs to PARTISAN REVIEW in an effort to confuse the primarily literary issue between us.

But PARTISAN REVIEW aspires to represent a new and dissident generation in American letters; it will not be dislodged from its independent position by any political campaign against it. And without ignoring the importance of the official movement as a sign of the times we shall know how to estimate its authority in literature. But we shall also distinguish, wherever possible, between the tendencies of this faction itself and the work of writers associated with it. For our editorial accent falls chiefly on culture and its broader social determinants. Conformity to a given social ideology or to a prescribed attitude or technique, will not be asked of our writers. On the contrary, our pages will be open to any tendency which is relevant to literature in our time. Marxism in culture, we think, is first of all an instrument of analysis and evaluation; and if, in the last instance, it prevails over other disciplines, it does so through the medium of democratic controversy. Such is the medium that PARTISAN REVIEW will want to provide in its pages."

(The Editors, 1937)

This reappearance of PR as an "independent", Trotskyist-oriented magazine may be viewed as a dramatic shift, a cutting of political ties and a statement of commitment to a modernist aesthetic; or - as by Phillips commenting on the editorial on its inclusion in the 50th anniversary edition of PR in 1984 - as representing a "clear line of continuity" (Phillips, 1984, p491). This assertion of continuity (as in Bloom's analysis, see page 44) is dependent on dichotomising political "atmosphere" and intellectual and literary values :

"Although some of our thinking has responded to changes in the intellectual and political atmosphere, our intellectual principles and our literary values have been fairly constant."
(Phillips, p492)

Both this argument and the alternative privileging of the *break* are, I suggest, overly simplistic.

Instead, I suggest, interpretation of the text requires a process of collecting and arranging contextual material in a "perspicuous way" (Wittgenstein, quoted in Schatzki, 1983); in a way which makes it possible to see the connections, to construct intelligibility. From the text - the constellation of elements - fragments or threads of meaning may be followed back to other moments, to sets of social relations, to their "surface of emergence" (Foucault). Alternatively, we can project forward, to speculate on the impact of the text, and its readings, on its contemporary and future readers - a process described by Phillips in his first published piece (see pages 100-102) as "a forward-looking and backward-seeing process" (Phillips, 1967, p143.) Unlike Ariadne, or Edmund Wilson (Homburger on Wilson, see page 42), we cannot hope that

one thread will reveal the nature of the labyrinth, but must examine the interweaving of the multiple threads.

This attempt to understand, to be perspicuous, is founded on the principle of *intelligibility* (see Cousins and Hussain, quoted on page 19); that is, an attempt to assemble evidence which will make intelligible (albeit to a subject in a specific socio-historical, intellectual position) a *case-history*. A case-history viewed as a process of construction and deconstruction of intellectual positions produced in an active engagement with social conditions; a process of *interpretation and representation*, and therefore, of *production*, of the social.

* * * * *

The editorial is a text constructed in and against PR's early history and the context in which the magazine had initially emerged; a context in which a "*tradition of aestheticism*" which was prominent before the First World War had been displaced by a "*literature which, for its origin and final justification looks beyond itself and deep into the historic process*". That is, a partisan Party literature. Rahv and Phillips objected not to a literature which looked into the historic process, but to a literature which found its origin and justification there. In 1937, they were rejecting not Marxism, but Stalinist determinism - breaking from a Communist Party which they perceived as "*totalitarian*", both in its Party politics and, perhaps more crucially, totalising in its attitude to literature with its assumption of a single moving principle, its subordination of literary values to those of "*factional politics*".

However, while claiming no ties to any party, their assertion of political independence was, it would appear, more a reflection of the pragmatics of survival in an arena (the New York literary world) dominated by the "*official Left*", a world - according to their perceptions at least - in which the marginal publishing houses and publications to which they looked were connected to the Party which was attacking their defection so vigorously (see page 172) and in which many of the established literary figures PR wanted to publish were then sympathetic to, if not active fellow travellers with, the Communist Party. Shortly after, PR was - if for a limited period - to be aligned fairly explicitly with Trotskyism.

Trotsky's Literature and Revolution provided a non-reductive analysis of literature and, with its conception of "cultural continuity", did not restrict it to class-bound proletarian socialist realism. For theorists who still aspired to a place in the vanguard of radical politics as well as of literature, Trotsky's autonomous model of revolutionary aesthetics was compelling and, I suggest, allowed the editors to, briefly in the late thirties, resolve contradictions (see page 24/5 for the usage of "contradictions" here) inherent in the discourses constructed in the magazine in the mid thirties and the forties and fifties. In the late thirties, they were able, in Howe's words (see page 305-308 for a discussion of Howe's critique of PR, "This Age of Conformity") to bring together the "two radical impulses" of their modernist aesthetic and leftist politics to inform an *avant-garde* practice (c.f. Huyssen - see page 28.) They rejected Stalinist cultural policy and replaced it with a model of an autonomous, yet partisan, art practice. A key premise of their position was that *avant-garde* art was inherently critical - innovative form necessarily challenging the established order. This presumption pre-dated their break with the Communist Party and was to be maintained into the fifties, but only, I suggest, in this 'Trotskyist' moment in the late thirties, did it form a coherent relation with their expressed political position(s).

In 1937/8 Rahv and Phillips rejected the constrictions of Stalinist "official" art and by 1939 were explicitly looking back to the "golden age" of the 1920s which they saw as "alive with experimentation and innovation" (Rahv, 1939. See page 223-229). In the early 1940s (having 'moved through' Trotskyism) they opposed the Government sponsored

official line on a "positive" (as opposed to decadent, cynical, modernist) art proposed by MacLeish and Van Wyck Brooks with equal vigour, only to, in the case of Phillips particularly, become reconciled to it in 1952 when they espoused "Our Country and Our Culture". Two further editorials from 1941 and 1952 will be analysed as crystallisations of these subsequent modulations.

The 1937 editorial should be read in the light of the binary opposition posed at the time between a tradition of aestheticism and a literature which finds its origin and justification in political expediency; between "art-for-art's-sake" and "art as a weapon"; between art from the "ivory tower" and the art of "artists in uniform". And in the light of the trajectory of the American Communist and Trotskyist Parties. In particular, their conceptions of and relations with art and artists; with theory and practice; with intellectuals and activists; with internationalism and nationalism; and Europeanists and Americanists.

Component elements of the 1937 discursive text will now be examined in turn.

"....the tradition of aestheticism has given way to a literature which, for its origin and final justification looks beyond itself and deep into the historic process..."

Editorial, 1937.

The 1937 editorial expressed formally the editors' break from the Communist Party and its political institutions and cultural policy. It did so however, not by public association with an alternative political programme, but by re-asserting the value of an earlier tradition of "aesthetic revolt", that of the period of "literary insurgency" (Aaron, 1977) known as "Bohemia" from 1910 to 1919 prior to the establishment of the American Communist Party(ies) (see Appendix One.) They did not construct a completely new discourse but reorganised the discursive articulation to highlight an element from the New York cultural discourse and Party history which they had inherited. They attempted to disrupt the separation of aesthetic and political radicalism which had been put in place in New York in the twenties.

In 1937, PR looked back to a *tradition of aestheticism* and by the early forties they were more explicit - the twenties was a "golden age". In valorising aestheticism they were rejecting what had happened in the Communist cultural circles where the twenties had seen a triumph of "proletarianism" over aestheticism. Of a socialist populism over intellectual experimentalism, a separation of the political and the cultural. In the second decade of the century, socialism and aestheticism had co-existed in New York's "Bohemia", but after the

disintegration of the community during and after the First World War a more restrictive cultural policy was constructed, largely under the aegis of Mike Gold in the Liberator and its successor New Masses. By 1934 and the publication of PR, a cultural policy was in place in the Communist movement which subordinated culture to political strategy and left little space for the critical project which the young editors of the magazine wished to advance - that is, to establish a set of ground rules for communist art and criticism which would encourage a literature that not only inspired revolutionary analysis and action but was good literature - indeed the presumption of its effectivity was based precisely on its quality. And while the supremos at New Masses resolutely based their analysis on the American experience (as viewed through Moscow's injunctions), Rahv and Phillips looked to European artists, critics and Marxist theorists.

* * * * *

The early part of the Twentieth Century had seen the rise in the United States of a spirit of rebellion which was individualistic rather than collectivistic; anarchistically utopian rather than organised; aesthetically as well as socially radical. A rebellion against Puritanism - viewed as repression, bigotry and prudishness - in politics, economics, religion, education and art (Aron, 1977, p8). Young in an age of social and economic stability, the rebels challenged the traditional culture and its guardians and privileged individual freedom and moral, social and aesthetic experiment. While not committed to a political programme, they were on the whole loosely socialist - a

"lyrical left" (McLellan, 1979, p316) who assumed an integration of art and politics, who did not presume that they formed two distinct social sub-systems.

By 1912 little groupings of "bohemians" existed in many places, but they were clustered' mainly in New York, in Greenwich Village and to a lesser extent, Chicago². "The Village" became a romantic symbol for future generations, Alfred Kazin was to write rather wistfully in 1942 :

"Who does not know the now routine legend in which the world of 1910-17 is Washington Square turned Arcadia, in which the barriers are always down, the magazines always promising, the workers always marching, geniuses sprouting in every Village bedroom, Isadora Duncan always dancing - that world of which John Reed was the byronic hero, Mabel Dodge the hostess, Randolph Bourne the martyr, Van Wyck Brooks the oracle? No other generation in America ever seemed to have so radiant a youth."

(Kazin, On Native Grounds, quoted in Cooney, 1986, p19).

The Village, at least in its legendary incarnation, epitomised the sophisticated *City*, the cosmopolitan, international, radical centre of avant-garde philosophy, politics and culture - the antithesis of provincial, conventional culture. It was an anarchic, individualist radicalism which, while it embraced (rather indiscriminately it would appear) socialism, feminism, psycho-analytic theory, owed as much to home-grown traditions of individualism as to theoretical rigour. It was a rebellion against the Protestant Ethic rather than the institutional manifestations of the Capitalist Spirit.

By the end of the decade however, a debate over intervention during the First World War, the political repression of the Bohemian journals and their editors who opposed intervention and the splits within the

Socialist Party occasioned by the setting up of a Left Wing committed to Communism, followed by the acrimonious setting up of two Communist Parties in 1919, had brought the dissolution of Arcadia in Washington Square. In the twenties, one section of Bohemia left for Paris and European culture, another left the city for the country to explore and re-present the "roots" of American culture, and a third remained to work within the Communist movement and construct an American proletarian culture. Thus aesthetic and political radicalism were dichotomised, dividing in various ways along a fault-line of *Americanism*.

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The Village culture of the teens was diverse and non-prescriptive but this diversity can, with the benefit of hindsight, be characterised loosely as binary; a grouping representing a native workerist and pioneer radicalism, inflected after 1917 by their vision of the Russian Revolution, and another espousing an internationalist (that is, European) East Coast intellectualism.

The first found its base in an alliance of the labour movement, as represented by the "Wobblies" of the anarchistic union the International Workers of the World, with Village bohemians. Theirs was an American vision, its heroes the hobo poet, the artist as man of the people, the proletarian intellectual adventurer epitomised by Jack London and later, by John Reed and Mike Gold. From this heritage developed the Americanist proletarian literature of the thirties. The second grouping was more academic and identified more with "highbrow" (Brooks) culture

and with European culture. However, for both Americanists and Internationalists, avant garde culture was equated with radicalism while traditional American culture and society were rejected as provincial and old-fashioned, and the proletarian adventurers were as committed to forging new forms of living, and of expression, as the European-orientated avant-gardists. Both wanted to create a new culture that combined what was of value in American culture with new European ideas.

Gilbert, in Writers and Partisans, his "history of literary radicalism in America", focused particularly on Partisan Review³, describes the two "primary clusters of ideas" as "Renaissance", and "Revolution" (Gilbert, 1968, p16)⁴. While both groups, he suggests, saw avant-garde art and socialist politics as not only compatible, but necessarily linked (an assumption that Gilbert himself questions), their politics differed and the Revolution tendency were more prepared to use art to advance specific political ends. Focii of the two clusters were the two journals; Seven Arts - edited by James Openheim, Waldo Frank and Paul Rosenfeld presenting the belief of the group led by Van Wyck Brooks and Randolph Bourne in a renaissance in American art and their ideal of a world wide community of artists and intellectuals - and the new version of the Masses - founded in 1911, but reorganised in 1912 by Max Eastman and subsequently edited by Eastman and Floyd Dell with John Reed and Mike Gold as frequent contributors. Overtly radical in its politics the Masses was nonetheless eclectic in its content - socialism, anarchism and syndicalism co-existed in its pages; Darwinism, Freudianism and Marxism were all of interest as manifestations of a scientific approach.

Both the Masses and Seven Arts opposed entry into the First World War by the United States and, in consequence, attracted sanctions - the Masses found difficulty in distribution and its August 1917 issue was barred from the Mails under the 1917 Espionage Act⁵ and in 1918 associates of the magazine, including Eastman, Dell and Reed, were tried in two trials for conspiracy against the Government. Seven Arts found its financial backers withdrew. It was not revived, but the Masses was succeeded by the Liberator in March 1918 which in 1922 was turned over to the Communist Party (the Workers Party).

In Gilbert's view, the pre-war bohemian community may have differed in their political and artistic policies, but there was surprising unanimity. However, he suggests, (supported by Lasch, The Agony of the American Left)⁶ the pre-war unity of Bohemia was destroyed by the war before there was time for incipient cracks to appear. In the post-war years, after a brief period of optimism inspired by the Bolshevik revolution, the Renaissance and Revolution tendencies departed in different directions and the dichotomisation between aestheticism and interventionist politics which was implicit in the two tendencies hardened into an iron division in the late twenties and early thirties.

Many of the Renaissance bohemians who had espoused European and rejected American culture went into "exile" in Europe, (particularly to Paris) from whence some were later to return to be influenced by the revolutionary element and to become Communist stalwarts, e.g Joseph Freeman or Malcolm Cowley (who in Exile's Return chronicled the disillusion and lack of commitment of his generation and the subsequent

growth in himself and others of a revolutionary commitment.) Others stayed in the United States and a group of Renaissance descent, centred around Van Wyck Brooks, replaced an admiration of Europe with a nationalist attempt to recover an American culture : to "rummage through the American past in search of a viable culture heritage" (Gilbert, 1968, p50). A third response, and one which was to become dominant, was that of the bearers of the Revolution heritage. While most of the Brooks group moved out of New York (many to Westport, Connecticut), they stayed in the Village, worked in the Communist movement and published the Liberator, replaced in 1926 with New Masses.

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The Bolshevik revolution initially provided a romantic symbol for the bohemians, epitomised in John Reed's rousing eye witness account Ten Days that Shook the World. In his introduction (dated New York, 1 January 1919, nine months before the American Communist Parties were set up) he said of the Bolshevik insurrection which was then fashionably described as "an adventure" :

"Adventure it was, and one of the most marvellous mankind ever embarked upon, sweeping into history at the head of the toiling masses, and staking everything on their vast and simple desires."
(Reed, 1966, p13)

However the flowering of enthusiasm among the left was brief, not least because of the divisions which manifested themselves among the Americans as soon as they attempted to institutionalise communism (see Appendix One), and Party membership declined in the twenties, particularly after

the New Economic Policy was implemented. Stalin's attack on first the "left" and then the "right" oppositions, led to the expulsion from the American Party of these groups in the late twenties. The Trotskyist left opposition was much more influential, especially among writers and artists, than the right opposition, but did not approach the membership of the Communist Party which benefited most from the resurgence of revolutionary politics in the early 1930s.

During the twenties, the unified bohemianism of the pre-war period was split and modified⁷ and the modernist experimental form to which Rahv and Phillips were drawn became counterposed to an overt political commitment⁸. Gradually - constructed primarily in the pages of the Liberator and New Masses, a dominant cultural trend emerged, proletarian art. This not only rejected the association of radical technique in the arts with radical politics (in favour of the politics), but also increasingly reflected distrust for intellectuals and bohemianism, humanism, European aesthetics, avant-gardism and 'non-political' theories like psychology. The proletarian tradition was to be an American art, the art of the American workers. It was to be committed realism - or, its critics would argue, naturalism. While they may have had roots in the Village bohemianism (may even have been part of it, like Gold), the Communists now rejected that era as a stage of bourgeois individualism⁹.

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Bohemia could thus operate as a symbol for the later generations of a united aesthetic and political radicalism, a New York radicalism. New Yorkers have consistently perceived their city as both the American city and as somehow not American - as cosmopolitan metropolis¹⁰. Introducing a special issue of The New Criterion on "New York in the Eighties" (Summer 1986)¹¹, Hilton Kramer quoted from Cortissov on American Artists in 1923, "New York is not yet, by any means a renaissance Florence, but the history of art in America is largely a history of its life. Art has grown here as the city has grown." (quoted in Kramer, 1986, pi.) During the Second World War, New York was constructed in the pages of PR and elsewhere as the artistic capital of the world in place of Paris (see pages 229-232) and prior to this, there was little doubt, in the minds at least of the editors, that it was the artistic and intellectual capital of the nation, indeed in Phillips' words, it was the nation :

"New York acquired the qualities of a nation : it was not only the homeland; it took the place of the rest of the world."
(Phillips, 1983, p185)

For the intellectuals, the "New York Intellectuals", associated with Partisan Review the resonance of Bohemia continued after its decline. They were always ambivalent about America - as critical intellectuals and theoreticians, and, in many cases, as Jews - and for them New York both was America and was not. Eliot, supporter of the conservative regionalist "Southern Agrarians"¹² and contemptuous of the internationalist "deracinated intellectuals of the North, undesirable 'free-thinking Jews'", described New York in 1931 as "the most complete expatriation of all"¹³. But for those Eliot criticised, those who in the thirties perceived themselves as expatriates in their own country

(more, their contemporary writings suggest for intellectual than for ethnic reasons), it was home. Phillips reports that his contemporaries, unlike the exiles before and the mobile subsequent generation, rarely left New York¹⁴ in the thirties and forties and they found it hard to believe that anything of intellectual or cultural import could be created elsewhere¹⁵. Generally speaking their movement out of New York - and to the academic bases they had always derided - coincided with their acceptance by and of American society.

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Thus, in 1937, PR could look back to the teens and twenties¹⁶ to find a legitimising pre-history for the elements which they wished to move to the centre of their discourse¹⁷. A discourse which was international, urban, intellectualist and theoretically underpinned a partisan art practice. A discourse which had been most explicitly delineated in 1936 after the suspension of publication of PR (see pages 159-161).

"... There is already a tendency in America for the more conscious social writers to identify themselves with a single organization, the Communist Party...."
Editorial, 1937

The relationship of PR to the Communist Party in the thirties must be examined in the light of the construction of Communism in America and the divisions within the communist movement; divisions which turned on oppositions between Europe and America and theory and action.

The setting up of a Communist Party in America in 1919, rather than formalising a new unity on the left, institutionalised the divisions within it. Not only a division between those who remained in the Socialist Party and the new Communists, but between two wings of the Communists who set up rival parties. The divisions turned on oppositions that thread through all Twentieth Century American political and literary debate - tensions between an individualistic spirit and a collective will, between theory and action, within the context of, and together constituting, an opposition between American and foreign. During its history, the American Communist Party, and its opponents, have been concerned to construct an identification of the Party in terms of Americanism - the Party as "American" or "unAmerican". Not only does the nature of these constructions shift, but so too does the conception of what "Americanism" is - in the words of Mathew Josephson (contributing to the symposium "What is Americanism?" in PR in 1936), rather than being a definite concept, "'Americanism' is any man's battle" (Josephson, 1936, p8)

Any study of left wing political and cultural movements in the United States is confronted with the tensions between the European provenance of socialist ideas and the American response; the tensions between admiration of and emulation of European thought and assertion of individualism and a more "rugged" individualistic frontier spirit (the contrast Rahv made in the literary field between "palefaces and redskins", see page 226); the tension between theory and experience. In the words of John Dos Passos "the extraordinary thing about Americans is that while they strain at a gnat of doctrine, they'll swallow an elephant of experiment..." (quoted, Homberger, 1986, p145.) Marxism, argued Phillips (in a retrospect of the thirties written in 1962) had grown out of the European mind and was unable to "take on a native accent" (Phillips, 1967, p16.)

The history of socialist and communist parties in the U.S. - and the explanations proffered for their relative failure - consistently reflect a tension between commitment to an internationalist movement and a desire to assert a uniquely American experience. The case for "American Exceptionalism" has been argued persistently, sometimes within the Party as grounds for a different strategy, often as an explanation for the failure of organised socialism/communism to take hold in the United States (see Appendix One.) The specificity of American economic, political and social conditions is cited, but also, perhaps more frequently, an "American Character" which is presented as innately individualistic (or "democratic") and therefore incompatible with theoretical and organisational constraints.

Marxism is represented as a "foreign" theory inappropriate to both America and Americans; interpreted by ideologues taking no account of the American experience. This can be seen, for instance, in relation to the difference between the two Communist Parties set up in 1919, the use of Lenin's critique of infantile leftism to condemn the "conspiratorial" underground party of the early twenties; the commitment of the Party after its emergence in 1923 to a programme based on the "actualities of the life of workers in the USA"; the debate on "American exceptionalism" in 1926/7; and the explanations offered for the failures of American socialism/communism by authors like Bell, 1962 and 1980; Howe and Coser, 1957; Myers, 1977. (See Appendix One.)

Rather than accepting a critique which suggests that communism confronted an innately incompatible American character, I suggest that the explanation lies in the inflexibility of the Communist Party discourse, its failure to adequately integrate elements from other discursive formations within which its members operated and defined themselves.

The American Communist Party was conceived in division and the roots of that division were still present in 1934 when PR was first published as its "organ". In 1919, not one, but two, Communist Parties were formed from the Left Wing of the Socialist Party - the Communist Labour Party and the Communist Party. The former represented the populist and workerist traditions of the Socialist Party and drew its membership primarily from the American-born; the latter represented the

theoreticist tradition and had its power base in the Foreign Language Federations. (See Appendix One.)

Max Eastman's (previously editor of The Masses and leading bohemian) reports on the founding of the two Communist Parties in The Liberator epitomize the ambivalence toward Europe and to theory reflected in the writings of so many of the American Left. While he felt the CP were more theoretically rigorous and had a better grasp of Marxism, they were a "Slavic socialist machine", a "Russian Bolshevik church" and his emotional sympathies clearly lay with the enthusiastic activists of the CLP who represented for him the American tradition and who understood American conditions. (See Appendix One.)

This dichotomisation of action and theory, of American and foreign (and the equation of action with American and theory with foreign) persisted throughout the period examined here. Throughout the thirties and forties the American Communist Party was concerned to be American and analyses of the Communist and Trotskyist parties (e.g. by Howe and Coser, Myers, Bell) attribute their failure to their inability to recognise the specificity of American conditions and character and the inapplicability to them of "European" theory and organisation. (See Appendix One)

These analyses reject a model which proposes a necessary historical development (to occur first in Europe and then in the United States) but instead, I suggest, propose a conception of American character as somehow given by the national experience rather than as a cultural

construction. The issue surely is not one of a determinate American character, but of how that character was constructed by the Americans. Not a matter of a Party organisation being imposed on inherent individualists, but rather that demands for conformity to whatever Moscow policy was in place did not take into account the debates which were taking place in the United States. Rather than arguing that Marxism was incompatible with an essentialist American individualistic "character", I would suggest that the explanation lies in the nature of the Party discourse, a discourse in which all elements were subordinated to a totalising principle (see page 58) established in Moscow.

Given the existence of a well-developed tradition of individualism in American culture, such a procedure was unlikely to succeed for long. But if it was incompatible with "Americanism" as socially constructed by the pioneers, it was also incompatible with the intellectual aspirations of the "Europeanists". The explanation, I would suggest, for the rejection of Stalinism by the New York intellectuals associated with PR lies in the intellectual inadequacy of the Party discourse of the thirties and forties. Rather than subjecting elements of the discourse and their inter-relations - their articulations - to tests of adequacy (i.e. relating them to social events, to history; assessing their explanatory power, their logical consistency), the Party simply subordinated all elements of the discourse to its strategic principle, simply incorporated all events and only reorganised the discourse if Moscow ordered. This could not be acceptable to a group which conceived of itself as an "intelligentsia" (this is explicit in PR, see page 168).

Thus, I suggest, the Americanists whose view triumphed in many ways in the Party in the twenties, had a view of themselves as Americans which was hard to reconcile with a directive Party structure, while the more theoreticist Americans (the "foreign" theoreticians of the Foreign Language Federation are not being examined) were thwarted in their attempt to reorganise the discourse in a way that would have allowed them to remain Partisan.

"There is already a tendency in America for the more conscious social writers to identify themselves with a single organization, the Communist Party; with the result that they grow automatic in their political responses but increasingly less responsible in an artistic sense...."

Editorial 1937

While retrospective analyses have asserted the incompatibility of the American character with Communist organization, the Depression saw the Party expanding its orbit of influence dramatically. The artistic policy promulgated by the Communist Party in the twenties and early thirties was that of "proletarian culture" which took working class experience and class struggle as its subject matter and privileged content over form. This overtly anti-intellectual and anti-European approach was constructed and promoted largely in the pages of first the Liberator, then New Masses, between 1919 and 1934, and it was within this critical framework that PR was first published.

The PR discourse was initially located, nominally at least, within the discursive apparatus of the American Communist Party as it had been reconstructed after the expulsion of the Trotskyists and the triumph of the Americanist ideology (though within the boundaries laid down by Moscow's interpretation of the "actualities" of the American situation and not in terms of any wide-ranging conception of "exceptionalism" - thus the Lovestonites had also been expelled.)

In 1934, in literary terms this meant a policy of promoting "proletarian culture", an American version of prolet-cult, with (from 1930) a

subsidiary policy of encouragement of sympathetic fellow-travelling intellectuals (but not of avant-gardism or aesthetic intellectualism on the part of Party members.)

Examination of PR indicates that the editors were both working within this discursive formation and subverting it. There is little doubt that they were at odds with the Party cultural heirarchy in New York, yet what has often been overlooked is the extent to which the theoreticist approach for which they were attacked utilised elements of the cultural debate in Western Europe and the Soviet Union.

In the construction of the Party cultural policy in the twenties key concepts examined in this analysis of Partisan Review - *Americanism, Art, Theory, Experience, Liberal, Intellectual* - were explored and redefined and the justification for art and the practice of artists and critics was located not in art as art, but in art as reflective of, and directive of, class struggle; a specifically American art. This construction provided both the framework within which the first issues of PR must be read and the position against which the 1937 editorial was counter-posed.

The Masses of the pre-war Bohemia had been banned and prosecuted in 1917/18 as being anti-war and was replaced in 1918 by The Liberator also edited by Eastman. This continued the eclectic traditions of the Masses but in the period before its transfer to the Workers Party (the legal arm of the Communist Party) in 1922 the foundations of proletarian art were laid, most notably by Mike Gold (writing as Irwin Granich) in

"Towards Proletarian Art" in 1921. It was a form of art, he asserted, which was forged in the crucible of the Bolshevik Revolution, a new art, an art which was of and for the people - Proletcult.

It was an art which found its inspiration in the Soviet Union, but which Gold transposed to America and articulated with the traditions of the frontier. An art of the mine, the factory, the tenement and the picket-line. A grass-roots art, a "lusty green tree" growing in :

"the fields, factories and workshops of America - in the American life."

(Gold, 1921, p24)

An art of "huge hewn poets", "out-door philosophers" and "horny-handed creators" not "phrase-intoxicated intellectuals" (op cit, p23).

In 1924 The Liberator closed down and was replaced by New Masses in 1926. Whether or not New Masses was initially controlled by the Communist Party (see Appendix Two) it was clearly identified with it after 1928 when Gold became editor. Until cultural policy was realigned by the dictates of the Kharkov Conference of Revolutionary Writers in November 1930, New Masses attacked intellectualism, academicism and modernism. The art-for-art's-sake aesthetes were counterposed to a vibrant, committed, proletarian artist. Esoteric theory was counterposed to experience; Europe to America and the new frontier - the Soviet Union. Reflecting his attachment to the frontier spirit, the title of one of Gold's famous pieces was "Go Left, Young Writers" in which he explained :

"When I say 'go leftward', I don't mean the temperamental bohemian left, the stale old Paris posing, the professional poetising, etc. No, the real thing, a knowledge of working class life in America gained from first hand contacts, a hard precise philosophy of 1929

based on economics, not verbalisms."
(Gold, 1929, p3)

Lenin's injunctions "On Party Organisation and Party Literature" were used (albeit rather 'creatively', see Appendix Two) to advocate Partisan literature and in 1929 the John Reed Clubs were founded to provide an organisational base for young artists. The first and largest was the New York Club and it was from here that PR was published in 1934.

Thus PR was first published as an organ of a Party organisation which was expected to promote a specific cultural philosophy and practice. It was a philosophy about which Rahv and Phillips were ambivalent, however even within the Party the cultural policy was not monolithic but by 1934 had two strands, one for Party members, another for non-members. The principles of proletcult were accompanied by an increasing toleration of "fellow travellers".

This second policy¹² was adopted unambiguously with the institutionalisation of the Popular Front policy in 1934/5 but while this is often represented as a dramatic change it can be seen less starkly as the completion of a realignment of the Party's policy for non-Soviet writers, a shift which had begun much earlier as part of a two-pronged strategy which was conveyed at the Second Conference of Revolutionary Writers at Kharkov in November 1930¹³. The Kharkov Conference set in place a dual policy for the Americans, on the one hand an extension of the proletarian base of the movement, on the other, a winning over of sympathetic intellectuals.

The first strand represented the policy which had been followed in New Masses and the JRCs and the new addition was obviously somewhat contradictory, but while the American contingent to Kharkov were "leftist"²⁰ when they arrived (for which they were criticised) the majority led by Gold quickly fell into line and the Conference Report in New Masses warned sternly that it was not a perfunctory afterthought, but very important. Subsequent issues of New Masses promoted both a strict adherence to the principles of proletarianism for the Party stalwarts and a tolerance, indeed encouragement, of the art and political practice of the fellow travellers.

The primary aim of the JRCs was to develop and disseminate "the revolutionary culture of the working class itself" (John Reed Club, 1932, p4) and their art was to be integrated into directly political activity. A much more lenient attitude prevailed toward the fellow travellers however, who were to be allowed to subscribe to any aesthetic provided they were sympathetic²¹ (see Appendix Two.) Intellectuals, it was explained in the definitive pamphlet from Moscow (To American Intellectuals) were the "excluded middle", neither of the proletariat nor the bourgeoisie (Gorky, 1932). They were realising, it was argued, that they too were exploited by the bourgeoisie and were altering their traditional practice of alliance with the bourgeoisie in favour of an alliance with the proletariat. The support of the fellow travellers was canvassed for Party activities and the Party candidate in the Presidential election of 1932 (Culture and the Crisis : an open letter to the intellectual workers of America).

Thus in the Popular Front strategy, while class struggle remained nominally the foundation of the Communist programme, the petty bourgeoisie and the intellectuals were aligned with the proletariat against the bourgeoisie, obscuring their differences. Laclau and Mouffe have advanced the concept of "chains of equivalence" in which objects (e.g. class fractions) are equated and differences between them elided, thereby constructing an over-simplified discourse premised on polarity²². In their examination of the development of the Marxist discourse they argue that the chains of equivalence set up during the popular front period allowed a national-popular subject position to emerge rather than a class position (Laclau and Mouffe, 1985, p64) It is suggested here that this analysis can be applied to the American Communist Party's appeals to *Americanism*.

Indeed (apart from the brief interlude occasioned by the Pact), the Party now promoted an anti-fascist pro-war position in which being against fascism was more important than being committed to class struggle, and "divisive" labour and racial struggles were suppressed (see Chapter Two). The PR discourse however did not propose such chains of equivalence, nor propose an analysis pivoting on the interests of the Soviet Union. Instead, the editors subscribed to the Trotskyist internationalist opposition to intervention. However, their abandonment of this in 1941 was followed by a gradual reorganisation of the PR discourse toward the Cold War anti-communist position which, with its "no third camp" assertion, rested on another set of equivalences polarising all Americans, indeed all "the West", against the Soviet bloc. (See Chapters Two and Three.)

Rahv and Phillips were the instigating editors of PR in 1934 and had made their critical debuts in the preceding years within (more firmly in the case of Rahv than of Phillips) the Communist Party cultural apparatus.

In 1932 Rahv and Phillips both produced their first major critical pieces (Rahv's published in August 1932 in New Masses, and Phillips' in 1933 in Symposium.) These were produced in a context that was complex. The parameters of official Party policy embraced both a workerist role for the JRCs and the new theorisation of the position and role of the intellectuals. While the young writers were both writing for the Party papers and were to look to the John Reed Club as a base in the New York literary/political world, neither piece could be described as within the initial province of the Clubs.

Phillips had been born in Manhattan in 1907 to parents who had both come from Russia. His father's family name was Litvinsky. He was brought up largely in the Bronx - with the exception of a period in Kiev with his mother and her family from the ages of one to four - and attended City College, "the poor boy's stepping stone to the world" (Phillips, 1983, p27) where, in his last year, he woke from the "routinized trance" in which he had spent his school and college education. His awakening he attributes mainly to fellow students and to a representative of "Bohemia" who introduced him to Modernism via Eliot's The Sacred Wood (op cit, p28/9). At graduate school at New York University in the early thirties, he reports, (op cit, p29 and Phillips 1967, px) he published his first piece "Categories for Criticism" in The Symposium and became

politically radicalised, joining the John Reed Club where he met Rahv²³. In fact he was already involved in the Communist movement (Wald, quoting Burnham, says many radical intellectuals believed he was in the party in the early thirties. Wald, 1987, p387) and he simultaneously published a piece in the Party's theoretical review Communist on "Class-ical Culture". Malcolm Cowley has described being called to account at the JRC headquarters in December 1932 for an article written in New Republic, by four young men - including Rahv and Phillips - who concluded that his article had failed to represent the Communist Party line correctly. (Cowley, quoted in Bloom, 1986, p60)

Phillips tells us in his autobiographical A Partisan View that he had submitted "Categories for Criticism" initially to Hound and Horn and that they wrote back saying "they could not understand the essay but thought it had something" (Phillips, 1983, p29) and were sending it to The Symposium (James Burnham's magazine). His initial choice is an interesting one given that Hound and Horn had just been described by Granville Hicks as "the semi-official organ of a certain tendency in American thought, the journal of the young men who accepted the leadership of T.S. Eliot..." (quoted Aaron, 1977, p254) and which in 1933 published Lawrence Leighton attacking literary leftists (op cit, p254/5). Inevitably, one wonders whether Phillips' career would have established a different trajectory if Hound and Horn had published the article.

"Categories for Criticism" could by no means be described as leftist. Indeed, in his autobiography, Phillips notes that a review of American

periodicals in Eliot's The Criterion had singled out his piece as "representing a breakthrough that was forging a new critical language." (Phillips, 1983, p29). In the article, Phillips addressed himself to the desire among critics for a systematic or "scientific" approach to criticism. While denying that criticism could ever be truly scientific - because interpretations of a work are historically specific and change - Phillips did feel that if the relations between "categories" of experience and analysis could be understood, it would be possible to systematise a critical approach and evaluative technique. However, while Phillips distanced himself from Marxism, which he implied was totalising, he was careful not to deny its validity.

The meaning of an art work is not, Phillips contended, fixed. Critical judgements are a product of the critic's intellectual background and historical position; they will therefore change over time and cannot be predicted for the future.

"Another difficulty comes from the attempt to relate criticism to its intellectual background. This relation is more clearly revealed by later perspectives which are formed by new judgments, since successive perspectives tend to discard the self-evaluating surface (hence, apparent autonomy) of ideas and to produce denominators for evaluating them. A critical judgment, as such, results from a kind of forward-looking backward-seeing process : the judgment is the inclusion of an element from some past cluster, or even the entire cluster, in a *contemporary* category. Historical perspective is but a scale of judgments which casts a bias on past events. The continuous reorganisation of the clusters (in the course of which the judgment links with other affective clusters as in the production of a poem) gives a judgment little more than provocative value. For a judgment to have more than this provisional meaning we should have to evaluate our position in the contemporary scheme of clusters, or, as the phrase goes, place ourselves in history. This, by our analysis, is impossible, since it encroaches on the privilege of later generations who see our judgments through the array of categories which separates their ideology from ours."

(Phillips, 1967, p143/4)

There are no simple cause and effect relationships identifiable in art, said Phillips, and thus no prediction. While Marxism analysed the relation of all superstructural ideas to the economic base, Phillips was limiting his analysis to the "genesis and meaning of individual critical ideas" and to the place of these in the superstructure. Thus while Marxism claimed predictive power, Phillips argued for the "impossibility of tracing the weaving of currents to predict future critical strands." (op cit, p145) The critical discourse involved a process of deconstruction and reconstruction within the contemporary context :

"Every important critical idea is unique and unpredictable in that ideas from other contexts impinge on old groupings."
(op cit, p147.)

Nonetheless, he was careful to conclude :

"I do not believe that Marxism invalidates my conclusions, nor that my conclusions step on Marxism's toes. Unless unwarranted implications are drawn from the remarks in this paper, it should be granted that they are on different ground."
(op cit, p145/6)

Rahv's piece, "The Literary Class War"²⁴ in New Masses in August 1932 was more firmly positioned within the Party discourse and his call for a "more definite frontier" (Rahv, 1932, p7) to be established between proletarian and bourgeois literature identified him as a "leftist".

Rahv was a member of the Communist Party (until he was expelled in 1937 for declaring his sympathies for Trotsky) and wrote for the Party's New Masses, the Daily Worker and associated small magazines Prolit and Rebel Poet as well as the Soviet based organ of the IURW, International Literature. Rahv had been born in the Ukraine in 1908 to Jewish shopkeepers living amidst a peasant population. After the Civil War his

parents emigrated to Palestine and in 1922, still a boy, he left, alone, to live with his older brother in Providence, Rhode Island. After school he worked as a copywriter in Oregon and migrated to New York during the depression in 1932, where "standing in breadlines and sleeping on park benches, he became a Marxist" (McCarthy, 1978, pix.) Rahv was self-taught, never attending college. Born Ivan Greenberg²⁵ and changing his name as his contemporaries did when he became involved in the movement, unlike many others, he did not chose to "americanise" it but elected the word which means Rabbi in Hebrew.²⁶ (Mary McCarthy, 1978; Andrew J. Dvosin, 1978.)

Both Phillips and Rahv were attempting to construct a framework for an historically informed literary criticism, one which recognised social class but not at the expense of aesthetic considerations. Writing as he was in a Party organ, Rahv's innovative interpretations were perhaps more significant. While Rahv called for the establishing of a frontier between proletarian and bourgeois art, he argued that in order to do so it would be necessary to carry out a "thorough critical scrutiny" of bourgeois literature. While he condemned the contemporary forms of bourgeois literature, he viewed it as the "thesis" to proletarian literature's "antithesis" - the two together would provide the basis for the synthesis of the literature without contradictions of the classless society. Later Rahv was to avow that his favoured modernist writers could accurately represent reality, but in 1932, in an analysis premised on the evolution of capitalism to Finance Capitalism with the corresponding appearance of a "leisure class" he rejected such work as negative individualism.

The major part of the essay drew on the idea of *katharsis* and suggested that while in the art of the dominant classes the kathartic experience left the reader/spectator limp and reconciled to the status quo, in proletarian literature there was evident a new form of katharsis a "cleansing through fire" (Rahv, 1932, emphasis original, p7). A third, synthesising, element was added to the classic Aristotelean formulation - to pity and terror was added "militancy, combativeness" (op cit, p7).

"The proletarian katharsis is a release through action - something diametrically opposed to the philosophical resignation of the older idea. Audaciously breaking through the wall that separates literature from life, it impels the reader to a course of action, of militant struggle; it objectifies art to such a degree that it becomes instrumental in aiding it to change the world."
(op cit, p7)

While bourgeois literature, he argued, had been kathartic when the Bourgeoisie were a revolutionary class, now that was impossible and it was reduced to the mere "naturalism" of Faulkner and the word games of Joyce. While "literature is the integration of experience", that experience cannot be integrated if the author lacks an understanding of the nature of capitalist society and a vision of the free society of the future. While the proletariat are rooted in a psychology of production and creation, the bourgeoisie, the leisure class (c.f. Bukharin) have become detached in a "psychology of pure consumption" in the phase of finance capitalism (op cit, p7/8.)

In his analysis of "fellow-travellers and the class line", Rahv expressed his doubts as to the significance of the involvement with social issues and left sympathies of American writers. While a "lenient attitude" was in order, caution was necessary - unless they were

prepared to "make the Marxian world view their own" they would be unlikely to integrate themselves into the proletariat and were almost certain to "desert and re-join the bourgeoisie." (op cit, p10)

Rahv may have been suspicious of the fellow travellers and the "intellectuals" who were courted by the Party after Kharkov, but clearly it was not their status as "intellectuals" that he was worried about, but rather the kind of intellectuals that they were and their role as followers rather than leaders. Rahv and Phillips were both firmly intellectual, indeed academic, in their approach to criticism. Committed in 1932 to an active role for art in the revolutionary movement, but equally clear that it must be good art.

In 1932 Rahv's vanguardist vision of his own role as a critic was clear and adumbrates the first editorial article in PR ("Problems and Perspectives", see p 130-134).

"The urgent task of the Marxist critic today is manifest. He must carve out a road for the proletarian writer, who, living as he does under the constant pressure of prevailing ideas derived from the property-relationships of existing society, is faced with immense obstacles in his struggle to liberate himself from various bourgeois preconceptions which he still unconsciously adheres to. It is the critic's task to indicate how the dynamics of dialectical materialism can vitalize the new proletarian expression, and what form their integration into the warp and woof of this expression should take."
(op cit, p7)

The article was not well received by the Party, and Rahv was chastised by A. B. Magil in the December issue. The article, Magil said, was a "weird compound of truth, half-truth and pure rubbish" (Magil, 1932, p16) and he accused Rahv of academicism, elitism and abstract

schematism. While his two theoretical formulations - Katharsis as applied to proletarian art, and bourgeois art as an expression of the psychology of consumption - were important, they were incorrect. In his use of Katharsis, Magil continued, Rahv had re-formulated an idea that was historically specific. From the point of view of the ancient Greeks his version was a parody; from the point of view of Marxism it was "idealist scholasticism" (op cit, p18).

Unlike Rahv and Phillips, Magil did not think concepts could be reconstructed :

"If Marxism teaches us anything, it teaches us that we cannot take a historically reactionary idea and make it revolutionary simply by adding another element."
(op cit, p16)

With regard to his use of Bukharin's analysis, however, Rahv had not fallen so badly - since he was using a genuinely revolutionary and scientific instrument, he was able to make a valid contribution - nonetheless he had oversimplified. Nor should he have been so suspicious of and condescending to, fellow travellers - he had, Magil said, inappropriately quoted Lenin to suggest that they must be forced to adopt Marxism fully.

* * * * *

These critical debuts indicate the tensions present within Rahv and Phillips' politico-aesthetic position as developed during their early years as editors of PR²⁷. While advocating proletarian literature in

1934/5 they were themselves clearly rooted in bourgeois intellectual traditions and concerned that proletarian literature should learn from bourgeois literary traditions rather than espouse directly representational class-based naturalism. Rejecting the proletarian naturalism promoted by Gold et al, they argued for realism. Art did not simply mirror 'reality' but was a "summons", a creative combination of representation and interpretation. (See page 129-9 for a discussion of the influence of Lukács and Hook.)

Elements that were to remain part of Rahv and Phillips' discursive "repertoire" are evident in these early pieces - the use of what they were later to call the sixth or *historical sense*, and successful art as the creative representation of *experience*. In 1932, Rahv argued that an author would not be able to integrate art and life if s/he lacked an understanding of the nature of capitalism and class relations and this incorporation of a tenet of the Party policy (continued in the first issues of PR) gave his assertions a - if somewhat limited - legitimacy within the Party apparatus. In the early years of PR however, the PR discourse was revised to assert that an artist of vision - that is, a true artist - would reflect reality correctly even if s/he had no conscious understanding, indeed might at a conscious level espouse conservative values. Using this position Rahv and Phillips were able in the late thirties to integrate a modernist aesthetic with a non-determinist version of Marxism.

* * * * *

In the 1930s Communism had its period of greatest influence as the discourse of Individualism failed to convince those experiencing the Depression - in Howe's words, "The individualism of Emerson, the free enterprize of Thoreau collapsed in the junkyard of depression America" (Howe, 1982, p14) and, to use Laclau and Mouffe's terms (Laclau and Mouffe, 1985) the overt crisis enabled the Communists to construct a system of equivalences which constituted America as "two nations" with the petty-bourgeois intellectuals placed in a relation of equivalence to the proletariat.

The tensions between European theory and American experience continued within the Communist political and cultural movement : between a sophisticated, urban, self-consciously intellectual group attracted to vanguardist politics and avant-garde aesthetics and the populist, proletarian, Americanists. Partisan Review was born out of that tension. It was conceived within the Communist movement and until it broke away, its discourse was necessarily fractured. Critical analyses were attempted, but within a framework which required acceptance, indeed promotion, of proletarian novels. Phillips, looking back, identifies as incompatible two strands in American culture which in the early 1930s he and others were attempting to weave together : a "populist, insular and anti-intellectual" native tradition and an intellectual theoreticism. The Marxist movement, he argued, was "nothing if not ideological, full of historical portents and meanings and connections" and if the radical movement had followed "its natural course" it would never have become involved with the "grassroots tradition" but would have been "urban, intellectual and critical" (emphasis added) and the leftwing writers

would have come to terms with literary tradition and "advanced" writing.
(Phillips, 1967, p19/20)²⁸

Central to the self-perception of the group who became the New York intellectuals was a conception of the role of intellectuals and of theory. It was a role constructed in the interstices between Party, Proletariat and Academy, constrained by the ambivalence to the European provenance of Marxism, the (in Phillips' words) "native suspicion of theory" (op cit, p16), and a suspicion of intellectuals who are not sufficiently involved in institutional, activist politics.

A consistent theme in American Marxism is a tension between those who believe that only with the creation of a Marxist intelligentsia and culture can progress be made, and those who perceive such an emphasis on intellectuals and aesthetics and (European) theory as dangerous²⁹. In 1968, introducing the reprint of Dialectics (a magazine published in 1937/8 by The Critics Group - sympathisers with the positions expressed in PR in 1937/38 - and devoted primarily to making available to a American audience European and Soviet Marxist literary theory), John Lachs commented in terms very similar to those with which the SWP received the relaunch of PR in 1937 (see page 172) :

"We may in fact, justly wonder at the very idea of a Marxist literary journal. The critic who takes Marx seriously for the purposes of his literary work obviously does not take him seriously enough. In confining his attention to the study of the arts, he condemns himself to the irrelevance of abstract theory. What escapes him is precisely what is central to Marxism. Understanding of the ubiquity of class struggle and the organic unity of theory and practice should propel him into the arena of political action. If he were a Marxist he could not be a mere aesthete or literary critic, his first task would be to take an active part in

the concrete revolutionary struggles of the day."
(Lachs, 1968)

Reviewing Wald's book on the New York Intellectuals, Michael Sprinkler recently concluded that it was their lack of engagement in revolutionary politics that paved the way for their subsequent anti-communism :

"By distancing themselves from the actual practice of revolutionary politics, they [the New York intellectuals] created the airless environment in which anti-communism could thrive. and, if we're to draw lessons from their example, the most immediate surely, concerns the dangers of imagining oneself to be committed to revolutionary socialism without ever having to bear the burden of concrete revolutionary struggles."
(Sprinkler, 1987)

This raises however, the question of what constitutes a "concrete revolutionary struggle"? In the mid thirties most of the New York intellectuals held a position that called for direct participation in Party political activity and a committed partisan literary practice; their intellectual practice being, in their view, a form of revolutionary struggle. For the editors of PR, the role of literary critic pointing the way to others was both necessary and sufficient. Their conception of art as "kathartic" or "kinetic" (as Rahv described it in 1934, see page 136) enabled them to propose a model in which the literary critic or "ideologist" (see page 131) by showing artists how to produce the work that would impel the proletariat to act was engaged in "actual practice".

".... Formerly associated with the Communist Party, *PARTISAN REVIEW* strove from the first against its drive to equate the interests of literature with those of factional politics...."
Editorial 1937

While it is certainly true that the editors always resisted a subordination of aesthetic criteria to those of political expediency, this was not a simple opposition, but rather an attempt to construct a position more sophisticated than that of Mike Gold et al³⁰, yet within the parameters of the international Party policy. Not a resistance to Marxism, but an attempt to re-inflect Marxism as formulated in the United States with European and Soviet theory. It has been argued earlier (see page 24) that the PR discourse was both *contingent* and *necessary*; both responsive to events and self-referential insofar as it exposed elements of the discourse and their inter-relations to tests of their intellectual or "scientific" adequacy. The struggle to create a distinctive PR discourse was an intellectual exercise, an attempt to reconcile the dictates of proletarian activism with criteria for construction of an aesthetically superior revolutionary literature - a reconciliation that could not be achieved without an expulsion of certain elements of the 'orthodox' in the American Communist Party discourse (an economically determinist and strictly class-bound analysis) and the incorporation of others (a conception of *realism* rather than *naturalism* and an active historical subject.)

The struggle to create such a coherent discourse can be interpreted as simple dissidence, as rejection of the Party cultural position, but it

is argued here that examination of the modulating discourse does not justify such a conclusion. Rather, the editors were drawing on, and into their discourse, formulations advanced in the international Party literature, notably by Lukács³¹ and the newly available Engels letters.

The first issue of PR described itself as "a bi-monthly of revolutionary literature" and "an organ of the John Reed Club of New York" (of which Phillips was secretary.) It is not possible for magazines to be unproblematic "organs" of institutions - even if the JRC had had a unproblematic policy for PR to reflect - and the connection between the magazine and the Communist Party was "somewhat ambiguous" (Rahv, 1970, px.) Phillips reports that both he and Rahv were ambivalent about the Party - attracted by the political enthusiasm of its members, they were repelled by their aesthetic policies and sectarianism (Phillips, 1983, p34.)

The origins of the magazine and its relations with NM and the Communist Party are a matter of some debate, but "the most common version" (Cooney, 1986, p38) has Rahv and Phillips approaching Joseph Freeman in 1933 with the idea for the magazine and gaining his blessing and that of the Communist Party. The John Reed Club provided a suitable institutional, if not financial, base. A visit by John Strachey to New York provided an opportunity to earn some money and the proceeds (\$800) of a talk he gave as a benefit for the John Reed Club provided PR with its initial financing according to Phillips (Phillips, 1983, p35).

The members of the John Reed Clubs tended to be unknowns who had nowhere to publish unless they produced their own forum, e.g. Left Front in Chicago (the first), The Partisan in Hollywood, Red Pen in Philadelphia (which became Left Review in 1934), Partisan Review in New York, and Leftward in Boston. Other left literary publications of this ilk included, Anvil, published in Missouri ("Stories for workers"); Blast in New York ("Proletarian short stories"); and Dynamo in New York ("A journal of revolutionary poetry"). A New Masses editorial at the time of the launch of the JR Club publications commented :

"The main function of these magazines is to provide a creative outlet for our younger talented revolutionist. What characterizes most of these modest John Reed publications is their spirit of experimentation, their interest in the revolutionary aspects of their crafts, and their consecration to the struggles of the proletarian vanguard. In this country, these John Reed Club magazines are among the first seeds of a genuinely profound and variegated revolutionary culture that promises to blossom forth in the coming years of intense struggle and great proletarian victory."

(Gold (?), 1934, p5)

Homberger argues that between 1928 and 1930 NM was a "Proletcult magazine", i.e. publishing the work of genuine worker-writers, but that it could not sustain such a policy economically. The John Reed Clubs, he suggests, were formed to provide an outlet for the younger writers, freeing NM to return to a more "commercial editorial policy" (Homberger, 1986, p128). Gilbert, on the other hand, represents the relationship between NM and the new little magazines as more competitive, with the little magazines providing an alternative for unknown writers excluded by NM. Whichever is the case, the JRC publications were not expected to publish established writers, or to challenge the cultural leadership of NM (see page 143 for the consequences of doing so.)

Bloom's analysis, with its autobiographical emphasis, stresses the way in which the Party offered 'career opportunities' to the budding New York Intellectuals. The Depression had blocked the opportunity to escape their backgrounds using education as a route to professional status; blocked their hopes for a resolution of the alienation produced by their position hovering between their parents' society and the "Gentile society of mainstream America" (Bloom, 1986, p34). But the Party, he suggests, offered an alternative route. As Phillips commented, (in "Three Generations") the bourgeoisie did not want them but the Party did, and, whether or not Bloom is correct about the attractions of the Party, certainly it did offer a forum for publication.

The initial statement of policy in PR declared :

"PARTISAN REVIEW appears at a time when American literature is undergoing profound changes. The economic and political crisis of capitalism, the growth of the revolutionary movement the world over, and the successful building of socialism in the Soviet Union have deeply affected American life, thought and art. They have had far-reaching effects not only upon the political activities of writers and artists, but upon their writing and thinking as well. For the past four years the movement to create a revolutionary art, which for a decade was confined to a small group has spread throughout the United States. A number of revolutionary magazines has sprung up which publish revolutionary fiction, poetry and criticism. Some of these are issued by the John Reed Clubs.

PARTISAN REVIEW is the organ of the John Reed Club of New York which is the oldest and largest Club in the country. As such it has a specific function to fulfil. It will publish the best creative work of its members as well as of non-members who share the literary aims of the John Reed Club.

We propose to concentrate on creative and critical literature, but we shall maintain a definite viewpoint - that of the revolutionary working class. Through our specific literary medium we shall participate in the struggle of the workers and sincere intellectuals against imperialist war, fascism, national and racial oppression, and for the abolition of the system which breeds these

evils. The defense of the Soviet Union is one of our principal tasks.

We shall combat not only the decadent culture of the exploiting classes but also the debilitating liberalism which at times seeps into our writers through the pressure of class-alien forces. Nor shall we forget to keep our own house in order. We shall resist every attempt to cripple our literature by narrow-minded sectarian theories and practices.

We take this opportunity to greet the various magazines of revolutionary literature already in the field, especially the New Masses whose appearance as a weekly, like the present issuance of PARTISAN REVIEW is evidence of the growth of the new within the old."

(The Editors, 1934)

There is some debate over who wrote the editorial : Joseph Freeman claimed authorship (Aaron, 1977, p298); Phillips denied this to Gilbert and claimed he and Rahv wrote it (Gilbert, 1968, p121), but does not comment in his own autobiography. Either way, the statement expresses the magazine's genesis within the Communist movement in general and specifically as an organ of the JRC with a "function to fulfil". The reference to attempts to avoid "narrow-minded sectarian theories and practices" could be taken to indicate a desire to avoid what Phillips later called the "party-line aesthetics" of New Masses (Phillips, 1983, p35), or, alternatively, and rather more likely in the light of the contemporary texts, it has no such resonance and refers to avoiding what was then perceived as ultra-leftism (see Appendix Two.)

The original editorial board comprised : Nathan Adler, Edward Dahlberg, Joseph Freeman, Sender Garlin, Alfred Hayes, Milton Howard, Joshua Kunitz, Louis Lozowick, Leonard Mins, Wallace Phelps (Phillips' pen name until the July/August 1935 issue), Philip Rahv, Edwin Rolfe. By the end

of 1934, Dahlberg, Kunitz, Lozowick and Mins had left the board and in 1935 Leon Dennen, Kenneth Fearing, Henry Hart and Edwin Seaver joined and Nathan Adler, Sender Garlin, Milton Howard left. So in less than a year, only Alfred Hayes and Edwin Rolfe provided continuity apart from Rahv and Phillips.

From the start, William Phillips and Philip Rahv were the primary instigators of the editorial policy - with the possible exception of the first half of 1936. PR's first article outlining editorial policy in Issue 3 appeared over their names and stated that the magazine "approached revolutionary writing in the light of the tasks and problems discussed in this editorial" (Phillips and Rahv, 1934, p9) and other articles by Rahv and Phillips, separately and together, have the force of editorials. Phillips describes the situation in these terms :

"It was understood from the beginning that Rahv and I were the main forces behind the magazine and its chief editors. Since the magazine was sponsored by the John Reed Club however, it had to have the kind of editorial representation all organizations - especially political ones - demand. Hence the masthead of the first issue looked like a showcase of participatory democracy."
(Phillips 1983, p37)

The initial policy statement (see page 114/5) had committed PR to promoting the cause of "revolutionary art" and located it firmly within the John Reed Club movement. Insofar as the JRC's primary aim was to develop and disseminate "the revolutionary culture of the working class itself" (JRC Manifesto, 1932) and to promote the young writers who were in the JRCs, Rahv and Phillips aspired to a more critical literary stance. The early issues of PR reflected the tensions between the critical standards set out in the editorial articles and most of the

creative work available for publication. The work of more successful "fellow travellers" might have offered literature of a higher standard, but even if it had been considered the place of a JRC "little magazine" to publish it, the editors expressed too "leftist" an attitude to have wished to do so ("fellow travellers are trailing, not leading the literary movement", Phillips and Rahv, 1934). It was not the work of the liberal bourgeois writers (associated since 1930 with the movement) to which they were attracted aesthetically, but that of the politically conservative modernists.

The magazine in the years 1934-6 was almost exclusively literary (there were reviews of theatre and film in the first five issues of 1936) and typically contained proletarian poetry and prose with book reviews and one or two critical articles - usually by Rahv and/or Phillips, but including translations of pieces by key European and Soviet Party figures.

The contents indicate a tension between the role prescribed for a JRC magazine and the aspirations of the editors to construct a critical framework for production and analysis of revolutionary literature. Literature, in their view, having revolutionary potential not simply by virtue of its content but by its form. Their critical project was at odds with Party policy in its intellectualism, its orientation to European or Soviet theory rather than to American pragmatism, and its aestheticism.

The first issue was composed primarily of proletarian prose and poems by members of the New York Party cultural hierarchy and the New York John Reed Club (Joseph Freeman, Alfred Hayes, Edwin Rolfe, Ben Field, Arthur Pense) with excerpts from the work of the more well-known Grace Lumpkin and James T. Farrell.

The critical piece was Phelps/Phillips' "The Anatomy of Liberalism", a consideration of the place of literary criticism in the context of Henry Hazlitt's The Anatomy of Criticism. Critical contributions, Phillips asserted, must (unlike that of Hazlitt) be rooted in creative practice (connected with "new and forceful movements in literary history".) In the United States, Phillips argued, there were four critical traditions : the "dominant bourgeois" (Phillips, 1934, p47) trend stemming from T.S. Eliot, I.A. Richards and Croce; the tradition of the French surrealists (in the U.S. represented by the *transition* group); the work of the Southern regionalists (Winters, Tate, Blackmur) and the "sociological critics" (Van Wyck Brooks and Lewis Mumford). Each of these schools had grown out of an art movement and, in turn had deepened it. However, while asserting the centrality of the creative process, he did not accord it primacy :

".... in questions of art, unless one points to objective social forces, one cannot explain the changes in art values, nor the significance of those that exist at any time..."
(op cit, 1934, p48)

'Pure' art would be meaningless art. However, this was not, he said, to subscribe to the conventional view of partisan literature - proletarian art was not "propaganda" and Marxists did not want, as Hazlitt asserted they did, to enforce any specific attitudes, to bring

about any specific reforms, but rather to "introduce a new way of living and seeing into literature." "It does not enforce the new view, it embodies it." (op cit, p49, emphasis added)

Here we see the contradictions then contained within the discourse - on the one hand, the attribution of artistic values to "objective" social forces, on the other, the conception of art as inspirational of ways of "seeing and living". These need not, of course, be contradictory, and would not be if a simple propagandist model were advanced - that is, *classed* writers, directed by class interest reveal the reality of objective conditions - but the editors rejected such a model. Their use of the concept of *dialectical synthesis* (as evidenced in Rahv's review of Hazlitt, below) provided an intellectual resolution.

Rahv reviewed Hazlitt in International Literature (Rahv, 1934). Hazlitt had expressed concern about the spread of "Marxian standards" in literary criticism and had equated Marxism with economic determinism³², Rahv however, stressed the dialectical nature of Marxist materialism and the dialogue between elements of the literary heritage, and between form and content : "The unity of form and content is a unity of opposites, not an identity". Thus the degenerate content of a (bourgeois) literature in decline could still be formally effective.

In these two reviews are evident the determination of Rahv and Phillips to construct a critical model which was compatible with a commitment to advancing the likelihood of a proletarian revolution and an aesthetic one. The modernists were committed to aesthetic revolt, the proponents

of proletcult to a political. PR was committed to an integration of the two. Rahv's piece in NM had, using the concept of katharsis, argued for a dynamic, dialectical approach, a breaking through the separation of 'life' and 'art'; a realisation in action of the emotions aroused by literature - *emancipatory action*.

Whether Rahv had read Lukács at that point is unknown, but the early critical pieces in PR strongly suggest a debt to Lukács. Lukács spent 1930-1 in Moscow working in the Marx-Engels-Lenin Institute on then unpublished manuscripts (Kowakowski, 1978, p262; Laing, 1978, p47; Livingstone, 1980, p2) including early work (which he found justified his 'Hegelianism' in History and Class Consciousness) and material by Marx and Engels on art. After moving to Berlin in 1931, Lukács made use of the latter in an article "Tendenz oder Parteilickeit?" published in 1932 in Die Linskurve, journal of the League of Proletarian Revolutionary Writers³³. This was published in a slightly abridged³⁴ version in the second issue of PR. (See page 122-124.)

The material used by Lukács was published in 1932 when the Marx-Engels-Lenin Institute made available to the magazine Literary Heritage letters of Marx and Engels on art and criticism which Pravda described as "containing thoughts that may solve many questions connected with working out the creative paths for Soviet literature...." (Pravda, Dec 22 1932, quoted Schiller, 1933, p122). In 1933, in a series "Letters and Documents", International Literature published Engels' letter to Minna Kautsky ("perhaps the most valuable of them all", Schiller, 1933, p122); his letter to Margaret Harkness; Marx and Engels' letters to

Lassalle; and, in 1934, Engels' letters to Paul Ernst and Lenin on Tolstoi. The material was published in the context of the encouragement of fellow-travellers³⁵ (Margaret Harkness is described as one, Schiller, 1933B, p116) and they were preceded by lengthy glosses spelling out their significance. The first letters were introduced by F. Schiller, with the words, "we publish below a document of enormous significance for the solution of the question of Marxist-Leninist art criticism." (Schiller, 1933, p122.) Schiller went on to criticise "the theoreticians of the proletcult, left and literary front groups.." (op cit, p128) and to suggest that Engels' statements (Engels, whose views "it goes without saying, coincided with those of Marx" op cit, p116) in his letters are "incompatible with the 'left' idea of 'throwing the classics overboard from the modern ship'...." It was noted that Engels had acknowledged the services of the petty-bourgeois fellow travellers to the working class but while encouraging them, drew attention to their mistakes "in order to develop their capacities as political writers - their mastery of dialectical materialism." (Schiller, 1933B, p117.)

Gilbert argues that the example of the new Soviet culture did not seem relevant or inspiring to Rahv or Phillips and that they did not rely on "events in Soviet literature to bolster their literary arguments" (Gilbert, 1968, p133). But while they may not have given attention to the creative literature, this is certainly not true of the theoretical material. Whether Rahv and Phillips had access to the material in 1932 cannot be determined, but since Rahv was a contributor to International Literature, they must surely have read it in 1933/4.

"Propaganda or Partisanship?" advances the case for socialist realism as distinct from direct propaganda. Lukács argued that proletarian writing was criticised as being "tendentious" and "inartistic" and "hostile to art" (Lukács, 1934, p38) by bourgeois critics because they perceived it as an attack on their class position. Proletarian art had responded by turning the term propaganda into a "term of honour" (op cit, p39). This was understandable, he said, but not theoretically sound since it was an acceptance of the bourgeois distinction between "pure art" and "propaganda"³⁶, between "content" and "form", "art" and "productive work", distinctions which, for Lukács, were irrelevant since "realism", "socialist realism", transcends these dichotomies.

If a distinction between "pure" and "tendency" art were accepted, there were two potential resolutions : firstly, to assert that literature "has a social function in the class struggle, which determines its content; we consciously perform this function and do not concern ourselves with decadent-bourgeois problems of form." (op cit, p39) Or, alternatively, we acknowledge "esthetic immanence" and the "primacy of form over content". Neither is a resolution, since both are based on the incorrect premise of dichotomy and the ideological illusion³⁷ that art and activity/practice are distinct. Bourgeois culture rested on this division and therefore a writer was forced to either abjure propaganda for pure art (although the notion that this were possible was an illusion), or to re-create reality in an overtly moralistic manner - producing a foreign element in the creative work. Instead, the "subjective factor" (op cit, p42) must be acknowledged.

While the bourgeois writer could never transcend ideology (insofar as Balzac for instance was able to "perceive the real, objective, motive forces of social development"³⁸, he did it with "wrong consciousness" (p43) and thus achieved a creative effect which was not his intention), the proletarian writer could :

"The proletariat is not subject to this ideological limitation. For its social existence enables the proletariat (and hence the revolutionary proletarian writers) to transcend this limitation, to perceive the class relationships and the development of the class struggle behind the fetishist forms of capitalist society. Insight into these interrelationships and the laws of their evolution likewise signifies insight into the proletariat's historical function and into the role of the subjective factor in this development. This holds good both for the determination of this subjective factor by objective, economic-historical evolution and for the active function of this subjective factor in the transformation of objective conditions."
(op cit, p43)

The knowledge of the proletariat was not automatic, not a reflection of the conditions of their existence, but had to be "achieved". If it is possible to transcend ideology and to act in/on the knowledge of 'objective' conditions then the role of the revolutionary writer is to recreate reality. Thus the dilemma disappears, there is no pure art, nor is the writer making "'external' demands upon his recreation of reality", simply recreating it accurately; and that recreation necessarily therefore contains "the fate of these demands". (op cit, p44)

This 'objectivity' did not of course mean the writer was not partisan, on the contrary, partisanship was the "necessary pre-requisite for true - dialectical - objectivity." (op cit, emphasis original, p44/5.) It made possible portrayal of the totality, unlike most current writings, (not just "the literary practices of Trotskyism"³⁹, but even the best of

"our literature") which rarely succeeded in recreating what the class conscious section of the proletariat aimed at and what it was doing.

PR contains no direct comment on the article, but Lukács' formulation is evident in the first editorial in Issue 3. Elsewhere, in the Little Magazine⁴⁰ Rahv expressed reservations about, not the model proposed, but the wisdom of the terminology in the American context. He identified three meanings of the term propaganda. If it simply meant propagation of ideas (a "linguistic" definition, Rahv, 1934B, p2) there was nothing to debate, since such propagation was "inherent in the very nature of art" (op cit, p1), communicated through both content and form. However, if the term was understood to mean not only propagation of ideas, but as also the "unartistic propagation of ideas through a literary medium" (op cit, p1) (an "esthetic" definition op cit, p2) then it was another matter. If this was the meaning of the term, then propaganda should be rejected because :

"..before a political concept can be made effective in poetry, it must first be translated into human terms, into the relations of sensuous detail and imagery."
(op cit, p1)

It was thus the business of Marxist criticism to identify those writers who were devoid of talent and to deflate their importance :

"Marxism fights the vulgarization of literature by its 'leftist' hangers on; it will not and cannot support the desire of a group of primitives to hypostatize their lack of talent and to repudiate the cultural heritage."
(op cit, p2)

However, he went on, these were not the only two meanings of the word. Lukács, in PR, had defined propaganda philosophically - as a subjective

moralising wish; a summons contrasted with reality. Proletarian art, or propaganda, being that art which portrayed reality objectively. In Rahv's opinion, Lukács was "perfectly correct" (op cit, p2) if his definition was accepted. However, since this was not usually the way in which the term was used (bourgeois critics had collapsed the first two meanings, choosing to say, this is a proletarian book, therefore it's bad because all proletarian books are badly written), Rahv was cautious about the advisability of equating art and propaganda in this way.

In January 1934 (in the German edition of International Literature) Lukács had published an attack on the (modernist) Expressionists in Germany who, in the context of the rise of fascism, he accused of promoting irrationalism⁴¹. Rahv and Phillips, I suggest, used his arguments in "Propaganda or Partisanship?" to underpin an analysis which was to develop more toward that taken by Bloch in his debate with Lukács in 1938 (see Aesthetics and Politics).

In 1938, Lukács' promotion of realism rested more explicitly on its ability to convey totality - on a unified reality :

"If literature is a particular form by means of which objective reality is reflected, then it becomes of crucial importance for it to grasp that reality as it truly is, and not merely to confine itself to reproducing whatever manifests itself immediately and on the surface. If a writer strives to represent reality as it truly is, i.e. if he is an authentic realist, then the question of totality plays a decisive role, no matter how the writer actually conceives the problem intellectually."
(Lukács, 1977, p33)

This unified reality might appear to be disintegrating but was not - it only appeared to be because "the basic economic categories of capitalism are always reflected in the minds of men, directly, but always back to

front". (op cit, p32). For Bloch on the other hand :

"Lukács's thought takes for granted a closed and integrated reality that does indeed exclude the subjectivity of idealism, but not the seamless 'totality' which has always thriven best in idealist systems, including those of classical German philosophy. Whether such a totality in fact constitutes reality is open to question. If it does, then Expressionist experiments with disruptive and interpolative techniques are but an empty *jeu d'esprit*, as are the more recent experiments with montage and other devices of discontinuity. But what if Lukács's reality - a coherent, infinitely mediated totality - is not so objective after all? What if his conception of reality has failed to liberate itself completely from Classical systems? What if authentic reality is also discontinuity? Since Lukács operates with a closed, objectivistic conception of reality, when he comes to examine Expressionism he resolutely rejects any attempt on the part of artists to shatter any image of the world, even that of capitalism. Any art which strives to exploit the *real* fissures in surface inter-relations and to discover the new in their crevices, appears in his eyes merely as a wilful act of destruction. He thereby equates experiment in demolition with a condition of decadence."
(Bloch, 1977, p22)

As the discourse of PR was reorganised over the next few years it became clear that the editors did not accept a conception of a unified totality, nor the "reflection theory", nor certainly, a view of modernism as decadent. Nonetheless, nor did they move toward Bloch's model of a consciously deconstructive modernism. Modernists like Eliot or Proust were perceived as deconstructive by virtue of their artistry, not their politics and "realists" like Thomas Mann were promoted while Joyce (Lukács' *bête noir* in the 1938 article) continued to be the subject of attack. This ambivalence toward Modernism - or post-modernism - persisted into the fifties and sixties when the younger writers were attacked for their nihilism.

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From its inception, PR indicated a clear debt to Lukács' aesthetic theory. Additionally, the magazine presented an historicist and non-determinist Marxism influenced, via Sidney Hook, by Lukács and Korsh.

Hook was not yet a contributor - he had split from the Party⁴² - but he was soon to become a strong theoretical influence. In 1933 Hook had published Towards the Understanding of Karl Marx, subtitled "A revolutionary interpretation" in which he developed ideas he had outlined in articles in the Journal of Philosophy, Symposium and Modern Quarterly between 1928 and 1932. In the preface, Hook explained that the book was not written by an "'orthodox' Marxist" but by an author who felt that "orthodox Marxism, in the form in which it flourished from 1895 to 1917 was an emasculation of Marx's thought." (Hook, 1933, pix) Orthodoxy was blind faith, fatal to honest thinking and antithetical to Marx's revolutionary project. In an analysis which Hook noted was indebted to Lukács' History and Class Consciousness for its emphasis on the significance of the dialectical element in Marx and his debt to Hegel⁴³, and to Korsch's Marxism and Philosophy with its emphasis on the "practical-historical axis of Marx's thought, Hook asserted Marx's role as a political activist.

While conceding that there were contradictions in Marx's thought⁴⁴, Hook was concerned to stress that the early writings were integral to the later, and that, while Marxism was not determinist, it was "scientific" in its own terms. That is, it was not scientific in the traditional sense in that it was not neutral, but involved "class-values" and was designed to achieve a "class goal", but it did provide a "scientific

method" insofar as it was "adequate and efficient to secure its own goal" (op cit, p6).

The Second International had distorted Marxism, he argued, by substituting "inevitability" for Marx's starting points : "human need, evolution and action" (op cit, p20). Marxism was a theory of revolution, a theory premised on the concept of conscious will. Luxemburg and Lenin had restored the concept of human agency to Marxism; Lenin most appropriately with his analysis of the necessity for a vanguard of professional ideologists. Hook reserved criticism of Lenin however for his commitment to the mechanical correspondence theory of knowledge, where he followed Engels in asserting that sensations are copies (reflections) of the material world⁴⁵. For Hook, "Knowledge is an active affair, a process in which there is an interaction of matter, culture and mind, and that sensation is not knowledge but part of the materials with which knowledge works." (op cit, p63)

Defending the dialectic against suggestions that it was religious mystification (advanced by Eastman in 1926 and continued through an attack on Hook's book in 1934 and used by Wilson in PR in 1938, see page 187), Hook asserted that the dialectic allowed an analysis of culture as an inter-related whole, but with relatively independent parts, and as continuous through change. Human beings are conditioned by their culture, yet they change it. From objective conditions (thesis), arise human needs and purposes which, in realising the possibilities for change (antithesis) set up action to realise these possibilities

(synthesis). All change exhibits both the unity between phases (the elements preserved) and the difference (the elements destroyed) and qualitative novelty (the new forms of organisation). (op cit, p84) Thus Communism does not involve a complete break with the past : "The existence of the great cultural heritage of the past would always constitute a challenge to reinterpretation in and for the present" (op cit, p85)

"Marx himself, was well aware of the fact that the art or culture of an historical period, although reflecting a definite form of social development, can make an esthetic appeal which far transcends the immediate historical milieu in which it arose."
(op cit, p87)

Marx's comment on Greek art⁴⁶, Hook said, "strikes a clear note in behalf of the relative autonomy of the esthetic experience." (op cit, p88)

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Initially the magazine was fairly 'orthodox', publishing reviews of proletarian literature and only gradually did the dissident elements of the fledgling discourse move to a more central position. However, the reviews of proletarian literature that PR initially published were rarely more than lukewarm in their praise and showed the contradictions⁷ noted in Phillips' review of Hazlitt (see page 118), that is, between art as reflective of and conditioned by objective social forces and art as inspirational of action to change social conditions.

In Issue 2, Parched Earth by Arnold B. Armstrong and The Shadow Before by William Rollins Jr. were praised as good examples of the "new class

novels"⁴⁷. In this review Rahv acknowledged that Armstrong had an "inadequate mastery of literary craft" (Rahv 1934D, p50), but argued that this should not prevent the reader from appreciating "the large human panorama revealed in the book...", a panorama seen through the eyes of a "revolutionist pulsing with that 'noble proletarian hate' towards the exploiting class, which as Lenin once said, is the beginning of all wisdom." (op cit, p51) The novels' "primary merit" (Rahv was dubious about their aesthetic qualities) lay in the fact that their authors were "acutely conscious of the material reality of act and character". They were aware that the "economic factor" was the leading factor in the determination of life under capitalism" (op cit, p50). Rollins was the better writer and more capable of "realism" - his "psychological realism" was unrivalled in the American revolutionary novel :

"each of his psychological perceptions is a projection of social character, and as such is rooted in class reality."
(op cit, p51)

Rahv also noted that "in accordance with the Marxist view of cultural continuity", Rollins hadn't discarded his literary heritage. Nor was he guilty of tendency writing :

"He has written a novel devoid of that communist self-consciousness that results in formula, rather than in the imaginative re-creation of life."
(op cit, p52)

In the first issue Rahv had reviewed Hemingway's Winner take Nothing and commented that, while the work didn't reflect a solid social base, Hemingway was "in full control of his formal effects" (Rahv 1934C, p58).

"a proletarian critic's evaluation of Hemingway's subject matter and detailed content cannot but show its uselessness to the proletarian writer. None the less, though in his case as in all others, content determines form, it would be sheer 'left' doctrinarism wholly to discard the cluster of creative means which

he evolved."
(op cit, p59)

This attraction to *form*, this call for an imaginative rather than a pedestrian realism was expanded in the first editorial in the third issue. In this Rahv and Phillips programmatically identified the "Problems and Perspectives in Revolutionary Literature" and staked a claim to critical leadership. Here for the first time they advanced an analysis that was, during the next two years, to divide them from the Party. The key elements of this were : firstly, the need for an aesthetic theory within which to create revolutionary literature and the central role of the critic in developing and applying this. And secondly, the need for a dialectical synthesis of political theory, aesthetic practice and experience; a synthesis which presumed a synthesis of form and content. (The term "synthesis" is used here since it is appropriate to the discourse under examination, but "creative articulation" would be more apt in my own terminology.)

Revolutionary literature, they suggested, was not unified - inevitably, since its progress was "a process unfolding through a series of contradictions, through the struggle of opposed tendencies.." - and it was "the business of criticism to help writers resolve those contradictions. Unfortunately, writers currently were "unfortified by criticism with the Marxian equipment necessary for coping with the problems of creative method." There had been little attempt made "to place such theoretical work in the center of our discussion" (Phillips and Rahv, 1934, p4). "The critic is the ideologist of the literary

movement, and any ideologist, as Lenin pointed out 'is worthy of that name only when he marches ahead of the spontaneous movement...'" Thus it is clear that within the terms of this discourse critics were actively - if indirectly - engaged in revolutionary activity; their role the literary equivalent of the ideologists of the Vanguard Party. The critic intervened by directing the writer, who intervened by issuing the "summons" to action.

Having thus identified unequivocally the centrality of their role, the two "ideologists" sketched out the problems. Revolutionary literature was dominated by "leftism" - a mechanism which subordinated aesthetic considerations to the directly political and ignored the literary heritage. Its identifying features were clear :

"Its zeal to steep literature overnight in the political program of Communism results in the attempt to force the reader's responses through a barrage of sloganised and inorganic writing. 'Leftism', by tacking on political perspectives to awkward literary forms, drains literature of its more specific qualities."

(op cit, p5)

and its cause equally evident :

"'Leftism' is not an accidental practice, nor can it be regarded merely as youthful impetuosity. Its literary 'line' stems from the understanding of Marxism as mechanical materialism. In philosophy, mechanical materialism assumes a direct determinism of the whole superstructure by the economic foundation, ignoring the dialectical interaction between consciousness and environment, and the reciprocal influence of the parts of the superstructure on each other and on the economic determinants. The literary counterpart of mechanical materialism faithfully reflects this vulgarization of Marxism. But its effects strike even deeper : it paralyzes the writer's capacities by creating a dualism between his artistic consciousness and his beliefs, thus making it impossible for him to achieve anything beyond fragmentary, marginal expression."

(op cit, p6)

It is unlikely that this analysis would have been welcomed by the New York Party cultural hierarchy, or that this would be their conception of "leftism". It does illustrate however the way in which concepts from the Party discourse were taken and re-inflected. Use of accepted rhetoric often obscures significant changes of meaning. (Similarly a sustained and informed programme can 'capture' concepts from the opposition, as "liberal" was claimed in the fifties.)

On the "right wing", Rahv and Phillips argued, were fellow travellers, who differed little from liberal bourgeois writers, and some younger poets who had "adopted the obscurantism of the verse in the bourgeois-esthete little magazines." (op cit, p6) And - in case anyone should think those remaining had solved the problem - it was pointed out that most of those in the middle simply had no commitment to any particular form. Turning to the other critics, Rahv and Phillips (while conceding he had "helped to clarify our approach") attacked Hicks' series of articles on "Revolution and the Novel" in New Masses, which they felt was prescriptive of content and style "without first establishing essential Marxian generalizations about the relation of method to theme and form." (op cit, p7). Other critics - Obed Brooks, Mike Gold, Joseph Freeman, Joshua Kunitz were merely mentioned. •

Having thus dismissed virtually all the current literature and criticism, the editorial turned to prescription : first, the question of "strata" in the writer's audience. Workers tended to prefer "popular" writing, and intellectuals "intellectual" writing. The proletarian writer must work towards "*unifying* the responses and experiences of his

total audience." Secondly, "The question of creative method is primarily a question of the imaginative assimilation of political content...", a political content merged into "the creation of complete personalities" (op cit, p8), a creative synthesis. And here a concept was introduced which was to be used extensively in the future - "usables" - the retention of some elements of the bourgeois heritage. Revolutionary literature must be judged against the whole body of literature. The measure of success was not "immediate agitational significance" but the "recreation of social forces in their entirety." (op cit, p9) PR, they said, approached revolutionary writing "in the light of the tasks and problems discussed in this editorial". Unfortunately, they conceded, while they aimed for "creative experimentation and critical precision", much of the material they published didn't measure up to these criteria and at least 75% of the work submitted to them was "leftist". With a final burst of pragmatic humility however they concluded that PR could not "presume to solve these questions single handed" and acknowledged NM as the "central organ" of the revolutionary cultural movement. (op cit, p10)

The editorial was included in the Party's 1935 anthology⁴⁸, Proletarian Literature in the United States (as "Recent problems of Revolutionary Literature") but their points of divergence from Party policy were by then clearly established and the article attracted criticism for its theoreticism (see page 152.)

Freeman's "critical introduction" to the anthology indicated the orthodox position. A position within which Rahv and Phillips were

working while extending its premises beyond that which was acceptable to the American Party leadership. Art, explained Freeman, was the product of class culture, its special function the transmission of class-determined experience. Freeman believed that there were universal, transcendent, experiences - emotions of love, hate, anger, fear - but argued that these are experienced in, and determined by, a class context. So too, the writer cannot represent them in the abstract, but must do so through specific experiences, experiences familiar to him/her. Most writers were not originally proletarian, but had been precipitated into the ranks of the proletariat since 1929 by the "social economic crisis". Freeman identified three periods of change among left writers : the period from the poetic renaissance of 1912 to the slump of 1929, during which writers, headed by Whitman, rejected the traditional concept of "eternal values" for a concern with immediate American experience. The period immediately following the crash when writers became aware of the realities of class society and sympathised with the proletariat as "*men*" but were unable as "*poets*" to cut the "umbilical cord which bound them to bourgeois culture" (Freeman, 1935, p20) - politically they were of the proletariat, aesthetically of the bourgeoisie. Finally, the growth in the thirties of an association between writers and the Party (Communist); the flowering of revolutionary proletarian literature. The 1935 (Popular Front) American Writers Congress was evidence, he felt, that "the dichotomy between poetry and politics had vanished, and art and life were fused." (op cit, p28)

In the fourth issue Rahv elaborated the position expressed in their editorial in a review of the criticism of Joseph Wood Krutch, "How the wasteland became a flower garden". The title referred to the fact that Krutch had been a critic of the "wasteland school of thought", that is, he had assumed that art was negative, now he had reversed his position to assert that it was joyous, "its purpose to make life tolerable" (Rahv, 1934E, p37). Rahv disagreed; art was "the *signification* of reality" (op cit, p39) thus, while bourgeois art was indeed intended to make the masses tolerate the status quo, it could not be affirmative because it was an art in decline. Revolutionary art, on the other hand, was necessarily "kinetic", "impelling [the revolutionary class] to the disruption of the social equilibrium and to the fulfilment of its only possible emotional release - action." This conception of art as kinetic was central to the criticism of Rahv and Phillips in the mid thirties, particularly for Rahv (see his first article in New Masses), and while they wrote increasingly favourably of Eliot, they were consistently critical of Joyce during the period because they considered his work encouraged passivity.

However, Rahv argued, while bourgeois art could not signify fully, it was a leftist over-simplification to dismiss it. While bourgeois literature did, broadly speaking, justify the status quo, this process took "contradictory forms", "sometimes even to the extent of undermining its own class foundations." Here Rahv divided bourgeois art into two types "commercial" and "intellectual" (c.f. revolutionary art as "popular" and "intellectual" in the editorial.) Commercial art affected the masses directly as "the open instrument of the propertied class

interest" while intellectual art did not unproblematically reflect its class origins because it articulated despair, slashed philistinism and even indulged in "virulent social criticism" - albeit usually "not stated in class terms but deflected through various crooked mirrors." (op cit, p40/1)

In "Problems and Perspectives", Rahv and Phillips argued that revolutionary writers empathised with their, proletarian, audience, unlike the aesthetes of the twenties. In "Three Generations", prompted by Malcolm Cowley's Exile's Return, Phillips analysed the position of the younger revolutionary writers in relation to the first generation - the pre First World War bohemians - and the second "lost" generation - the exiles who went to Europe. The third or "proletarian" generation were, Phillips explained (in the then orthodox analysis, see Freeman's introduction to Proletarian Literature) were not proletarian by birth, but by identification, proletarianised by the Depression⁴⁹.

Much of the problem with proletarian literature, Phillips suggested, was that the revolutionary literary movement was an amalgam of two generations, the young third generation (Rahv and Phillips would have been 26 or 27) and representatives of the previous generation (unspecified, but would include Gold, Freeman, Kunitz, Hicks) who had not gone through the period of literary experiment of their contemporaries because they did not go abroad, having "side-stepped it in order to carry the line of revolution forward" (Phillips, 1934B, p51). Clearly this was most praiseworthy, but it meant that they had not assimilated the literary spirit of the twenties, a spirit which "is a

part of our heritage and of which most of the younger writers were "acutely conscious". (Phillips had come to the movement via the Modernists and, according to the notes on contributors, Issue 2, Rahv was engaged in a book on the period.) Thus in their first year of publication the editors had already incorporated into their terms of reference the "spirit of the twenties", *Aestheticism*.

The conscious young writers were flanked, they said, by leftists who repudiated the heritage, and, insofar as it is impossible to repudiate a heritage entirely, continued the tradition of "primitive popular writing", and rightists who used the methods of writers like Joyce or Eliot without a sense of to what revolutionary use these influences "should be bent" (Phillips, 1934B, p53). The key to an adequate partisan literature was "the Marxian idea of synthesis" :

"The lost generation negated many of the values of the preceding one, though both operated in the same framework of capitalist culture. In rejecting this culture, the proletarian generation effects a higher synthesis of both earlier periods."
(op cit, p54)

While, in its specifics, it might well have affronted the older party stalwarts, this "Hegelianism" was not as dissident as it might appear in the American context. Issue 5 contained excerpts from Bukharin's speech made at the All-Union Congress of Soviet Writers (Socialist Realism had been officially adopted at this Congress in 1934 as the goal of Soviet Art with keynote speeches delivered by Gorky, Zhadanov and the temporarily rehabilitated Bukharin, Laing, 1978, p37/8). While Socialist Realism might have been interpreted very prescriptively in subsequent years, in 1934, Bukharin's analysis shared much with Lukács

(op cit, p38). The excerpt printed in PR dealt (unsurprisingly) with general issues of literary criticism which played, Bukharin said, a "great role, but not always a constructive one." Poetry, he said, "is the fixing of emotional experience in words", the "mediator" of feelings and experiences of historic-social human beings. The issue of content and form was the most burning issue and particularly urgent was the "problem of the cultural heritage in general and ... the problem of mastering the technique of art in particular" (Bukharin, 1934, p11.) We must learn from the past in the fashion prescribed by "the *materialistic dialectic*, according to which the 'negation' is not a simple process of destruction, but a new phase in which, to speak with Hegel, 'the old exists in a higher form'." Poetry must reflect a "multiplicity" (op cit, p12) of material (content) and, since content and form are allied, therefore of form. A multiplicity unified not artificially, but by "*socialist realism*", "that special method in art which is in accordance with dialectical materialism. It is the transference of dialectical materialism into the world of art." (op cit, p13)

In another excerpt from a speech to Congress, Johannes Becher (the editor of the German edition of International Literature) argued that, since the fascists were destroying German culture, the proletariat must make it over, "rendering it serviceable to their *new* and broader class aims..." (Becher, 1934, p21)

* * * * *

Central to Rahv and Phillips' attempt to redefine the terms of the American Communist cultural debate was the issue of form and content. Proletarianism valorised content, modernism valorised form. Rahv and Phillips theorised a synthesis of the two - not a submersion or negation of one or the other, but an articulation, a unity based on tension, on contradiction.

In the first issue of 1935 Phillips focused on "Form and Content". Sketching the progress of the debate in idealist philosophy - as "a special case of the general relation of matter to spirit, substance to essence, the temporal to the eternal, etc." (Plato, Plotinus, Kant, Hegel, Croce) (Phillips, 1935, p31) - he noted that such debate had been almost entirely absent from literary criticism until the Twentieth Century. The transition to "explicitly revolutionary literature" (op cit, p32) however, focused attention on the issue which had to be resolved in order to employ the "usable elements" of the literary heritage. (Cooney proposes this emphasis on the "usable past" in PR was a direct (American) transmission from Van Wyck Brooks' "On Creating a Usable Past" in Dial, 1918, but it clearly had other histories too.)

Content and form could not be defined independently, Phillips asserted; not reduced to what a writer says and how s/he says it, but rather, they were "two aspects of a unified vision" (op cit, emphasis original, p33). The 'content' of, for instance, Hamlet's soliloquy, is not the specific question posed (whether 'tis nobler, etc). The question :

"takes its meaning from Hamlet's person and state of mind, in short, from Shakespeare's complete perception of the play of human motives and of the character of Hamlet. And this is given not only in the working out of the plot, in the innuendoes of action, but

also in the very idiom of the soliloquy which imparts Shakespeare's grasp of behavior in his time. In saying this, the idea of form is included in that of content."

(op cit, p34)

Form is a "*mode of perception*", perception of specific literary content:

"The values, philosophy and subject of an art work are modulated by the insight of the writer into events and characters which give the structural embodiment of the content. The point of contact to the reader is the final fusion."

(op cit, 34)

Since form and content are fused, the usable elements of the literary heritage will not be simply the forms, but rather the "*sensibility of traditional writers*".

"The task of the revolutionary writer is the forging of a relatively new sensibility, compounded of his Marxian outlook, proletarian experience and whatever available literary sensibilities exist."

(op cit, p36)

Thus, Eliot's sensibility, for instance, has

"produced a trenchant idiom for the dislocation of bourgeois perspectives amidst a tightening commercial way of life."

(ibid)

* * * * *

Even in the earliest issues a distinctive PR discourse was being formulated drawing on an aesthetic tradition, on the "usable" elements of the bourgeois culture. A discourse which emphasised *form* as well as *content*, proposing a dialectical synthesis. A discourse which proposed a role for the intellectual critic, which asserted the necessity of a theoretical framework for the creation of a partisan kinetic literature which looked to European and Soviet traditions.

The critical position which was being constructed in PR exploited spaces in the Communist Party discursive apparatus but, as it became more distinctive, it was confronted by the limitations imposed by that apparatus.

There was debate within the Communist movement as to the proper role of the JRCs, and this extended, of course, to the magazines they produced and their editorial policy. Should they promote unknown writers who could/should not be published in NM, or should they too be attracting the higher profile authors and critics?

In September 1934, the JRCs held their National Conference at which both Rahv and Phillips led sessions; Phillips discussed the role of the JRC magazines and Rahv "dealt with the lessons of the Soviet Writers Congress and defined the nature of bourgeois influence on proletarian writers" (Rahv and Phillips, 1934B, p61), and Phillips was elected to the new National Committee. PR's critical leadership, at least by their own report, was making headway - leftism was denounced by the Writers Commission and "in this connection, the discussion in the Writers Commission indicated that Partisan Review was exerting a wide influence among the young writers." (op cit, p60). At the Conference, Trachtenberg proposed that the JRCs took the initiative in organising a National Writers Congress in the next 6-8 months and in the first issue of PR of 1935, a call to participate in the Congress with the intention of setting up a League of American Writers affiliated to the IURW appeared.

Despite the presence of other editors on the board, and some constraints on policy, Rahv and Phillips had appeared to be building the form of magazine that they wanted in 1934. At the end of 1934 it was announced that the next issue would be larger and "a much greater variety of writing will be presented, giving room to experimentation in form and to analytical and directive Marxian criticism of a wider scope than heretofore." (The Editors, 1934B, emphasis added.) However, the aspirations of the young editors to develop a theoretical framework for revolutionary literature and to publish aesthetically innovative work went beyond the role conceived for the JRC magazines within the Party hierarchy, particularly as the move toward the formal adoption of the Popular Front policy hardened the dichotomy between policy for Party members and for fellow travellers. In December 1934, Granville Hicks examined "Our magazines and their functions" in New Masses, arguing that resources (financial and human) should not be wasted. He asserted the hegemony of NM : "...There is no sense in mincing words. The New Masses is the principal organ of the revolutionary cultural movement" (Hicks, 1934, p22). Since it had the largest and most diverse audience, "no work should appear in other revolutionary magazines that could be effectively used in the New Masses." Other magazines should only exist if they fulfilled a different and specific function; the proper role of JRC magazines was to publish the work of its members that could not be published elsewhere. He singled out PR for not doing this - its first five issues had contained work from non-Club members and by well established writers who could easily have been published elsewhere. Currently, only "about one-fifth" of the pages had been used "to good advantage". Either it should publish the work of members, or long

critical essays about "the theoretical and practical problems of proletarian culture" (op cit, p23) - or it should combine with Dynamo and publish poetry. Bohemian individualism, he warned sternly, was not appropriate and a reorganisation of the revolutionary press was necessary.⁵⁰

Issue no 7 was duly combined with Dynamo for a united creative front preceding the Writers Congress and included "a discussion of some of the literary problems which face writers today and which will be further considered at the Writers Congress..." (The Editors, 1935, p2) The introduction to the issue continued with the statement "none of the articles and comments necessarily represents the editorial opinion of Partisan Review, nor are they to be taken as programmatic statements" (op cit, p2.) There were three articles, on the novel by Seaver, on criticism by Rahv and Phillips and on poetry by Rolfe, each followed by three or four comments by different writers. Since every article by Rahv and Phillips indicates that the making of programmatic statements was precisely their intention, and in the light of critical comments made by others of them in the next few issues, it would appear that this statement represented, not Phillips and Rahv declining to align themselves with the other statements, but rather, the editorial board asserting their control. The internal evidence suggests that for a period of just over a year, Rahv and Phillips lost control of editorial policy⁵¹, recovering it during the Summer of 1936, after which the magazine appeared for one issue (October 1936) before closing down until December 1937 when it appeared as the 'new' PR after the public break with the Communist Party at the 1937 Writers Congress.

In the pre-conference issue, asking, and answering, "What is a proletarian novel?", Edwin Seaver followed the Popular Front line in declaring that a proletarian novel was "not necessarily a novel written by a worker, about workers or for workers" (Seaver, 1935, p5). While this might seem to remove the point of the phrase, Seaver was able to explain that many petty-bourgeois writers were being proletarianised and that :

"it is not the class origin of the novelist that matters but the present class alignment, not the period of history in which he sets his story, or the kind of characters he writes about, but his ideological approach to his story and characters, which approach is entirely conditioned by his acceptance of the Marxian interpretation of history."
(op cit, p7)

In the "Comments", Edwin Berry Burgum added that the proletarian novel was a novel written "under the influence of dialectical materialism from the point of view of the class conscious proletariat" (Burgum, 1935, p8) but that the petty-bourgeoisie "had achieved or were achieving this point of view under the pressure of events." (op cit, p10) Henry Hart suggested that a distinction between revolutionary and proletarian novels would be useful, given that "the acceptance of the Marxian interpretation of history should and must also be utilised in novels not primarily proletarian." (Hart, 1935, p12)

James T. Farrell on the other hand, presaging his break with the Party line presented in Notes on Literary Criticism (see p 156/7), thought too much revolutionary criticism was sterile in its "crass determinism" (Farrell, 1935, p14), with no acknowledgement of the fact that literature was a process, a literary process. Quoting Marx on the lack of a direct relationship between art and material relationships during

the periods of the highest development of art, he accorded an active role to culture, asserting that cultural manifestations evolve away from economic ones over time and become causal factors in the production of change.

In "On Criticism" Phillips and Rahv asserted that Marxian criticism involved, on the one hand a "day to day practical evaluation of trends and individual works" and, on the other, "the elaboration of general esthetic principles in relation to the history of literature as a whole" and clearly they considered the latter must form the foundation for the former - "it is difficult to have a consistent and accurate practical criticism when it is not based on a considerable body of esthetic theory." This was why most Marxian criticism was inadequate - empirical and vulgar. As new recruits with little grasp of Marxism rushed into print to "rediscover postulates long-since established", "an anti-esthetic soon gets mistaken for a new esthetic." (Phillips and Rahv, 1935, p16)

Rahv and Phillips had been asserting precisely this for several years, but 1935 saw a decisive shift in the Party toward the Popular Front, polarising a dichotomy between the intellectual theorists and the populists. We must, said Phillips and Rahv, have an aesthetic, but its development was "being seriously hampered by the prevalent vociferous aversion to theoretical analysis." And, in a criticism that was to be a foundation of their position in 1937/8 as they split from the Communist Party to align themselves with international Trotskyism, they argued that, while theoretical analysis was accused of being "bourgeois

estheticism" and "academicism", this dismissal was not "based on Marxian principles, but on what is known as the 'pragmatic American temper'" and "in literature as in politics Marxism faces the task of fighting this 'pragmatism' which familiar historical conditions have produced in the United States." (op cit, p17)

Criticism was not meant for mass audiences, it should not be attacked by "making the intelligence of a mythical reader-ignoramus the norm of the critical level." Certainly one section of critical writing simplified for the "purpose of daily reviewing" but that wasn't criticism's main task :

"criticism is in the main a form of conceptual analysis, and is primarily directed at readers familiar with the problems of literature. 'Criticism is not the passion of the intellectual, but the intellect of passion'. (Marx) If literature is a weapon in life, criticism is a weapon in literature."
(op cit, p17)

Criticism should not be "servile", it should not be hailing poor work, but "creating a new esthetic, re-evaluating literary history, advancing proletarian art." It was an axiom of Marxism that art "like every other form of communicative activity" is a social instrument and therefore a weapon in the class struggle, but it is not a direct weapon, it acts on those "susceptible to artistic mediums" (p18), not as a "system of signposts", but as "an instrument of reorienting social values, attitudes and sympathies" (op cit, p18/19)

Unlike Seaver, Rahv and Phillips did not think the "ideological approach" of an author was the factor which determined the effectivity of their work. For them, the "general ideology" (like most Marxists at

the time they used the word neutrally to mean a world view rather than negatively⁵²) and the "specific content" of his/her work were not identical. The specific content (taken as being shaped by the form in which it inhered, see Phillips on "Form and Content" page 139-141) might well through its accuracy of representation belie the ideology - as it had in Balzac. Obviously the 'better' your ideology, the better your vision could be :

"The best ideology of any given period is that which defines most accurately the necessary movement of history. Today Marxism is this most advanced ideology."⁵³
(p21)

and therefore provided the artist with the possibility of seeing reality "more profoundly and comprehensively" than any other ideology. However, talent was also important, differentiating between artists working "on the same ideological terrain" :

"All that ideology does is help light up areas of experience, but it does not grant you the eyes with which you see. It is the most advantageous interaction of talent and ideology which permits the development of a great literature."
(op cit, p21/22, emphasis original)

As to revolutionary literature, the class struggle was its "directive image", but around that the artist must build "a network of human experience in all its multiplicity" "The class struggle is not a mold into which the artist stuffs experience; it is the reality giving coherence and structure to wide ranges of life" (op cit, p22). It was not the overt political acts, the open strife, the strike for instance, which should be the subject of revolutionary literature, but the background to this, the life of the working class. And a range of forms were appropriate to such representation, the literary past must be

reworked - Lenin defining leftism had said it "persists in the unconditional repudiation of old forms and fails to see that new content is breaking through all and sundry forms." (quoted op cit, p24)

The "Comments" on this piece by Newton Arvin and Granville Hicks indicated that Phillips and Rahv had overstepped the mark - reorganised the elements of their discourse too dramatically. The article was considered to be over-concerned with theory and too open to other literary traditions. While Arvin said he found it hard not to agree with "the spirit" of the article he made it clear that certain authors simply could not be tolerated : "There may well be situations, moreover, in which it is practically more important to discredit certain writers and certain ideas than to keep the dialectical scale in fastidious balance". Literature had sometimes to yield to "necessities" (Arvin, 1935, p26) Hicks warned that critics who did understand aesthetic theory should not be scornful of critics or writers who did not. They must be careful not to become doctrinaire - "handing from some mist-veiled mountaintop meaningless decalogs." (Hicks, 1935, p30)

For a period after this Rahv and Phillips' contributions were minimal and the magazine was modified in line with the then Party policy to aim at a wider audience. The contributions from Rahv and Phillips were limited to occasional book reviews with Rahv's (if not Phillips') indicating dissent.

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It is generally agreed that the decision to close down the JRCs had been made prior to the announcement of the full-blown Popular Front policy⁵⁴. Cooney reports that the New York JRC had been closed down by February 1935 (Cooney, 1986, p80), but PR did not remove its reference to being an organ of the JRC until Issue 8, after the Congress when it was described as "a new literary magazine edited by a group of young communist writers..." (The Editors, 1935B, p2) and the price was reduced, from 25 cents to 15 cents, in order to try to reach a wider audience. (It was also the first time that Phillips appeared in the editorial list as Phillips rather than Phelps.)

This issue contained only short book reviews by Phillips and Rahv; Phillips' was on Farrell in which he said little controversial, but Rahv's on Nelson Algren's novel complained that the revolutionary press had almost entirely ignored "the first complete portrait of the lumpen-proletariat in American Revolutionary literature" (Rahv, 1935, p64), a book that was a "recreation of experience" (op cit, p63). In Issue 9, there was nothing by Rahv or Phillips.

In early 1936 PR was merged with the poetry magazine Anvil edited by Jack Conroy with the stated aim that it be a magazine "broader in scope and, we believe more mature." (The Editors, 1936, p2) The full board consisted of : Alan Calmer, Jack Conroy, Ben Field, William Phillips, Philip Rahv, Edwin Rolfe, Clinton Simpson, and as associates, Nelsen Algren, Erskine Caldwell and Richard Wright.

Gold welcomed the merger in New Masses ("Papa Anvil and Mother Partisan") in typically chauvenist terms (in respect of both nation and gender). The new publication, he announced, represented a "shotgun wedding" between :

"... that spunky pioneer of midwest proletarian literature, Jack Conroy's Anvil; and Partisan Review, organ of the New York left-wing intellectuals.

Well the child of roughneck Father Anvil and his thoughtful college bride has at last appeared. It's a vigorous male, retaining the best features of both parents; Papa's earthy directness and Mama's erudition and sensibility. Handsome and clearcut and pulsing with revolutionary life, Partisan Review and Anvil is now on the newstands and as a magazine promises to be a success."
(Gold, 1936, p22)

One assumes that it was the "bride" who was the reluctant partner - critics, said Gold, might "occupy an important place in the vanguard of the revolutionary literary movement" (op cit, p22), but why did they have to be so academic? If only they could, in Arvin's words, "let their hair down".

There was no contribution from either Rahv or Phillips in the first two issues of PR and Anvil, but in the third issue, both reappeared with book reviews. Again, Phillips, on Santayana, was neutral, but Rahv, reviewing Spender asserted their critical position. Spender, he said, evidenced an idealist rejection of communism for aestheticism, but this was not surprising since :

"... much of Spender's shrinking from the ultimate meaning of Marxism arises from the false interpretation of it transmitted by various populists and vulgarizers who insist on equating their very own village culture with dialectics. Their strident simplifications violate the intrinsic character of art-mediums at so many points that a revolt against the critical system brooking such vulgarizations becomes inevitable. When Spender attributes to Marxism a gross use of literature as propaganda, the denial of a relative autonomy to the artistic imagination, as well as dictatorial precepts as to material, style and imagery, he has

merely taken the 'leftists' at their word."
(Rahv, 1936, p29)

In the meantime, the Popular Front line was being asserted in PR by the Party cultural hierarchy; the general theme was a recuperation of Americanism and populism. A pragmatic Americanist discourse in opposition to the self-consciously theoreticist critical framework being constructed by Rahv and Phillips. Carl Van Doren's address to the Book Union Dinner (the Book Union was set up to publish Writers' League literature on a monthly basis) was printed illustrating the current policy of capturing the American literary past for Communism - not as defined in terms of its unintended *effect* (c.f. Rahv and Phillips), but by imputing radical *intention* to the work. "Much of the best American literature has always inclined toward the left" - Emerson was cast as a revolutionary, Thoreau as an anarchist. (Van Doren, 1936, p9) In the review of the Union's first publication, the anthology Proletarian Literature in the United States, Newton Arvin attacked the criticism contained as too scholastic and unemotional, "drily expository", "prosaically analytical" and "written from the eyebrows up". Rahv and Phillips were mentioned specifically, not yet written off, but criticised: "One can agree wholeheartedly with the point Phillips and Rahv are making in their essay ["Problems and Perspectives", the first PR editorial] and still wish that they could make it in a less scholastic manner." (Arvin, 1936, p13)

An excerpt from Joseph Freeman's autobiography An American Testament on "some American communists" described some of the party leaders of 1922,

Dunne, Foster and Ruthenberg, and concluded with a quotation from Ruthenberg's article in the Liberator on the 1919 emergence of the party from underground (see Appendix One) : "Its campaigns and programs of action are based upon the actualities of the life of the workers in the United States". Freeman commented on this 1919 analysis : "The Party was becoming realistic. It was a section of the international revolutionary movement operating on the national terrain out of which it sprang, in which it was rooted." (Freeman, 1936C, p24, emphasis added.)

Gold, in particular, had promoted a populist American proletarianism in the Liberator and New Masses in the twenties but Rahv and Phillips had been trying to carve out a new ground, an internationalist, intellectualist approach to art. Now they were being beaten back.

However, Phillips and Rahv had acquired allies in their project. James T. Farrell was writing the new "Theatre Chronicle" and his attack on Clifford Odets in the first issue of PR and Anvil (it was impossible to understand how a man who wrote the "alive, exciting, even electrifying, one-act agit-prop play.." Waiting for Lefty (Farrell, 1936, p28) "could have written a play so consistently, so ferociously bad" as Paradise Lost (op cit, p29)) was attacked by Gold in New Masses in his article welcoming the merged magazine - while Gold had wanted critics to "let their hair down", Farrell, he said, had not let his hair down but gone nudist (Gold, 1936B, p2). Countering in the next issue, Farrell insisted that critics must be critical and must not have one standard for bourgeois work and another for revolutionary.

In the next issue, Alan Calmer in "All Quiet on the Literary Front", outlined eight observations about the nature of revolutionary literature based on points taken not only from Hicks, Freeman and Seaver, but also from Phillips' and Rahv's editorials in PR. It was sufficiently general to build on the similarities in position rather than the differences, but it did recognise their contribution.

The third issue focused on the question of "What is Americanism?" and, while the questions may well have reflected the interests of Rahv and Phillips, it is unlikely that most of the answers did. This "Symposium on Marxism and the American tradition" was introduced with the following statement :

"In the belief that the problem of defining Americanism in relation to Marxism and revolutionary literature is of the greatest importance for the understanding of all these forces, the editors have asked a number of writers of diverse shades of opinion to reply to a questionnaire on the subject... The questionnaire follows :

What is your conception of Americanism? Do you think of it as separate and opposed to the cultural tradition of Western Europe? Do you think of it as identical with, or opposed to, or inclusive of the distinct native revolutionary heritage of the early Jacobins like Tom Paine, the populist movements of later days and the radicalism of the Knights of Labor, Albert Parsons, Gene Debs, Bill Haywood, etc.? Should the values of this American tradition be continued and defended or do they symbolize the brutal struggle for individual riches which some writers (as, for example, certain expatriates and European critics like Georges Duhamel) have interpreted as the essence of Americanism? Does your conception of Americanism postulate its continuity from colonial days to the present age or do you place it within definite historical limits?

In your opinion, what is the relationship between the American tradition and Marxism as an ideological force in the United States, with particular reference to the growth of revolutionary literature in this country? Do you think that our revolutionary literature reflects and integrates the American spirit or is it in conflict with it? If this conflict exists, do you think this is a failure on the part of revolutionary writers or do the very premises of

revolutionary writing prevent the organic integration of the two?"
(The Editors, 1936, p3)

The questions were certainly ones with which Phillips and Rahv were concerned, but their answers to them (spelled out a year later in "Literature in a Political Decade", see page 159-161) were at direct odds with those proposed by the Party heirarchy.

We have seen how the American Communist Party was initially split into two factions - the 'foreign' theoreticians and the native-born activists - a split that was resolved essentially in favour of the Americanists (although of course many analysts would argue that the Party failed to maintain its momentum precisely because it was not resolved decisively enough in their favour.) "Proletarian literature" as promoted by Mike Gold from 1921 was unequivocally American in a 'workerist' form, but the move post-Kharkov toward the encouragement of fellow-travellers had to some extent diffused this. The Popular Front policy after 1935 however, which extended the tolerance, indeed synchophancy, for sympathetic bourgeois writers, and the attempt to appeal to a wider audience, also involved a concerted attempt to contradict any suggestions that communism was "un-American". The Party's current programme therefore required, firstly, that the American cultural heritage be shown to be compatible with Communism - that liberal democracy and Communism were in a direct line of development (an argument used later by the anti-communists to show that their earlier Communism was just a hiccup in their Liberal trajectory, see page 268); secondly, that Marxism wasn't inherently 'foreign' and the American Communist Party had constructed a

truly American form; and, finally, that to be American didn't mean having been born there.

While the party-line (as advanced in the symposium by Arvin, Josephson and Freeman) was that there was no problem in integrating Marxism with the American character and tradition, William Carlos Williams took the view that "the American tradition is completely opposed to Marxism" (Williams, 1936, p13) (an attempt to regiment was incompatible with the liberal spirit) as did William Troy. In an analysis that was compatible with the Party project, if more subtle, Kenneth Burke felt that there was nothing inherently national in ideas or practices - that it was not the origin of ideas, but their application that mattered. Marxism might have come from Europe, but so did the property relations it criticised, and if capitalism proved itself inadequate in American, a critique of it was American insofar as it was relevant. He did feel however that the current tendency to Americanise was being overdone - as when Hicks for instance "tried to claim nearly every outstanding American of the past for the cause of revolution." (Burke, 1936, p10)

Rahv and Phillips were not among the respondents - and there was no editorial comment - but the Party's attempt to construct a populist, nativist Marxism was incompatible with all they then stood for. While the Party discourse was re-inflected to emphasise the American, Rahv and Phillips became explicit in their rejection of it. Given these dual shifts, it became impossible for the editors to maintain their critical project within the Communist Party apparatus. Trotskyism however offered a political framework with which they could align themselves and

within which they could promote both a vanguardist politics and an avant-garde aesthetic.

* * * *

In the fifth issue of PR and Anvil (June 1936), it was announced that, since only 10 issues per year were intended, there would be no publication in July and August. The tide had apparently turned for Rahv and Phillips, and an editorial alliance with Calmer formed. Calmer's "Down with Leftism" reviewed Farrell's A Note on Literary Criticism. In the book, Farrell criticised leftism in literature (a trend Calmer credited PR with first identifying.) Applauding this (which he imagined would be a minority position), Calmer suggested that the main weakness of the book was its failure to investigate the origins and development of leftism. Had Farrell done so, Calmer considered, he would find that it did not arise "consciously out of a set of thought-out principles, but rather out of a lack of them." They were not even consistent in their evaluation, swinging from "literary praise of the most mediocre writers who eulogise the revolutionary working class to political approval of the most 'successful' authors whose sympathies are remote from the working class movement." (Farrell, 1936B, p9) (Thus "rightism" as identified in "Problems and Perspectives", see page 131-134, had become a form of "leftism". The term Leftism is used here as it was used in PR, but it is not very meaningful to today's reader - it indicates criticism rather than a specific philosophical position. Rahv and Phillips were "leftists" to those that they criticised.)

In the same issue, Rahv reviewed Murder in the Cathedral. The leftists, he said, had simply declared this major artwork fascist and not worth analysis, but, while clearly Eliot was steering close to fascism, that did not mean his poetry was automatically fascist since in every art work "there is always the possibility of creative contradictions, on which the dialectic feeds." The "apparent idea" of a work was not synonymous with its actual meaning", or "its individual quality with the quality of the author's complete works". It was necessary to distinguish between "the specific content of a work of art and its possible objective effects..." (Rahv, 1936B, p11/12)

Normally in the critical pieces in PR, the notion that work would have different effects on differentially situated readers was implicit, here Rahv made it explicit : "It has been said that every work of art is an act of collaboration between reader and creator" (op cit, p12). We do not, he said, respond to a work in its historical specifics, we respond to it in the light of our own experience - thus we do not respond as Becket, or as Eliot, but as readers fearful of "a doom posthumous to theology", the spirit of doom affects, not the theological specifics.

Phillips, writing on Malraux's Man's Fate and Days of Wrath attacked the leftists who had uniformly slated Man's Fate in 1934, insensitive to "the variety and novelty of meanings that make up a novel" (Phillips, 1936, p18.)

When PR reappeared after the summer break in October 1936 (still nominally combined with Anvil) the only editors were Calmer, Phillips

and Rahv and the content was slanted much more toward a European humanist tradition in literature and theory. For the first time, work by Silone - a hero of the 'new' PR - appeared and an outline of "The Philosophic Thought of the Young Marx" by Max Braunschweig ("a German Marxist at present living in exile", translated by Harold Rosenberg.) The youthful works of Marx, Braunschweig argued, were important partly because Capital could not be understood properly without reading them, and, more importantly, because they locate Marxism within a European philosophic tradition from which it developed. Key was the concept of *alienation*; labour under capitalism was alienated because it could not be creative. The revolution - an active process - would not be simply political, but total, i.e. man would achieve true humanity. (Braunschweig, 1936) Thus were emphasised, the notion of history as advanced by active agents, and, equally important for PR, of 'man' as defined by his (her) creativity, and liberation defined as the restoration of full creative potential.

This was the last issue of PR for over a year, but during 1937 they spelled out their position with particular reference to the debate over Americanism and made clear their divergence with the Party in "Literature in a Political Decade", a contribution to New Letters in America, edited by Horace Gregory and intended to be a bi-annual publication of new work by young writers who had benefited from the experimental advances of the twenties.

Sketching out the literary developments of the thirties, Phillips and Rahv welcomed the growth of socially conscious literature but repeated

their criticism of the leftists who had not built on the experiment of the twenties and had promulgated first a rigidly sectarian aesthetic code and then, inconsistently, a promotion of fellow travellers. (Again rightism had become leftism.) Thus the movement had split, as the younger critics stigmatised leftism. (Phillips and Rahv, 1937, p172) The revolutionary trend had not transformed the American literary consciousness because "the basic failure - the tendency to reduce men to parts of themselves persisted." Proletarian novels had substituted "social behaviourism for individual behaviourism." (op cit, p175.)

Now they made explicit their critique of American literature :

"There is no revolutionary work written by an American which presents on the level of consciousness those moral and intellectual contradictions which appear in the struggle between old and new cultures."

(op cit, p175)

Europeans like Kafka, Silone, Guilloux and Malraux however had been able to do so. The cause of the problem was not Marxism, but :

"... the pragmatic patterns and lack of consciousness that dominate the national heritage.

Few intellectual tendencies have been able to survive in American literature. For the most part they were either smashed or distorted by such traditional forces in the culture of the country as pragmatism, populism, regionalism and the false materialism of the literary shopkeepers."

(op cit, p176)

The lost generation had imported an interest in modernism, but it was merely a "cultural veneer glossing the old Village furniture" (op cit, p176) and others had imported European avant-garde technique, but it was just that - they failed to appreciate the meaning that produced the technique and remained "advanced technicians" rather than "advanced

poets". Others succumbed to mere "catalogue writing", simply naming objects and sensations.

And, developing their position that an aesthetic theory was necessary, they attributed these failings to anti-intellectualism equated with rural provincialism and nationalism :

"Behind all these methods is an anti-intellectual bias, which constantly draws literature below urban levels into the 'idiocy of the village'. Criticism, which is almost a pure product of the city, is being written by people who regard their own spontaneous responses as valid judgements. Thus criticism turns against the intellect, of which it is a primary function."
(op cit, p177)

"So long as American writers ignore the acquisition of the European intellect, they will continue in their futile attempt to create a literature in one country - futile because inevitably a contradiction arises between the international consciousness of American life and the provincial smugness of literature itself.

It seems to us that if this contradiction between consciousness and domestic stasis is to be resolved, it can only be done through the Europeanization of American literature. At this point of course, the deep-seated prejudices of nativity rise to protest against foreign entanglements, and unfortunately even many of the Left intellectuals themselves defend the isolation of the American creative mind. In the last analysis, however, America is just as much a part of the Western world as Germany or France. The last decade has seen the Europeanization of the American class struggle and the rise of political movements whose basic program and strategy are native adaptations of general principles at work in bourgeois society as a whole. If literature is to absorb these new dynamics in the social life of America, it cannot do so by superficially politicizing its local thought. It can only be done by subjecting the native reality to the full consciousness of Western man. In the same way as Thomas Mann's work is deeply rooted in the German soil, even while his complete ethos generalizes the intellectual experience of Europe, so the American novelist, rising to a high level of consciousness, would carry the particulars of American life into the mainstream of world culture."
(op cit, p178/9)

What was required was not a "false Europeanizing", a grafting on of "bald political purposes" to old values. Marxism - "one of the highest

manifestations of Western consciousness" could too easily be reduced to "scholastic formula" when applied with a "low level of awareness".

"Its fecundity in art does not lie in point by point utilitarianism, but in a shaping of a materialist sensibility; perceptions that have the power of social validity and historical imagination can nowadays seldom be expected from any other source."
(op cit, p179)

Thus, at the end of their association with the Communist Party⁵⁵, Rahv and Phillips spelled out the factors which made a continued association impossible - the Party's anti-intellectualism, an anti-intellectualism which had its roots in the American tradition. They counterposed the *City* to the *Country*, *Europe* to *America*, the *intellectual critic* to the *literary shopkeeper* and indicated the authors they would be focusing on in the near future : Kafka, Silone, Malraux, Mann (Gide and Koestler were the other major figures). Europeans who were capable in their view of representing both the critical intellect and "experience".

But, if the Communist Party was anti-intellectual and firmly American, Trotskyism was internationalist and led by an intellectual "the flower of a half-century of the Russian intelligentsia" (Serge, 1942.)

"PARTISAN REVIEW is aware of its responsibility to the revolutionary movement in general, but we disclaim obligation to any of its organized political expressions. Indeed we think that the cause of revolutionary literature is best served by a policy of no commitments to any political party...."

Editorial, 1937.

Gilbert argues that the suspension of publication of PR in October 1936 was more for financial than ideological or political reasons and, if it is the case that Rahv and Phillips had effectively taken back control of the editorial policy over the Summer of 1936, this is likely, but financial issues can not be separated from political ones. Phillips reports that they had made a decision to get out of the orbit of the Communist Party and decided to suspend publication until they could "regroup and find new sources of support." (Phillips, 1983, p36.)

During the period before its reappearance in December 1937, Rahv and Phillips' rejection of Stalinism solidified, aided by the Moscow Trials and the performance of the Communists in the Spanish Civil War (Macdonald, 1963, p10/11) and at the same time the movement hardened against them⁵⁶. They had made useful new connections with the disillusioned literary editor of New Masses, Fred Dupee and his friend Dwight Macdonald, and by the beginning of May plans for a revival were underway. By the end of the month the future editorial group, with Farrell and a few others, were planning their strategy for opposition at the Second⁵⁷ Writers' Congress. (Cooney, 1986, p97-105.)

The Congress was supporting the Popular Front - the aim being to broaden the base of the Congress and open it to all writers. Here Dwight Macdonald declared himself "for Trotsky" and Rahv and Phillips associated themselves with his stand. The last morning of the Conference was devoted to five "craft commissions" : on the novel, poetry, motion pictures and radio, drama and on criticism (chaired by Granville Hicks). Hart in the Conference Proceedings reported irritably:

"Notes were taken at only two of these craft commissions, those on criticism and the novel, and in both cases these notes were very garbled indeed. The notes on the critics' session indicated that none of the topics proposed for discussion was discussed, but that the time was consumed in an attack upon the Congress by a small group of six which culminated in Dwight Macdonald's remark that he was against the united front and "for Trotsky". These attacks were, of course, attacked, and the meeting seems to be typified by the answer of Mr Hicks to Joseph Freeman's question 'Can I say one word about criticism?' 'No, Joe,' replied Mr Hicks, 'that's one thing we can't discuss'."

(Hart, 1937, p225)

The group of six comprised Macdonald, Rahv, Phillips, Dupee, McCarthy and the writer Eleanor Clark^{5a}.

Rahv later described the Congress as "throwing overboard the whole theory of scientific socialism" and, comparing the policies of the first Congress with the second, said :

"Within the short space of two years the 'revolutionaries' of 1935 had substituted the stars and stripes of New Deal Marxism for 'the red flag of the new materialism'."

(Rahv, 1938, p24) [The quote being from Aragon's speech in 1935]

and

"The stalinists have converted anti-fascism into the latest rationale for defending the status quo."

(op cit, p25)

Macdonald (Macdonald, 1984, p800) reports that Rahv and Phillips had the mailing list for PR and it was restarted as an independent magazine, but using the same name (and continuous numbering of the volumes)⁵⁹ by Rahv, Phillips, Macdonald, Dupee, G.L.K. Morris (a painter who provided the money, Macdonald, p800) and, briefly, Mary McCarthy. Dupee and Morris were both friends of Macdonald's (and had previously jointly edited The Miscellany), with Dupee having provided the link between Rahv and Phillips and Macdonald and Morris (Macdonald, 1984, p807; Phillips 1983, p47.) McCarthy was a Trotskyist sympathiser and recently lover of Rahv⁶⁰. In 1941 Dupee left and was replaced by Clement Greenberg. Of the editors, the crucial figure, apart from Rahv and Phillips, was Macdonald who was the most institutionally involved with Trotskyism and whose disagreements with Rahv and Phillips increased as they moved away from Marxism until six years later the position had become untenable.

Macdonald's background - non-Jewish, non-immigrant (born in New York in 1906 into a solidly upper middle class family), educated at Exeter and Yale - differed significantly from that of Rahv and Phillips. He "came late" to the revolutionary movement, largely he says, because he went to Yale rather than to City College like most of his comrades who were handing out leaflets while they were in short pants (Macdonald, 1963, p6), but he was an earlier convert to aesthetic radicalism, having formed a very exclusive (with two other members) club at Exeter, called "The Hedonists", "pour épater les bourgeois" (op cit, p7). He had worked for Fortune from 1929 to 1936 and was radicalised by the experience although, by his own account, his objection to capitalism as encountered there seems to have been cultural rather than political : "... the men

running our capitalist system were narrow, uncultivated and commonplace.." (op cit, p8). His resignation in 1936 was precipitated when the last of a series of articles he had written on the U.S. Steel Company, which he had headed with a quote from Lenin's Imperialism, was "bowdlerised" by the editors (op cit, p9.) He turned to the Communist Party as "the only party I'd heard of" (Macdonald, 1984, p801) in the mid thirties as a "mild fellow traveller" (Macdonald, 1963, p10) but didn't become formally involved with the left until he became a Trotskyist during the Moscow trials. He joined the SWP in 1939 (taking the party-name "James Joyce", Wald, 1987, p203) for what he describes as "purely moral reasons"⁶¹ after the Soviet-Nazi pact, but had started writing for its party papers (encouraged by Burnham, Wald, 1987, p200) earlier in the year. He contributed a regular column originally entitled "They the People" followed by "Reading from Left to Right" to New International and another in Socialist Appeal, "Sparks in the News". An early contribution was perhaps indicative of his future relations with the party - a letter attacking Trotsky's involvement in the suppression of the Kronstadt rebellion.

"....Because the writers of the new grouping aspire to independence in politics as well as in art, they will be identified with fascism, sometimes directly, sometimes through the convenient medium of 'Trotskyism'. Every effort, in short, will be made to excommunicate the new generation, so that their writing and their politics may be regarded as making up a kind of diabolic totality....."

Editorial 1937

At first, Communism had, for them, held the promise of revitalising literary expression, now Rahv and Phillips held the Communist Party responsible for sacrificing artistic expression to political expediency.

"Literature to these people is, after all, merely a pretext for the manipulation of ideas in favour of the current party policy."

(Rahv, 1938, p27/28)

Kolakowski has suggested that "Stalinism" was not a particular form of Marxism definable "by any collection of statements, ideas or concepts"; not a question of propositions, "but of the fact that there existed an all-powerful authority competent to declare at any given moment what Marxism was and what it was not" (Kolakowski, 1978, p4) Certainly in the U.S., the Party's aesthetic policies could be so described, and Rahv and Phillips were motivated by a desire to identify a model of practice that was theoretically rigorous, that was premised on intellectually adequate principles, that was precisely a set of propositions. Their break with the Communist Party was not a break with Marxism, it was a break with a, to them, intellectually unacceptable version of Marxism, one in which all elements of the discourse were subordinated to current Party interest rather than to any tests of validity. In February 1938, Rahv made this explicit :

"The tradition of individual judgement, of skepticism, of scientific verification, is inherent in the very terms and conditions of knowledge. The collectivity of the Marxist movement aim to raise this tradition to the level of materialist consistency and conscious political direction. A collectivity of blind faith and accomodation, on the other hand, is altogether the opposite of that envisaged by the founders of socialist thought."
(Rahv, 1938, p30)

Stalinisation, he argued, had destroyed the possibility of artists flourishing within the party :

"to expect a bureaucratic, authoritarian regime to nourish a truly critical, revolutionary consciousness in art is to expect miracles,"
(op cit, p30)

Their identification with Trotskyism was, it is suggested, a resolution of an intellectual contradiction. That is, within a Trotskyist framework they were able to present a discourse which allowed for both an avant-garde art practice and vanguardist politics (in theory if not practice); positions which were incompatible within the Communist Party paradigm⁶².

This was not a decisive break however since most of the elements of the discourse were already in place; it was a reorganisation not a creation. Elements of Trotskyist aesthetics - notably the concept of cultural continuity, of the inapplicability of a "proletarian culture" and a central role for the intelligentsia (see page 175/6) - had already been incorporated. The Trotskyist apparatus proffered a framework within which in 1937/8 the PR discourse could be unified, weaving together the elements of an internationalist, intellectualist vanguardist politics with an internationalist, intellectualist, and avant-garde art. While the Communist Party apparatus had been disabling, the Troskyist

apparatus was (temporarily) enabling. This is not to say that Rahv and Phillips were "Trotskyists" in other respects (although Macdonald and Greenberg were). The discourse of the new PR until 1941 (see Chapter Two) included a rejection of socialism in one country, a rejection of the possibility of intervention in what was perceived as a war between competing imperialist powers and a perception of the Soviet Union as degenerated, but there is little evidence that it was the specifics of Trotsky's political analysis that attracted them. Rather, it would appear to be the cultural analysis advanced within an internationalist perspective and by an intellectual whose credentials as a theoretician and a "skeptic" critical of the status quo and of the Party hierarchy were beyond doubt.

* * * * *

At the 1937 Writers Congress, Rahv and Phillips went along with Macdonald's declaration "for Trotsky", and while the 'new' PR asserted its independence from party politics, this was not accepted by others - nor indeed, on the evidence of their correspondence with Trotsky, were they as "independent" as the editors, then and now, liked to suggest.

The editors were caught between a desire to court Trotsky (probably initiated by Macdonald, who was a member of the SWP, but certainly with the commitment of Rahv, if not Phillips) and a desire to appear independent in order to, on the one hand, attract established writers and critics, and on the other, avoid giving the Communist Party ammunition for their attacks.

The new magazine aimed to carve out a place in the critical world and to publish the work of respected writers and critics - both American and European. In an interview with Bloom, Phillips asserted : "we saw ourselves as a rallying ground or center, where the best intellectuals would come." (quoted in Bloom, 1986, p82). Thus the 'new' PR became a focus for intellectuals disillusioned with Stalinism, but it was not simply a political symbol, it played a significant role in constructing the position identified with the anti-Stalinist intellectual community.

As the editorial indicates, the editors were well aware that their public break with the Communist Party would lead to denunciation of the new version of the magazine. Initially they were wary of openly antagonising the Party and concerned to establish in the eyes of others their independence of party politics of any kind - Cooney quotes Dupee expressing to Macdonald his concern that in order to gain contributions from famous writers like William Troy^{es}, they needed to prove they were "really non-political" (quoted in Cooney, 1986, p122). They had intended to print excerpts from Gide's Second Thoughts on the USSR in the first issue but decided not to do so (Gilbert, 1968 and Cooney, 1986). The material was however published in the second issue and Cooney's research shows that only ten days elapsed between Phillips telling Farrell the piece had definitely been rejected and his announcement that it would appear. Cooney considers the most likely explanation of this abrupt change of heart (earlier historians have presented it as more gradual) to be the appearance of the literary supplement to New Masses (December 7, 1937) which contained attacks on PR by Gold and Hicks. The supplement was a new venture by New Masses

and one which Farrell at least viewed as "obviously a move to counter any influence which Partisan Review might win" (quoted in Cooney, 1986, p115).

Gilbert, Pells and Cooney all stress the way in which the Communist Party had offered young writers like Rahv and Phillips not only a sense of commitment and belonging, but an institutional framework, in effect, a career structure, and one which they were therefore reluctant to exclude themselves from. Despite the dramatic declaration at the Writers Congress, it is suggested by these historians that the Party took the initiative in cutting the ties rather than they and this, and their initial reluctance to openly challenge the Party, is interpreted as a reflection of the Party's control of the left cultural milieu. Aaron, however, argues that the internecine struggles on the left between 1929 and 1939 "hardly bear out the widely held myth that in the thirties the Communists had captured New York" (Aaron, 1977, p267) and approvingly quotes Granville Hicks' statement that "There never was a time when anti-Communism wasn't a vastly easier road to success than Communism..." (quoted op cit, p267). Both views focus on the 'practical' advantages to be gained from identification with a theoretical position rather than the appeal of the intellectual adequacy of the theoretical constructs themselves. Even if they did find themselves being "read out of the movement" (quoted, Cooney, 1986, p100) before they had made the decision to break themselves, it was because

their position could no longer be contained within it; because they had found the Communist Party discourse wanting.

* * * * *

The attacks on PR by the Communist Party had begun before publication with an article by Gold ("Falsely Labelled Goods") contesting the advance publicity that PR was about to "resume" publication and arguing that magazine was completely different (Gold, 1937); to which Rahv and Phillips responded that Gold was ignoring the fact that the magazine had developed its policy before the suspension of publication and that the last issue of the 'old' magazine had only three editors and "ownership and management were completely in the hands of those three individuals" (Phillips and Rahv, 1937B.) In the Daily Worker Gold proclaimed "A literary snake sheds his skin for Trotsky", (Gold, 1937B) and V.J. Jerome, "the party's Matthew Arnold" (Macdonald, 1963 p12) joined the attacks. New Masses refused to publish authors who wrote for PR - William Carlos Williams admitted that he had withdrawn work from PR because NM had threatened not to publish his work if he did not (Williams, 1938.) But others were also dubious, Socialist Appeal, the paper of the SWP⁶⁴, welcomed PR's split from the CP as a sign of a "revolt against Stalinism among the intellectuals" (Novack, 1937) but regretted the fact that they aspired to independence from party politics. Socialist Appeal declared that, while the Stalinists were wrong to subordinate art to party politics, the "Partisan Reviewers" were equally wrong to assert its independence; art and politics were interdependent. While there should be freedom for experimentation, for

different artistic tendencies to compete, it must be recognised that politics dominates all life and, while the magazine should "have a broad circumference" in terms of its selection policy, it must also "have an ideological and political center".⁵⁵ PR in turn accused them of "over-zealous simplifications" and "ultimatist demands" and responded by publishing a letter from John Wheelwright, "a poet who is also a member of the Trotskyist organisation" (Phillips and Rahv, 1937C, p62), which defended autonomy for the arts.

Their revolutionary credentials were also questioned by an editorial in Poetry which asked :

"the question arises, however, whether a magazine professedly revolutionary in character can avoid having some definite political program, either explicit, or implied. Taken at its face value, the policy of the PR seems to boil down to this : that literature, for the present, should lead not to action but to more literature. That may or may not be an excellent policy, but is it revolutionary?"

(quoted in Phillips and Rahv, 1937C, p61)

This opposition of literature to action is persistent in the cultural history being explored here, (see page 109 and footnote 29) and the charge was raised again by Macdonald when he left the magazine in 1943. However, the precepts outlined in Rahv and Phillips' editorials indicate clearly that they perceived the production of literature and literary criticism as a form of political action. Critics, or "ideologists" provided the guidelines, the leadership, for the authors whose creative work inspired revolutionary action; was "kinetic". They now replied :

"We answer Poetry as follows : our program is the program of Marxism, which in general terms means being for the revolutionary overthrow of capitalist society, for a workers government, and for international socialism. In contemporary terms it implies the struggle against capitalism in all its modern guises and disguises,

including bourgeois democracy, fascism, and reformism (social democracy, Stalinism). As for the role of literature in the revolutionary process, we are frankly sceptical of the old imperatives. Novels and poems, we think, are rarely weapons in the class struggle in a sense direct enough to justify the phrase. Marxism is a guide to action, certainly; and Marxism can be a guide to literature, but whether literature itself is, can be, or should be, typically a guide to action is one of the problems that Partisan Review is dedicated to explore. For the rest, a literature which 'led to action' without at the same time leading 'to more literature,' would not, we are convinced, be literature at all." (op cit, p62)

They had never argued that literature should be a programmatic guide to action, rather, effective literature would inspire it.

* * * * *

The point at which PR turned to Trotskyism coincided with the movement's high point in the United States. Increasingly, in the period from 1933, intellectuals and artists were leaving the Communist Party and associating with, if not actually joining, the Trotskyite Party^{es} (the Left Opposition (1928), Communist League (1929-34), the American Workers Party (1933), which merged with the CLA in 1934 to form the Workers Party. They then entered the Socialist Party in 1936 and dissolved the Workers Party, starting the Socialist Workers Party in 1937 after their expulsion. In 1940 the Socialist Workers Party split with a faction leaving to start the Workers Party.)

In 1926, Trotsky's Literature and Revolution had been favourably reviewed by Gold in NM, albeit he disagreed with Trotsky's position that the creation of proletarian culture was not a priority, and that the classless culture of the future would be built on the heritage of the

past. After Trotsky's political excommunication, naturally his aesthetic position was rejected more decisively by the Communist Party, but its assumption of "cultural continuity", a classless culture, and a central role for the sympathetic intelligentsia, was attractive to Rahv and Phillips, offering as it did a possibility for construction of a model which combined radical politics with avant-garde aesthetics.

In his 1924 introduction, Trotsky conceded that the most pressing issue in the Soviet Union was to organize the economy, but he argued that the victory of socialism would not be complete until science and a "new art" had developed :

"In this sense, the development of art is the highest test of the vitality and significance of each epoch."
(Trotsky, 1960, p9)

but this new art was not a proletarian art, an antithesis to bourgeois art. It could not be, because the dictatorship of the proletariat was a temporary transitional phase, to be followed by the classless society. All ruling classes, he suggested, create their own culture, but in the case of the bourgeoisie this took centuries and reached completion only as the class reached political decadence (op cit, p184). The proletariat would have neither the time, nor the inclination, to develop culture; its concerns would be more immediate and pressing - economic and political destruction and reconstruction. The initial cultural task of the revolution would be "culture-bearing" (op cit, p193), a passing on to the "backward masses" of the pre-existing culture. Culture must have continuity - each generation appropriates the existing culture and transforms it - but before the proletariat could pass out of its stage of "cultural apprenticeship" (op cit, p194) it would cease to be a

proletariat. Unlike the bourgeoisie, which developed its own culture within feudalism, the proletariat are forced to seize power before they have even appropriated the bourgeois culture, indeed they are forced to overthrow bourgeois society because they are denied access to the culture (op cit, p195.) In the struggle to construct a new culture, the elements of the old must be absorbed and assimilated :

"At the present time, the proletariat realizes this continuity not directly, but indirectly through the creative bourgeois intelligentsia which gravitates towards the proletariat and which wants to keep warm under its wing."
(op cit, p227)

For Trotsky, the intelligentsia occupied an ambiguous position in the class structure. There was a "law of social attraction" which determined that they would associate themselves with the class in power. Previously that had been the bourgeoisie but now in the Soviet Union it was the proletariat, this therefore changed their class location and their potential impact :

"The law of social attraction (toward the ruling class) which, in the last analysis, determines the creative work of the intelligentsia is now operating to our advantage. One has to keep this fact in mind when shaping a political attitude toward art."
(op cit, p216/7)

Revolutionary art was not created only by workers he argued, in fact, because the revolution was a working class revolution, they had little available energy. The intelligentsia however, had both the cultural grounding and the passive political position which fit them for the task. (See page 214 for the editors' application of these ideas in PR.)

* * * * *

Phillips now disclaims any suggestions that he or most of the people associated with PR (Macdonald and Burnham being exceptions) were Trotskyites and plays down the connections. He represents Trotsky's relations with PR as contentious and accuses him of trying to make use of the magazine for his own purposes. He comments :

"As for the relations with Trotsky, he wrote several things for the magazine, but we had a running quarrel with him, mainly on the question of the relation of writers and periodicals to a revolutionary party. We kept asserting our belief in total independence while Trotsky wrote a rather bitter polemic against us in which he seemed to be nurturing the illusion that writers and intellectuals splitting off from the Stalinists should naturally become his disciples and followers. When they kept their distance, Trotsky ascribed this to their inability to remain revolutionaries after being burned by Stalinism."
(Phillips, 1983, p44)

but this retrospective presentation of the relations with Trotsky glosses over the extent to which, on the evidence of their correspondence, PR courted Trotsky and curtailed their desire for political autonomy to an extent which prompted a reluctant Trotsky to contribute to the magazine.

By 1946, in a retrospective analysis of the first ten years of PR (The Partisan Reader : Ten years of Partisan Review, 1934-44) Rahv and Phillips were minimising their affiliations with Trotskyism and previous histories of PR have tended to follow this line. Cooney's recent analysis, despite having access to the correspondence between the editors and Trotsky, still concludes that they "kept him at arm's length and demonstrated that they were entirely sincere and acutely sensitive about the magazine's independence." (Cooney, 1986, p126) An early (January 1938) letter from Trotsky attacking PR (presumably the "bitter

polemic" referred to by Phillips) was published in 1950 and would appear to bear out such interpretations. Until now Rahv's reply has not been published⁵⁷ but the full correspondence taken together, and Rahv's letter in particular, seem to this reader to present far stronger commitments than previously acknowledged (see Appendix Three.)

Macdonald had made contact with Trotsky in early July 1937, shortly after the Writers Conference and before the relaunch of PR, expressing the Editors' eagerness for a contribution from him. Trotsky was however cautious, given their emphasis on the magazine's political independence, and their request in January 1938 that he contribute to a symposium on "What is Living and What is Dead in Marxism" (PR's response to the growing tendency to question Marxism in the light of Fascism and the failure of an international proletariat to assert itself) incensed Trotsky and prompted the attack which is usually used as evidence of the distance between the magazine and Trotsky. The PR editors, he asserted, lacked commitment and had "nothing to say" (see Appendix Three). This response is, apart from the subsequent contributions by Trotsky which were published in PR, the most public element of the correspondence and, in conjunction with comments made by Trotsky to representatives of American Trotskyism (see Appendix Three) indicate his mistrust of the anti-Stalinist New York intellectuals. However, despite the fact that Trotsky almost certainly did want to use PR for Party ends and the questionable nature of his commitment to artistic autonomy, the extent to which the editors deliberately courted Trotsky should not be understated.

Rahv responded to this attack for the Editorial Board in March 1938 accepting Trotsky's criticisms and promising to "stiffen" the magazine's "political spine". (See Appendix Three.) In April (after Phillips' article on Marxist aesthetics, see page 184, and Rahv's on the Moscow Trials), Trotsky agreed to contribute and in August/September 1938 his contribution on Art and Revolution appeared as a "letter"^{ss} entitled "Art and Politics" on "the state of present day arts and letters" (Trotsky, 1938I, p3).

Trotsky said he felt that his task was to pose the question correctly rather than to answer it. He stressed the potentially revolutionary role of art, and art's ability to represent rebellion, to protest against "reality" rather than to reflect it. Bourgeois society for a long period was able to recuperate this rebellion. Declining capitalism was less able to contain the rebel tendencies, but, at the same time, the artistic schools of the Twentieth Century themselves reflected the decline and decay of bourgeois society and were unable to reach complete development.

A solution to this situation could not be found, he argued, in art itself, but only in a rebuilding of the society of which art is a part. Trotsky went on to add that a model for this could not be found in the Soviet Union and most of the letter was devoted to examples of repression under Stalin where all art was "official art" and the promise of the October revolution had been stifled by bureaucracy.

Avant garde, "minority" art provided the hope for the future - as progressive political movements started as "splinters" from older movements, so too,

"when an artistic tendency has exhausted its creative resources, creative 'splinters' separate from it, which are able to look at the world with new eyes. The more daring the pioneers show in their ideas and actions, the more bitterly they oppose themselves to established authority which rests on a conservative 'mass base', the more conventional souls, skeptics, and snobs are inclined to see in the pioneers, impotent eccentrics or 'anemic splinters'⁶⁹. But in the last analysis it is the conventional souls, skeptics and snobs who are wrong - and life passes them by."
(op cit, p9)

Art wishes no supervision from anyone, Trotskyites no more than Stalinists :

"Art, like science, not only does not seek orders, but by its very essence, cannot tolerate them. Artistic creation has its laws - even when it consciously serves a social movement. Truly intellectual creation is incompatible with lies, hypocrisy and the spirit of conformity. Art can become a strong ally of revolution only in so far as it remains faithful to itself. Poets, painters, sculptors and musicians will themselves find their own approach and methods, if the struggle for freedom of oppressed classes and peoples scatters the clouds of skepticism and of pessimism which cover the horizon of mankind."
(op cit, p10)

In the next issue the editors replied to an accusation of factionalism from Malcolm Cowley in New Republic. Their response, which they said "may be regarded as a restatement of our political position" was to point out that to be non-party was not to "forswear" politics.

"We have never aspired to stand for pure literature. We have always agreed with Mr Cowley that the contemporary writer must concern himself with politics if his work is to have any deep meaning for our time."
(The Editors, 1938, p124)

but, in their opinion, the struggle "between Stalinism and revolutionary

Marxism" (op cit p125) was not "factional" nor did it necessarily involve party politics.

The same issue saw the publication of the manifesto for IFIRA (International Federation of Independent Revolutionary Art.) In July 1938, the French surrealist André Breton and the Mexican muralist Diego Rivera (with whom Trotsky was staying) had written to PR offering them the chance to publish "their" manifesto on revolutionary art (generally accepted as having been written by Breton and Trotsky, see Appendix Three)⁷⁰. The editorial "This Quarter" introduced it and stated "we are.... in complete sympathy with the general aims of the IFIRA, and we are ready to take part in the formation of an American section of the Federation." (The Editors, 1938B, p7)

The manifesto reflected the themes of "Art and Politics" : artistic creativity threatened not only by war, but by the "death agony" of capitalism and by totalitarian regimes (both Germany and the Soviet Union); the need for autonomy for the artist; and the inherently revolutionary function of art :

"true art is unable not to be revolutionary, not to aspire to a complete and radical reconstruction of society... we recognise that only the social revolution can sweep clear the path for a new culture."

(Breton and Trotsky, 1938, p50)

The artist must be completely free - no one, state or party, must prescribe the themes of art. Art is an end in itself, not a means to an end.

This was not a call for a "pure" art - on the contrary, "so-called 'pure' art" "generally serves the extremely impure ends of reaction" (op cit, p51)⁷¹ The "supreme task of art in our epoch is to take part actively and consciously in the preparation of the revolution. But the artist cannot serve the struggle for freedom unless he subjectively assimilates its social content, unless he feels in his very nerves its meaning and drama and freely seeks to give his own inner world incarnation in his art" (op cit, p52.)

The aims of IFIRA were to be :

"The independence of art - for the revolution;
The revolution - for the complete liberation of art."
(op cit, p53)

Progress with the organisation of a U.S. branch of IFIRA was slow, but the manifesto of the League for Cultural Freedom and Socialism was published in PR in Summer 1939⁷². Macdonald was acting secretary of the League, and Rahv and Phillips both signed the statement which asserted its revolutionary socialism as well as the principles of intellectual freedom and aesthetic autonomy⁷³.

* * * * *

The discourse being constructed by Rahv and Phillips from 1934-36 had increasingly incorporated elements which, if they were not necessarily gained directly from Trotsky (though it seems highly likely that they were), were certainly compatible with Literature and Revolution : *cultural continuity*, the *culture bearing* task of the revolution and the

formative role of the intellectuals. These concepts were not logically compatible with the aims and means of "proletarian culture" as promoted by New Masses and hence, while the PR discourse aspired to coherence and a unity of political and aesthetic practice, this had been impossible while the magazine remained a part of the Communist Party apparatus.

The expressions of Trotsky's position (if not necessarily his actual intentions)⁷⁴ in PR combined with the aesthetic analysis did provide the possibility of a coherent avant-garde discourse, that is, it encompassed both a vanguardist model of politics and of art and allowed art to "follow its own laws". Art, said Trotsky, "can become a strong ally of revolution only in so far as it remains faithful to itself" (Trotsky, 1938, p10), "true art is unable not to be revolutionary" (Breton and Trotsky, 1938, p50), the artist must serve the revolution but could only do so if s/he "freely seeks to give his own inner world incarnation in his art" (op cit, p52).

In 1937 Rahv and Phillips crystalised a commitment to an "avant garde" art - the source of all genuinely creative impulses - an art produced by "intellectuals", resisting conformity and embodying artistic, social and political integrity. Within the framework of the IFIRA manifesto they were able to articulate both their vanguardist intellectualism and their formalist aesthetic into a coherent position.

Previously, PR had been almost exclusively a literary magazine but, from 1937, it included art (reproductions as well as articles and reviews), drama and cinema. Additionally, although the fact is not mentioned in

its editorial, the new incarnation was to reflect an international approach to culture - which is to say European, as well as American culture, this "internationalism" never extended world-wide. The first issue contained a contribution from Picasso - a prose poem and etchings which the editors claimed were "Picasso's first examples of politically inspired art", "so far as is known" (The Editors, 1937, p32). Future contributors included Camus, Gide, Aron, Orwell, Koestler, Sartre, Eliot, Spender, Connolly, and refugees like Serge, Arendt and Chirramonte.

The radical intellectual and artist, it was asserted, should look not to an American proletarian art in thrall to the Party, but instead radical politics would be embodied in and advanced by an aesthetically radical art. The "red decade" was now represented as a mistake; a period of political miscalculation and cultural self-destruction.

With hindsight, Phillips was sarcastic about the attempt to create proletarian literature :

"As was to be expected from such a theoretical '*reductio ad absurdum*' the practice was even more absurd than the theory, but it would be almost sadistic to recall now some of the comic statements which were taken so seriously at that time in the pages of New Masses."

(Phillips, 1938, p12)

Rahv and Phillips were not prepared to attribute the inadequacies of Proletarianism to Marxism. Marxism did not provide a set of injunctions for art practice, what it did provide was a critical method. Phillips denied that the justification for the "comic statements" could be found in the "founding fathers" of Marxism. None of them, with the limited

exception of Trotsky, he argued, had laid down a set of aesthetic principles; their remarks on the subject were "generalities rather than generalisations" (op cit, p13) and at no time had Marx or Engels stated or implied that art was a class weapon⁷⁵.

Marxism was not a closed system of beliefs, but a method. One should therefore speak of

"Marxist criticisms in the plural, and of ventures in Marxist criticism, especially since it has yet to be demonstrated that only one code of beliefs or one kind of insight into art is compatible with the philosophy of Marx."
(op cit, p21, emphasis original.)

In an article on Thomas Mann, Phillips (as Rahv had earlier in 1938, see page 167/8) made it clear that a political party could only claim the allegiance of intellectuals while the tenets of its philosophy passed their tests of validity. He identified an intellectual crisis in modern society - critical skepticism was lacking. The modern intellectual had forgotten his "vital function" :

"To safeguard the dreams and discoveries of science and art, and to champion some political movement insofar as it fulfils the requirements of an intellectual idea."
(Phillips, 1938, p3, emphasis added)

Thomas Mann, albeit a humanist, then represented⁷⁶ for PR the honest intellectual, prepared to stand out for the truth against the lie - against "infamous pragmatism" (Mann, quoted op cit, p4.) And, in an analysis adumbrating that which was to become the PR conception of the alienated intellectual/artist in the forties, Phillips presented Mann as the artist in conflict with society, pitting art against barbarianism;

the representative of "humanity" (the striving to transcend our animalism) in conflict with the "folk" principle (the physical base of the collectivity). However, for Mann, art was a disease, the ailments produced in the attempt to assert humanity and this pessimistic view was unacceptable to Phillips. Mann's artist was incomplete because he lacked science, "the most characteristic product of the European mind". While art, Phillips argued, records our dreams and our efforts to attain them, it cannot enable us to "overcome the conditions of our existence" (op cit, p7). Science could.

Marxism offered a science of history, based on "the constant refinement of the empirical method as applied to the study of class behaviour" (op cit, p7.) From Aristotle, through Smith, Ricardo, Hegel, Marx, Lenin, Trotsky, we aim, said Phillips, to be "scientific socialists". This was not determinism however, "... the curve of socialism is plotted not only by the laws of production but also by the intentions of men." (op cit, p8)

Thus the key elements of the discourse - scientific (yet non-determinist) Marxism, the critical intellectual, the European tradition, a political yet genuinely creative art, were expressed.

* * * * *

During the late thirties the debate in and around PR was concerned with the question of whether Marxism was scientific or mystificatory - a debate initiated by Eastman in 1926 (see page 128.) At its heart was a

debate about whether the dialectic was a scientific tool or irrational belief.

In "Marxism in our Time", Victor Serge emphasised that while Marxism was "science" it was not static, not "finished", but "always completing itself", always in a process of self-revision. Marxism gave people an *historical sense* :

"... it makes us conscious that we live in a world which is in the process of changing; it enlightens us as to our possible function - and our limitations - in this continuous struggle and creation; it teaches us to integrate ourselves, with all our will, all our talents, to bring about those historical processes that are, as the case may be, necessary, inevitable, or desirable. And it is thus that it allows us to confer on our isolated lives a high significance, by tying them, through a consciousness which heightens and enriches the spiritual life, to that life - collective, innumerable, and permanent - of which history is only the record.

This awakening of consciousness insists on action and, furthermore on the unity of action and thought."
(Serge, 1938, p27)

As Phillips had, Serge explained that while Marxism had had its setbacks within the movement (the degeneration of the Bolshevik Revolution), this did not invalidate it as science, on the contrary, only the application of Marxist analysis could explain that degeneration.

In 1936, Hook (in From Hegel to Marx) had promoted a non-deterministic version of Marxism and defended the dialectic (see page 127 and footnote 44.) In "The Myth of the Marxist Dialectic" (Fall 1938), Edmund Wilson sided with Eastman rather than Hook in asserting that there was a deep-seated inconsistency in Marx and Engels' work and that its root was in the Hegelian dialectic which prevented them from adequately formulating the relationship between the material world and human agency. The

triadic dialectic was irrational, religious mysticism - the trinity, the magical triangle of Pythagoras, the symbol of power probably derived from the male sexual organs - had upon Marxists "a compelling effect which it would be impossible to justify through reason." (Wilson, 1938, p74.) By accepting the dialectic, a Marxist was professing a faith and put himself (Wilson was using Eastman's metaphor) in the position of "a man going upstairs on an escalator" (op cit, p79.)

Phillips ("The Devil Theory of the Dialectic") was not prepared to accept this yet. While he agreed that Marxism must be approached critically rather than mummified into a system of beliefs, and while he considered the dialectic a flaw in Marx's work, he did not consider the flaw invalidated the work as a whole. Wilson, Phillips felt, was confusing Marx's view of history with laws of nature. No one who had read Hook he said, could cling to a notion of the dialectic as "science" in the sense of the physical sciences, but what was important in Marx was his historical sense. When Marx said social change followed the pattern of the dialectic, he meant "the force for transformation in society, unlike nature, was supplied by man's *consciousness* of his class needs." (p83) Socialism was "inevitable" only in the sense that when the material conditions were appropriate, and the necessary consciousness of the working class was developed, socialism "necessarily becomes the next stage in history" (Phillips, 1938B, p84.) Marx did not view the dialectic as the proof or means of attaining socialism, but as a metaphor.

Thus, in late 1938, PR was advancing a view of Marxism as "a philosophy of social action" (op cit, p89) and as a self and socially reflexive theory :

"And at any given time, the question of what is living or what is dead in Marxism is not an abstract one for it can be determined only by applying the old theories to new ideas and situations."
(op cit, p90)

The test of a proposition could not for them be Party policy, it must always be intellectual adequacy, its "scientific" status - science being defined as a method able to achieve the goals it set for itself (c.f. Hook, see page 127/8.) If Marxism seemed inadequate to the task of explaining contemporary society (including Stalinism), it must be reformulated.

* * * * *

During the years 1937 to 1939 the PR discourse was identified with a Trotskyist position in which aesthetic and political practice were represented as integrated, without any subordination of one to the other. This was expressly represented in the position taken, for instance, by the League for Cultural Freedom and Socialism in its statement on the war ("War is the Issue") signed by all the editors. In line with Trotskyist anti-interventionist policy they opposed entry, but on cultural as well as political grounds. The last war showed, they said, that with entry came regimentation, a decline in criticism, in literary development. "Every branch of our culture will be set back for decades." (League for Cultural Freedom and Socialism, 1939B, p126.)

This view was elaborated in the second exemplary text to be examined (Chapter Two). This editorial, "Kulturbolschewismus is here" was written in 1941 and will again be subjected to a forward and backward reading and other elements of the discourse which evidence the use of the Trotskyist framework will be examined there.

CHAPTER TWO

INCORPORATION OR RESISTANCE?

During the year that PR had suspended publication, Fascist regimes had consolidated their hold in Europe and the expectations of a second World War had increased. The response which was formulated in the pages of PR prior to the entry of the United States into the war in 1941 was a key strand in the discourse of the period.

The Communist Popular Front policy had been officially established in cultural terms at the 1935 Writers Congress at which the League of American Writers was created. While PR was distancing itself explicitly from Americanism, the Party was using it in its attempt to construct an eclectic anti-fascism, thus drawing into its ranks Americanists like Van Wyck Brooks', Lewis Mumford and Malcolm Cowley (who had found America when in Europe during his "exile", see Exile's Return.)

In contrast, the Trotskyite position in the late thirties and early forties was internationalist - that conflict between the 'democracies' and fascism was at root a battle for markets between competing capitalists. This position is evident in PR's editorials, the first of which ("Munich and the Intellectuals") attacked most left intellectuals for being prepared to support an "imperialist war" (The Editors, 1938C). The PR editors were anti-fascist of course, but maintained during the years leading up to and during the early years of the War that America must not intervene; that to be pro-war was to aid capitalism and, ultimately, fascism. (Rahv and Phillips maintained this until 1941 but Macdonald maintained it throughout the war.)

After the Nazi-Soviet pact in 1939, the Communist policy became "peace". A switch which lost them a great deal of credibility, support and members (Howe and Coser, 1957) and did not gain them an alliance with the anti-war anti-Stalinists who were not prepared to trust them (Farrell, 1940.) This policy was in turn succeeded by a return to anti-fascism when Hitler invaded the Soviet Union in 1941 and the post-invasion alliance of the U.S. and U.S.S.R. meant that, while the American Communist Party came out of the war very weakened in membership (unlike the European Parties), it did retain the sympathy of many "liberals".

In the eyes of the PR editors, the (Communist Party) League of American Writers was, before the Pact and after its ending, promoting an "official" culture; a culture which was all that the avant-garde despised and had dismissed in favour of the "modern". Both the Popular Front and, increasingly, the U.S. Government argued that American culture should be used to build a patriotic pro-war spirit; that literature should present a "positive" view of society rather than the critical negativism of the "moderns". This view was promoted largely by Brooks and MacLeish (who soon became proponents of a Government as much as a Popular Front position) and by 1941 was known as "the Brooks-MacLeish thesis".

The editorial "Kulturbolschewismus is here" was published shortly before the bombing of Pearl Harbour prompted many anti-war leftists to shift from their position that the war was essentially imperialist to an, albeit reluctant, espousal of intervention. By 1941, Rahv and Phillips

were no longer sympathetic to the Trotskyist position, and Macdonald's innovative interpretations of the class nature of the Soviet Union had caused him to split from the Trotskyists (by then themselves split). However, Macdonald remained opposed to participation throughout the war and the next issue saw the publication of a notice that the editors of PR could no longer agree on their position and would not, therefore, print any more editorials on the subject. By 1943 the disagreements had developed to a point where the editors could no longer work together and Macdonald left to start Politics.

Despite the imminent split between the PR editors over intervention, the 1941 editorial does represent a shared position (as expressed in previous and subsequent contributions by Rahv, Phillips and Greenberg) on cultural autonomy. In 1937, the introductory editorial of the new PR had condemned the restrictions imposed on aesthetic practice by the "official left"; now they were to compare these restrictions to the assertions of the pro-government "Brooks-MacLeish thesis" that modernism was deconstructive of the status quo (something the editors did not deny but saw as its attraction) and must be replaced by a committed, positive, art which lauded it, an art which privileged content rather than form - a suggestion no more attractive to the editors in aesthetic terms than proletarianism had been. In 1937 the editors had been tentative in their commitment to the "tradition of aestheticism" of the first decades of the century, now they were explicit - the aestheticist school of the twenties was "still the most advanced cultural tendency that exists...." (see below.)

"Kulturbolschewismus Is Here" (Abridged)

"In the period of reaction we are living through, it is peculiarly unfortunate that, as Dos Passos remarks in the introduction to his latest book, 'Americans as a people notably lack a sense of history.' For the modern intellectual needs a sixth sense if he is to survive - the historical sense. Confronted by a frustrating historical situation - the breakdown of the political, social and cultural values of the bourgeois order, and the simultaneous impotence of any progressive revolutionary force to sweep clear the debris - our intellectuals have for the most part either tried to find their way back to the long discredited values of the bourgeoisie, or else have begun to move towards a totalitarian 'solution'. But for the values they instinctively want to preserve, both roads lead to historical dead-ends.

The swing back to bourgeois values has been up to now much the stronger. It has caught up almost all the old intellectual leaders of the left wing.....

This tendency [discovering the virtues of capitalism] is nothing new, nor is it of itself especially dangerous, since the values these writers are trying to revive are quite beyond the aid of their oxygen tanks. In this article I want to analyze the other and newer and much more ominous tendency, which seems to me most significantly expressed to date in a recent paper of Van Wyck Brooks - the tendency to rally to the concepts of Hitler's (and Stalin's) 'new order'. Another manifestation is James Burnham's book, The Managerial Revolution, on which I shall have something to say next issue.

Van Wyck Brooks' speech* was a Dadaist gesture in reverse. Dadaist in the furious invective, the wild statements, the general air of provocative hyperbole; only the madly ringing alarm clocks to interrupt the speaker and the stench bombs to drive out the audience were lacking. In reverse because the apparatus was turned in defense of bourgeois-Philistine values. The comparison is unfair to the Dadaists, whose antics were both logical and deliberate. Brooks was apparently serious in his clowning.

The paper is built around an antithesis between 'primary' and 'secondary' writers. The former is 'a great man writing', 'one who bespeaks the collective life of the people' by celebrating 'the great themes...by virtue of which the race has risen - courage, justice, mercy, honor, love.' He is positive, constructive, optimistic, popular. He believes in the idea of progress'. Above all, he is primary. The 'secondary' or 'coterie' writer, on the other hand, is a thin-blooded, niggling sort of fellow, whose work reaches 'a mere handful of readers,..' His stuff has brilliant 'form' but lacks 'content'. He is 'a mere artificer or master of words', who perversely celebrates 'the death-drive' instead of the 'life drive'. He is a doubter, a scorner, a sceptic, expatriate, highbrow and city slicker. His work is pessimistic and has lost contact with The People and The Idea of Greatness. He is above all, secondary.

*'Primary Literature and Coterie Literature.' a paper delivered at the Second Annual Conference on Science, Philosophy and Religion, at Columbia University, New York City, on September 10, 1941. I am indebted to Dr. Louis Finkelstein, of the Conference, for a copy of the paper and of Thomas Mann's letter of comment. [Footnotes are Macdonald's own.]

Brooks does not hesitate to name names as follows* Primary : Tolstoi, Milton, Erasmus, Dickens, Rabelais, Dostoievsky, Socrates, Goethe, Ibsen, Whitman, Hugo, Emerson, Whittier and Thomas Mann. (Critics : Arnold, Taine, Renan, Sainte-Beuve.) Secondary : Joyce, Proust, Valéry, Pound, Eliot, James, Dryden, Nietzsche, Rimbaud, Mallarmé, Farrell, Hemingway, Dos Passos, and Gertrude Stein. (Critics : Eliot, Richards, Winters, Pound, Tate, Ransom.).....

* For this list I have also drawn on a speech Brooks gave a year ago at Hunter College (published as 'On Literature Today') in which he first developed his thesis, though in much more genial and cautious terms.

The most obvious comment on the two lists of writers given above is also the most important: all the primary writers except Mann* are of the past, while the scope of the 'coterie' classification includes practically every significant modern writer, of every school from Paul Valéry to James T. Farrell. Now it would be logically possible that many writers in the past and no writers today might measure up to a given esthetic standard. But Brooks is not making an esthetic judgment - in fact one of his chief quarrels with the coterie writers is their preoccupation with 'mere' esthetics. He is making a historical judgment : he claims that Eliot, Joyce and the rest are bad writers because they don't truly render the 'sense of the age'. This is the point at issue. For, if we overlook the crudity of Brooks' formulations, we can agree with him that the coterie writers don't believe in progress and the 'march of humanity', that they are inclined to be sceptical and critical, that they are not at all popular, and that they represent the end and not the beginning of a culture. But the real questions are : Is their scepticism justified? Are their audiences small because popular cultural values are debased or because they perversely prefer to isolate themselves from 'humanity'? Is bourgeois society - which I assume Brooks would grant is the society of the period and writers in question - dying, or is it entering on a new life?

* This exception is in appearance only. Brooks dubs Mann 'primary' not because of his work which is patently 'secondary' in its pessimism, scepticism and world-weariness, but because of his ego, because 'the Goethe-intoxicated Mann' alone of modern writers is preoccupied with 'the idea of greatness'. What irony, that the foible of a great creative talent, which leads him to pose as Goethe redivivus, should be to Brooks precisely Mann's passport to the ranks of the 'primary' writers!

For all his boldness, Brooks nowhere dares to assert that bourgeois society in this century is in a flourishing condition. He simply assumes this crucial point - or, more accurately, doesn't seem aware it is crucial, and that writers can be expected to exhibit his 'primary'

virtues only in a 'primary' historical period. Here his historical illiteracy stands him in good stead. For he is actually able to believe that the specific values of the last century are eternal values, and that Homer, Rabelais, Erasmus, Milton and Doestoevsky all wore the spiritual costume of Victorian humanitarianism. 'Tradition', he states flatly, 'implies that mankind is marching forward.' And : 'This mood of health, will, courage, faith in human nature is the dominant mood in the history of literature.'

'Thirty years ago, when I began to write', remarked Brooks wistfully in his Hunter College speech, 'the future was an exciting and hopeful vista. Everyone believed in evolution as a natural social process. We took the end for granted. Mankind was marching forward.' Facing a world in which such beliefs are violently in conflict with reality, and unable or unwilling to change them, Brooks is forced to denounce as somehow responsible for this reality those writers whose work most truthfully reflects it. It is a particularly neat example of how an originally progressive ideology becomes reactionary when it is carried over into a later period. Van Wyck Brooks has become, doubtless with the best intentions, our leading mouthpiece for totalitarian cultural values. For the spirit in which such great creative works as Ulysses, The Golden Bowl, Death in Venice, Swann's Way and The Wasteland are conceived is that of free inquiry and criticism, and it must always and in every instance result in exposing the overmastering reality of our age : the decomposition of the bourgeois synthesis in all fields. The final turn of the screw is that Brooks, like MacLeish, in attacking those whose work exposes this decomposition, himself expresses its farthest totalitarian reach. We can now understand his close relations with the Stalinist literary front, his chauvenistic leanings of late years, and his famous proposal that 'committees be formed in towns to make house-to-house collections of objects made in Germany which might be destroyed in public bonfires... If these mass-demonstrations were on a scale sufficiently large, they would suggest that democracy has something to say.' (Letter to Time, Dec. 5, 1938) Hitler also has something to say, in these terms, and has said it.

To explain how it is that the greatest writers of the age don't possess the 'sense of the age', Brooks constructs the theory that a clique of mediocrities have somehow seized control of modern literature and imposed on it a set of 'secondary' values which effectively prevents any one (except Van Wyck Brooks) from perceiving that they themselves are just not up to the 'primary' standard. 'That certain minds are dominant does not mean that these are the minds which possess the sense of the age. They may be only the most articulate... These coterie writers have expressed a moment in which they have caught humanity napping.' It is all a tragic historical accident - like an automobile smashup.....

Where have we heard all this before? Where have we seen these false dichotomies : 'form' vs. 'content', 'pessimism' vs. 'optimism', 'intellect' vs. 'life', 'destructive' vs. 'constructive', 'esthete' vs. 'humanity'? Where have we known this confusion of social and literary values, this terrible hatred of all that is most living in modern culture? Where have we observed these methods of smearing an opponent, these amalgams of disparate tendencies, this reduction of men's motives

to vanity and pure love of evil? Not in the spirit of abuse but as a sober historical description, I say these are the specific cultural values of Stalinism and the specific methods of the Moscow Trials. Brooks' speech could have been delivered, and was in essence delivered many times, at Stalinist literary meetings here and in Russia during the crusade against 'formalism' and for 'social realism' which began with the Popular Front turn in 1936 and remains the characteristic Stalinist approach to esthetics. Proust to him is a 'spoiled child', Joyce 'the ash-end of a burnt-out cigar', just as Radek could describe *Ulysses* as 'a microscope focused on a dunghill.' And aren't we right at home in that poisonous atmosphere again when we read that John Crowe Ransom's literary criticism 'suggests the joy of Bruno Mussolini hunting out the Ethiopians'? Or when Brooks retorts to Mann's 'toleration' of T.S.Eliot: 'Dr. Mann is not tolerant of Hitler, and there are certain people about whom I am not tolerant'? Is it far-fetched to bring in the Moscow Trials? Their stage-managers, like Brooks confronted with unanswerable historical objections to their frame-up, also had to seek motivations for the accused in personal vanity and sheer diabolism. And just as they found it convenient to amalgamate fascists, Bukharinists, Trotskyists, and bourgeoisie into a single block, so Brooks makes no distinction between the critical values of Eliot, Richards, Tate, Pound and - actually - Logan Pearsall Smith. We are only just beginning to appreciate the terrible significance of the Trials for our age. The more closely integrated Stalin's Russia becomes into the Anglo-American war effort, the more threatening will be a recrudescence of its cultural values. We may have to fight the old fights of the thirties all over again. On the basis of this paper, Brooks is the logical successor to Dashiell Hammett as president of the League of American Writers.

But this outburst by an eminent American critic suggests even more than this. Here we have that official approach to culture which has spread far beyond the confines of the Stalinist movement. Brooks' thesis is essentially an amplification of the attack on the 'irresponsibles' made a year ago by Archibald MacLeish, Librarian of Congress and intimate of the White House. And would not Goebbels, the foe of 'degenerate' modern art, applaud not only the particular cultural tendency attacked, but also the very terms of the argument: 'Primary literature somehow follows the biological grain; it favors what psychologists call the 'life-drive'; it is a force of regeneration that in some way conduces to race survival.' 'Kulturbolschewismus', 'formalism', 'coterie writing', 'irresponsibles' - the terms differ for strategic reasons, but the content - and The Enemy - is the same.

The official approach to art has for its aim the protection of a historically reactionary form of society against the free inquiry and criticism of the intelligentsia. It is an attempt to impose on the writer from outside certain socio-political values, and to provide a rationalization for damning his work esthetically if it fails to conform to these social values. The mechanism is exposed with particular crudeness in Brooks' paper, which simultaneously damns coterie writing in social terms because it has a bad content ('pessimistic', 'negativistic', etc.) and also damns it esthetically because it has no content ('mere artificers of words...for whom only the manner exists and not the substance'). We may also note that the official critic,

since he is attempting to defend what is historically indefensible, is forced at every turn to attribute petty and base motives to the serious writers of his day, and to elevate pure theological wickedness into a historical principle.

The recent growth of this tendency over here is an ominous sign of the drift towards totalitarianism. It is a matter of cultural life and death to resist this tendency, regardless of one's specific political beliefs. Looking over back issues of the magazine, I am struck with how continuously we have been fighting a rear-guard action against this growing official esthetic, first as it manifested itself in the Stalinist writers' front, then after the Nazi Pact disillusioned the main body of American writers with Stalinism (unfortunately, purely on the political level, without raising the broader cultural issues at all), as it has cropped up in the swing behind the government in the war crisis. The irony is, of course, that it is a rear-guard action, that the new social and political forces which alone can bring into being a new esthetic tendency are still frozen and impotent. Eliot, Joyce, Proust, James, Valéry - these represent, as Brooks says, an end and not a beginning. Their school had done its work, fought and won its battles by the end of the twenties. But it is still the most advanced cultural tendency that exists, and in a reactionary period it has come to represent again relatively the same threat to official society as it did in the early decades of the century. The old battles must be fought again, the old lessons learned once more.

'Well, in our country', said Alice, still panting a little, 'you'd generally get to somewhere else - if you ran very fast for a long time, as we've been doing'. 'A slow sort of country!' said the Red Queen. 'Now here you see, it takes all the running you can do to keep in the same place.'

(Macdonald, 1941B)

The editorial weaves together many of the central elements of the PR discourse in a fashion specific to that historical moment in its transformation - the identification of changing "ideologies"; the concern with teleological models of social progress; the suggestion that Stalin's U.S.S.R. and Hitler's Germany represented a "new order"; the ever-present tension between form and content, formalism and a partisan realism, scepticism/alienation and commitment/collectivism, avant-garde and kitsch, highbrow and lowbrow, the urban and the rural; and with "official culture" and an independent, "critical" *intelligentsia*.

"....I want to analyze... the tendency to rally to the concepts of Hitler's (and Stalin's) 'new order'..."

Editorial, 1941.

Most of PR's editorials relating to the advent of, and policy toward, the War were signed only by Macdonald (the outbreak of war in Europe had been the precipitating factor in his joining the SWP, see page 165/6) and reflect his changing relationship to Trotskyist Party policy. Within the Party, war policy was determined by the outcome of a debate on the class nature of the Soviet Union; Macdonald's editorials started from within this debate but were more concerned with the extension of the "new order" analysis to Germany and, ultimately, to the United States.

The position of the Communist Party on the potential and actual European war was dictated unproblematically by the interests of the Soviet Union - again their discourse dependent on a strategic principle to which other elements were subordinated. Thus the Communist Party were against fascism while the U.S.S.R. looked vulnerable to German aggression, against war during the Pact, and in favour of U.S. intervention when the Pact was violated in June 1941. After Pearl Harbour, in December 1941, the Communist Party was enthusiastic in its war efforts, abandoning "divisive" strategies in relation to workers and blacks and encouraging a no-strike policy and participation in mainstream politics. (Howe and Coser, 1957) For the anti-Stalinist Trotskyists however, the defense of the Soviet Union was not automatic but turned on the question of its

class nature - if it was still a workers' state it merited defense, if a "new order" it did not.

The Communist Party discourse was constructed around a totalising principle and thus events were simply subjected to interpretation in the light of this fixed principle (Party Interest.) The principle itself was not in question and events were discursively subsumed rather than creatively integrated. If it was felt by the Party hierarchy that it was warranted by changing circumstance/popular opinion the discourse was reorganised, but the yardstick remained strategic advantage rather than the intellectual cogency or theoretical validity of the discourse or discursive elements. As a party, the Trotskyists too had a strategic principle and presumed that the Stalinist order lacked credibility. However, I suggest they, or at least their supporters among the "New York Intellectuals" were more concerned to explore the logical coherence of their positions.

Initially the Trotskyists were united in a belief that the anticipated conflict in Europe was an imperialist struggle for power and markets between competing capitalist or neo-capitalist economies and, as such, the outcome was irrelevant to the (international) proletariat. On the domestic front, since fascism was interpreted as the product of capitalism in decline, it followed, for them, that maintenance of capitalism in America would inevitably lead to, rather than avoid, fascism. Only socialism could defeat fascism; consequently, they argued, the opportunity should be seized to advance the revolution rather than to defend capitalist democracy; to "turn the imperialist war

into civil war" (known as the *defeatist* policy). However, while there was therefore no advantage for the American, or European, proletariats to be gained from American intervention, there remained the issue of the German threat to the Soviet Union and the response offered to this depended on whether the Soviet Union under Stalin was deemed sufficiently progressive to warrant defence.

Trotsky of course had opposed Stalin's development of bureaucratic control in the U.S.S.R. and argued that the Soviet Union had become a "degenerate workers' state", nonetheless, while potentially turning towards capitalism, it remained a workers' state, since the proletariat collectively owned the means of production². In the late 1930s, a dissident faction in the SWP developed the theory of "bureaucratic collectivism". The initial elaboration of this position is generally (e.g., Deutscher, Howe and Coser) attributed to Bruno Rizzi, an Italian ex-Trotskyist who published La Bureaucratization du Monde in Paris in 1939; but Carter/Friedman and Burnham had publically questioned the official line as early as the Autumn of 1937 (Myers, Chap 8.) The dissidents argued that as the bureaucrats controlled the means of production, they were developing into a "new class", rapidly becoming divorced from the proletariat. Thus the debate had clear implications for policy on the war - if the U.S.S.R. was still a workers' state, albeit degenerate, it must be defended and if Hitler invaded this would presumably entail cooperation with the bourgeois democracies.

By September 1939, the dispute within the American party had crystallised (Deutscher, p471; Myers, Chap 8) into two main factions,

the "majority" under Cannon conforming to Trotsky's rejection of the new class analysis; and the "minority" led by Shachtman. Macdonald's articles were initially closely representative of those of the Shachtman faction (who became the Workers' Party in 1940.) By the 1941 editorial however Macdonald's analysis of "bureaucratic collectivism" had departed from the Party line and he had left the movement (see Appendix Four.) In the pages of PR he and James Burnham debated their versions (a condensed version of The Managerial Revolution appeared in PR in 1941.) There were significant differences in Macdonald's and Burnham's analyses and crucial differences in their hopes for, and commitment to, socialist strategy. Increasingly however differences between the versions of the "new order" analysis were glossed over by their readers for instance, Phillips asserted (Phillips, 1945) that the two theories on bureaucratic collectivism were very similar, both disproving the inevitability of socialism. At that time this was presented as meaning that socialists would have to find a new way to make ground against capitalism, since they could not rely on it being destroyed by its contradictions. Acceptance³ of the "new order" analysis was an important step toward repudiation of Marxism⁴ but that was still some way in the future.

In the Autumn of 1939, in an editorial deploring the Nazi-Soviet Pact ("this final betrayal of the international working class") the editors made it clear it was Stalinist policy that they disagreed with, not communism - the betrayal was not "implicit in the 1917 Bolshevik revolution" nor did "the logic of Leninism lead 'inevitably' to Stalinism"⁵. Repudiating Socialism in One Country, they declared :

"We believe, on the contrary, that the Soviet Government has been obliged to go in for power politics because it long ago abandoned

the Leninist conception that the defence of the Soviet Union was inseparably bound to the liberation of the masses in other countries"

(The Editors, 1939)

Nonetheless, despite this apparent continued distinction between Marxism and Stalinism, the gradual reformulations of Marxism which were posed cumulatively challenged its status as *Theory*.^e

In 1938 when Trotsky, less than pleased at the suggestion that the new magazine should start with such a negative attitude to Marxism, had declined to contribute to the proposed symposium on "What is Living and What is Dead in Marxism" the editors had, partly to pacify Trotsky, given up the idea. In 1940 however, Rahv wrote an editorial on the subject, by which time their challenge was more extensive. The editorial rejected the revisionists who were dismantling Marxism, but also the orthodox who held to the dogmas - Marxism must be renewed, the liabilities excised and the assets expanded (Rahv, 1940).

This re-evaluation of Marxism rested on a test of its status as *Science* and its predictive powers. Though Rahv suggested the explanations for Stalinism were material and not to be found in Marxist-Leninist ideology (as Corey and Eastman were by then arguing), he did question Marxism's scientific status. Marxism claimed to be a science, he said, but if science (quoting a French physicist) is "a rule of action that succeeds" (Rahv, 1940, p175), then only its negative predictions and none of its positive ones had been fulfilled :

"In the main, events have confirmed the Marxist analysis of bourgeois economy, of the bourgeois state, and of imperialist wars; but so far events have failed to confirm the Marxist prognosis that once objective conditions have ripened, the masses will know how to dismember the profit system in order to reconstruct society on a

more rational basis. And objective conditions, considered on an international scale, have not only been ripe, but at times rotten-ripe."

(op cit, p176)

The workers had not achieved revolutionary awareness and intervened in their own interest in the historic process. This did not mean to deny their revolutionary status, but it did mean that the view of Marxist parties and leaders suffered from "abstraction and from teleological illusions" (op cit, p178.) This raised both the question of the nature of the mass and of leadership - Lenin's conception of the vanguard having not proved immune to totalitarian ideas and practices. In order to renew Marxism, Rahv said, that which was dead must be pronounced so and buried (the dialectic; "the defective concept" of the mass/leadership relation; the history is on our side mysticism, the fetishism of the economy it encourages; the theory of the dictatorship of the proletariat, "in its Bolshevik incarnation insofar as it negates the forms and traditions of democracy") in order for that which was living to assert its power (the materialist interpretation of history; the theory of class struggle; of the state of bourgeois economy; of imperialist conflicts; theory and state of internationalism and analysis of reformist movements.) Marxism was still "the greatest contribution to social science and to the technique of social action made in modern times." (op cit, p179)

Science was still widely appealed to in the debate about whether - or rather how - to revise Marxism. Eastman (who had been one of the first American "bohemians" to promote Marxism in the teens and twenties) now based his rejection of the "Marxian hypothesis" not on a change in his

values but on the scientific evidence - "the facts" ("As to Facts and Values : An Exchange". Eastman, 1942.) Marxism was a "theology" that must be abandoned and a new radical movement must be based on "a straightout recognition that Marxism is unscientific" (op cit, p207). His opponents of course (in this case Farrell with whom Eastman was exchanging views) simply contested the status of these facts.

The fact that one of the first postulates of Marxism to be dropped in PR was that of the role of the proletariat seems significant in the light of the "intellectualist" stand of the editors and contributors. Macdonald at least, makes it clear that they saw themselves as betrayed by the refusal of the proletariat to adopt their ideas - the intellectuals were right about American capitalism, but the masses wouldn't listen⁷ and

"Nothing is more frustrating for an intellectual than to work out a logical solution to a problem and then find that nobody is interested."

(Macdonald, 1963, p24)

Throughout the war, Macdonald's advocacy of non-intervention remained constant, Initially, because the outcome of the capitalist struggle would not alter the exploited condition of the international proletariat, later, because only the most advanced State form, socialism, could defeat fascism. The policy of revolutionaries therefore, had to be to concentrate on winning socialism. In 1941, Greenberg joined the editors, temporarily providing support for Macdonald's position against Rahv and Phillips, and in July/August 1941, the two published "Ten Propositions on the War", which, while it

stressed the authors' anti-fascism, called for political activities to be directed towards establishing a socialist state rather than being displaced into intervention in the war.

At this point, the editorial split surfaced publically with an acerbic exchange in the Nov/Dec issue initiated by Rahv with "Ten Propositions and Eight Errors", in which he accused Macdonald and Greenberg of hiding in a "snug sectarian hole" from the real extent of the danger from Hitler and from the fact that the proletariat could not be relied on to take action.² While all the protagonists were agreed that the Leninist organisational model had been corrupted by totalitarianism, Macdonald and Greenberg were committed to the possibility of replacing that with a more 'democratic' (if unspecified) "Luxemburgist" model which could respond to the Western (or American) experience. Macdonald and Greenberg, Rahv argued, wrote as if the "shattering surprizes of the last two years" had not happened, as if Hitler had not "removed one country after another from the arena of possible revolutionary action" (Rahv, 1941, p499). There was no immediate socialist resolution, the war would either be won by the combined forces of Anglo-American Imperialism and Stalinism or lost. The defeat of fascism was a precondition of progress and an interventionist stance was necessary. Rahv rejected the "revolution by consent" policy being promoted in England by Harold Laski and Francis Williams (the view that the capitalists would abdicate power in the national interest) and the "revolution by class war" policy (the Trotskyist "defeatism", i.e. that the capitalist government must be overthrown first) as being utopian. Thus, "whereas a Nazi victory would bury the revolution for good, the

chances are that a Nazi defeat would recreate the conditions for progressive action." (op cit, p502) There was no alternative.

While Rahv accused Macdonald and Greenberg of having a Leninist programme with Luxemburgian interpolates, they considered themselves Luxemburgists; proposing, not Lenin's "revolutionary defeatism" but Luxemburg's "revolutionary defensism". Greenberg had reviewed a biography of Rosa Luxemburg in the previous issue and asserted that her teachings were "the only body of post-Marxist revolutionary doctrine that can be counterposed to Leninism". An opposition that was necessary because Lenin's organisational principles had proved inadequate - he was orientated to Russia, Luxemburg to the West - her experience :

"made it clear to her that the workers of the West would go into action effectively only under organisational forms which, by allowing the maximum democracy to the rank and file, insured the instantaneous sensitivity of the revolutionary leadership to the moods of the masses".

(Greenberg and Macdonald, 1941, p436)

This provides an interesting example of the way in which "European Theory" was not by necessity incompatible with conceptions of an American "democratic character".

After Pearl Harbour² the disagreements had become so strong that, in the next issue (Jan/Feb 1942) the five editors printed a statement disclaiming their ability to provide "programmatic guidance" but, while the editors could not agree on directly political issues, they were still able to agree on the main concern of the "kulturbolschewismus" editorial - that the primary task was to preserve cultural values¹⁰. Macdonald continued to write contributions on the war, but in

July/August 1942 an unusual disclaimer appeared on the contents page :

"The articles in Partisan Review whether written by editors or contributors represent the point of view of the individual author and not necessarily the editors"
(emphasis added, The Editors, 1942B)

A year later, the divergence between the editors had widened beyond the possibility of co-operation and Macdonald resigned¹¹.

Macdonald's resignation letter and the editors' reply appeared in the July/August 1943 issue. In his letter, Macdonald said the divergence between his conception of the magazine and that of the other editors had become too great, partly on cultural grounds :

"I feel Partisan Review has become rather academic, and favor a more informal, disrespectable (sic) and chance-taking magazine, with a broader and less exclusively 'literary' approach."

When they revived PR in 1937, he said, it was "as a Marxian socialist cultural magazine" but since Pearl Harbour the other editors had abandoned Marxism and attempted to eliminate political discussion. And Macdonald announced his intentions to produce an alternative :

"...a magazine which shall serve as a forum and a rallying-point for such intellectuals as are still concerned with social and political issues. A magazine which, while not ignoring cultural matters, will integrate them with - and, yes, subordinate them to the analysis of those deeper historical trends of which they are an expression."
(Macdonald, 1943)

The editors responded in turn that Macdonald had wanted to :

".... abandon the cultural policy of P.R. and to transform it into a political magazine with literary trimmings. The use of literature as bait is a familiar strategy of left-wing politicians. Having failed, however, to convert the magazine to his special political uses, Macdonald had no alternative but to sever his connections with it...."

....it is rather disingenuous of him to suggest that the issue dividing us is the issue of estheticism versus a Marxist grasp of

'historical trends'. No such issue was ever debated. The truth is that Macdonald tended more and more to think of the magazine as an organ of political propaganda; and the more evident it became that the old revolutionary movement is in a state of decline, the more he wanted P.R. to take over its functions. We, on the other hand, have always maintained that no magazine - least of all P.R. which from its very inception has been edited mainly by literary men - can put itself forward as a substitute for a movement.

We could never agree to 'subordinate' art and literature to political interests. It is precisely this sort of disagreement which led, in 1937, to our break with the Stalinists. For it is one thing to introduce the Marxist point of view into the analysis of culture, and something else again to impose it on culture in a total fashion. We all should be impatient these days with those attempting to set up an ideological or any other type of monopoly." (The Editors, 1943)

While Macdonald was prepared to "subordinate" cultural matters to a materialist analysis - viewing cultural products as an expression of "historical trends"; Rahv and Phillips feared the magazine was to be turned into (again) an "organ of political propaganda". The independence that the 1937 editorial had claimed was a reality now, only for approximately two years had the discourse operated within an explicitly Trotskyist framework and for the next few years there was no political identification. In 1944 the Macdonalds started Politics which, in Howe's¹² words "took jabs... at the increasing sedateness of PR". (Howe, 1984, p115) Gradually Macdonald became less committed to socialism. He turned from Marxism to anarchism after two years of editing Politics (Macdonald, 1963, p27), and in 1949 gave up the magazine and by the 1950s had given up his "third camp" (neither the Soviet Union nor the United States) position and declared he had chosen the West - a position announced in a debate with Mailer in 1952 (Macdonald, 1963)

".....The official approach to art has for its aim the protection of a historically reactionary form of society against the free inquiry and criticism of the intelligentsia...."

Editorial 1941

Returning to 1941, we find that by the articulation of the elements of the PR discourse had been significantly reworked since its inception. Intellectuals were always credited with an innovative role but the representation of their place in the social formation and the precise nature of their "function" changed. Only, it is suggested, in the late thirties and, to a lesser extent, early forties, could a conception of critical intellectuals be articulated coherently; integrated with a conception of an autonomous aesthetic avant-garde and a partisan political practice.

The representation of *Intellectuals* in PR needs to be considered in the light of their representation(s) in the Communist Party discourse. In the early 1930s (after Kharkov) the Communist Party had been assiduously courting "intellectuals" and the Culture and the Crisis¹³ pamphlet indicated the public response of the sympathisers. As we have seen (page 103-6), Rahv in 1932 was a "leftist" who doubted the sincerity and staying power of the fellow-travelling intellectuals and was chastised for this by Magil. In the early 1930s, the Communist Party was advancing the law of the "excluded middle" and suggesting the intellectuals should therefore ally with the proletariat (see page 97), but by 1940, the Party was disappointed in the performance of the intellectuals.

During the Popular Front period, the Party was keen to reassure its new cultural allies that they would not be subject to aesthetic controls and General Secretary Browder began to sound curiously like Trotsky. In the years after 1935 he assured writers that while the class struggle was forcing them to make political choices, they did not have to abandon their cultural heritage. The first demand of the Party was that literature be good : "fine writing has political significance." The Party could not and would not pass resolutions on artistic questions : "there is no fixed 'party line' by which works of art can be automatically separated into sheep and goats." (Browder, 1941, p6) Neither content nor form were going to be imposed. (The fact that this indulgence was not extended to Party intellectuals like Rahv and Phillips is indicative of the two pronged strategy post-Kharkov with its tolerance for fellow travellers and hard line for members.)

In 1940 however, V.J. Jerome, disillusioned by the mass defections occasioned by the Pact, was attacking Trotsky's denial of proletarian culture and arguing that the surrender of the weapon of proletarian literature left workers open to subjugation to bourgeois culture and ideology (Jerome, 1940, p44.) The intellectuals "declassified" and driven toward the proletariat by the depression of 1929 had proven a disappointment - reluctant to accept Marxism or to join the proletariat (he named Wilson, Hook, MacLeish and Hicks.) Given their lack of dedication to the cause, the significance of intellectuals as a group asserted in the early thirties was now downplayed. Why, Jerome asked, do "many intellectuals retreat at sharp turns in history?" What is their social significance, and are they a class? Answering his own

questions, he explained that they were "neither a class nor a social layer of homogenous class composition." (op cit, p16) They were a "unique strata", of various social origins but predominantly petty-bourgeois, and dependent economically on the ruling class. While their economic activity might be distinct insofar as it was mental production, their origins, their social position and their relation to the means of production were heterogenous, thus they were not, and could not be, an independent political force as a group, although factions of them might ally with political forces either reactionary or progressive. Since they suffered under capitalism, they might ally with the working class but many would not since they conceived of their mental labour as superior.

* * * * *

During the early days, the intellectuals' position in the social formation was not explicitly theorised in PR, but in New Masses in 1934 Rahv, in a review of The Unpossessed by Tess Slesinger¹⁴, (Rahv, 1934E) explained that they were not a "class" or a distinct social category. While the fact that intellectuals operated in art and in literature "at an oblique angle from their class" deceived people like Ms Slesinger into thinking of them as a "socially independent group", they were in reality only superficially a unique social grouping, basically they belonged to the middle class, "sharing all its vacillations and alliances" (op cit, p26.) (Individual intellectuals however - like himself - had been precipitated into the proletariat by the depression, see Freeman on proletarianisation, page 135.)

By 1937 however, the social position of intellectuals was represented in PR as more ambiguous. The analysis offered then indicates the influence of Trotsky and his "law of social attraction" (see page 175/6 for Trotsky's analysis) - the intellectuals as a group were neither bourgeois nor proletarian, but, it was suggested, would ally themselves with the class in power, or taking power. They had a "peculiar relationship" (Macdonald) to the class structure and class struggle, apparently objective and capable of resistance, yet implicated in the class society :

"They conceive of their own thinking as being disinterested, free from class loyalties, taking as its referent 'society in general'. In a sense, this is true. They have not the direct economic interest in one side or the other of the class war which the proletariat and the big bourgeoisie have. But in a deeper sense, they deceive themselves. Like the petty bourgeoisie which produces most of them, the intellectuals shift back and forth between the two polar antagonists, attaching themselves to whichever at the moment seem to be the stronger."
(Macdonald, 1939E, p19)

Or Rahv,

"Marxist criticism, in discussing the social base of literature, has always laid too much stress on such terms as 'bourgeois' and 'proletarian'. This is an error, I think, because literature is not linked directly to the polar classes, but associates itself with (or dissociates itself from) the life of society as a whole as well as the different classes within it by giving expression to the given bias, the given moods or ideas of the intellectuals. An examination of the special role and changing status of the intelligentsia is, therefore essential to any social examination of modern literature.

Trotsky is, I believe, the only Marxist critic who develops his analysis of writers and literary trends around this concept."
(Rahv, 1939, p11)

The position of the intellectuals was not theorised on the basis of their position in relation to the means of production, but rather through an ultimate identity of interests with the dominant class. Rahv

refers to the "law of social gravitation toward the ruling class" (op cit, p13) in the last instance. In these terms, the alliance of the intellectuals with the proletariat in the early thirties was attributable to their belief that the proletariat were the rising ruling class; as bourgeois power reasserted itself however, the alliance with the bourgeoisie was forged again.

Thus the intellectuals did not have a specific class position arising from the nature of their production. There was no attempt for instance to locate them amongst the proletariat through a conception of the "collective labourer". The intelligentsia did "produce", but their ideas and art forms were not treated as "commodities" in this analysis; they were the producers of ideas and art and, provided they preserved their autonomy, these ideas/art would be critical of the status quo. It was their "privilege and duty" (Macdonald, 1939E, p10) to criticise ruling class values. While intellectuals might not have a class position as such, they did have a "special role" (Rahv, 1939, p11), a critical role.

In the late 1930s and early 1940s, the editors were concerned at the capitulation of intellectuals both to Stalinism - in which they included acceptance of the Popular Front anti-fascist alliance and to American "official culture". This capitulation was the more shocking since the class position - or lack of class-position - of the intellectuals made them the group most capable of resisting these trends. Avant-garde (or "intellectual" art¹⁵) was inherently critical, the aesthetic avant-garde and politically committed intellectuals were equated. (Thus a coherent

discursive articulation of the political and aesthetic elements could be achieved.) Modernism was necessarily politically as well as aesthetically radical.

In the Summer of 1939, Rahv's editorial (quoted above) developed this theme. Amid "a rising tide of patriotism and democratic eloquence" intellectual standards and creative energy were ebbing. "Everyone" knew, he argued, that literature (in the "qualitative sense of the term") (Rahv, 1939, p4) had been "liquidated" in the totalitarian countries, what many did not realise was that it was also being liquidated in the democratic countries where artists were

"voluntarily subjecting themselves to a regimen of conformity, are 'organically' as it were - obediently and at times with enthusiasm - adapting their products to the coarsening and shrinking of the cultural market. In this, the late hour of our society, one begins to perceive that what we are really witnessing is the first stage of a process that might be called the withering away of literature. Being the most ideological more than any other art [sic] literature responds openly and directly to changes in the social weather - the first to venture out into the bright and clement air, the first to turn tail when wintry darkness falls."

(Rahv, 1939, p5)

The political context was restricting the artistic endeavour and it was the task of the intellectual to resist this, to continue the innovative avant-garde tradition and by so doing challenge the political status quo. According to Rahv, the intellectuals had "moral and esthetic values running counter to and often violently critical of the bourgeois spirit." They lived in a hostile society, but because they did not have a specific class position, they were able, with struggle, to retain their autonomy. Artists and intellectuals were capable of resisting attempts to transform their "products into exchange values" (op cit, p12).

Elsewhere - in an article on "Proletarian Literature : A political autopsy", published in Southern Review in 1939 - Rahv argued that in a class society only the ruling class had the material means and the self consciousness which were the pre-requisites for cultural creation. The proletarian as cultural consumer, was forced to live on "the leavings of the bourgeoisie", able to produce only "limited and minor cultural forms, such as urban folklore, language variations, etc." (Rahv, 1970, p12) The bourgeoisie had been an owning class, he continued, able to create a culture prior to its accession to power, the proletariat however, was totally dominated and since it could only achieve freedom through a process of social change which would involve its own disappearance and the advent of classless society it could not have a culture of its own. Theorists of proletarian culture confused Marxism with party ideology and party ideology with culture - believing that the proletariat had an ideology of its own they concluded it had a culture. Rahv however argued, citing What is to be Done?, that there was no proletarian ideology but only an ideology for the proletariat. The proletariat, incapable of developing more than a trade union consciousness must be politically educated by the intellectuals¹⁶.

Thus the Trotskyist conception of the culture-bearing intellectual meshed with the conception of the critic as ideologist of the literary movement leading and guiding the cultural-political interventions of writers which had been advocated in PR (see page 131-4) during the days of association with the Communist Party, but had not been compatible with the precepts of proletarian literature. A (Trotskyist) intellectual could have an active role as an intellectual :

".... the major impulses of European art can be traced in practically every instance to the existence of an active intelligentsia, crucially involved in its contemporary history, and sufficiently self-conscious to be able to assimilate some new experience to the norms of its past. One might almost put down as an aesthetic law that continuity is the condition for creative invention."

(Phillips, 1941, p487)

Van Wyck Brooks and Archibald MacLeish were perceived by PR as the personification of incorporated intellectuals and their attacks on coterie intellectualists (see page 195/6) merely fuelled the PR assertion that modernism was inherently progressive and attacks on it totalitarian. Phillips, in his major contribution to the debate - in the same issue as Macdonald's editorial - ("The Intellectuals' Tradition") made the point Rahv had made in "This Quarter" - intellectuals (a "distinct occupational grouping" since the Renaissance) were capable of "detached and self-sufficient group existence" (Phillips, 1941, p485) but the majority had failed to achieve it, only a small avant-garde were engaged in a "kind of permanent mutiny" proclaiming the freedom and integrity of art.

PR's position was consistently "elitist", but the formulation of the role of intellectuals shifted, there was a changing articulation between their role, cultural production and political practice. In the fifties, the conception of a politicised and/or politicising avant-garde was transmuted into a resistance to the levelling effect of mass culture (see page 301-4), not by significantly changing the conception of the intellectual as "critical" but because the conception of American culture changed.

In 1939, in order to explain the relative autonomy of the artist/intellectual, Rahv introduced a concept which was to become a dominant theme in the PRs of the forties, *alienation*. The artist was able to resist incorporation only by being "anti-social" (p12)¹⁷. (The use of term alienation here however was not really "marxist" - J.F. Wolpert more accurately used the term *anomie* to describe the avant-garde "bohemians" (Wolpert, 1947, p477)¹⁸ The artist was estranged from society, but not from him/herself :

"rather than pay the price of being at one with society, the artist chose to be alone with his art; he preferred alienation from the community to alienation from himself."
(Rahv, 1939, p12)

nor was s/he isolated; the alienation was not an individual matter, it was a "group ethos" (Rahv, op cit, p12), a product of the historic role of the intelligentsia, the "creative grouping as a whole" was the "unit of alienation" not the individual writer (Phillips, 1941, p481) and while their "traditional semi-independence (Rahv, 1939, p13) was being threatened, a minority, the avant-garde, would resist and act as a "vanguard group" (Rahv, op cit, p15.) Indeed, even in the fifties, the literary avant-garde were referred to as "The Resistance" (see page 301). Their role, their responsibility, their function was to question the "official" view.

In Summer 1944 PR published Arthur Koestler's essay on "The Intelligentsia" in which he asserted that "it is indeed the 'aspiration to independent thinking' [the 1934 OED definition] which provides the only valid group-characteristic of the intelligentsia" (Koestler, 1944, p265). Their function was to be the "self-interpreting, introspective

organs of the social body" (op cit, p268)¹³. In the Spring of 1944 PR had published "Notes Toward a Definition of Culture" by T.S. Eliot and in the Summer issue "A Discussion" of his points. In this context Phillips took issue with Eliot's assumption that "the elite" - or the intelligentsia in Phillips' terms - had a conserving role culturally,

"On the contrary its role is that of independent thinking and innovation in the arts. Hence the most advanced sections of the elite tend to be radical, dissident and uncompromising and to relate themselves, however indirectly or unconsciously, to those social forces that challenge the economic and cultural exploitation of man."

(Phillips, 1944, p309)

* * * * *

In the early years, this formulation of the critical, independent intelligentsia was not expressed in the discourse, but emerged gradually as the editors identified not just the bourgeoisie, but the Stalinist Party apparatus as the enemy. In the early forties both the Party and the U.S. Government/mass cultural institutions were identified as the antagonists, but by the late forties, while the same arguments were being used in the cause of anti-communism rather than anti-Stalinism (i.e. from outside rather than within the communist movement) the American establishment was no longer a target.

While the aspiration to "independent thinking" and the promotion of social progress remained central to the New York Intellectuals' conception of themselves, the conceptual systems against which they defined their thought were recomposed, the polarities redesignated. The opposition between capitalism and socialism; the bourgeoisie and the

proletariat became totalitarianism versus democracy, the Soviet bloc versus the West. A politics of "the middle way" was constructed, a revitalised centre (Schlesinger's "vital center") in which the intellectuals continued to play their critical role :

"The collapse of the revolutionary movement has put the intellectual into a defensive position; the alternative for the next few years is no more 'capitalism or revolution' but to save some of the values of democracy and humanism or to lose them all, and to prevent this happening one has to cling more than ever to the ragged banner of independent thinking."
(Koestler, 1944 p277)

But, despite the rhetoric, this form of "new realism" was not a rejection of polarity, it simply equated "totalitarianism" of the left and the right and counterposed them to the middle (see page 270)

Thus critical thinking remained central to the perceptions of Self of the contributors to the PR discourse in the mid forties, but while PR criticised most intellectuals for a "failure of nerve" an abdication of their critical function and retreat into myth and religion (see page 240); others criticised PR for making concessions in the name of that independent thinking. Julian Symons, writing from the British Army acknowledged that PR was alive to the problem of failure of nerve, but felt not sufficiently so regarding "art and letters". He was worried at the number of writers who were "gaily rolling down the slippery slope of belief in public religion or private myth" (Symons, 1943, p428); he felt that PR was changing for the worse, bending to a separation of art and politics, making concessions in the name of "keeping art (or 'independent thought') going." But, he asked, in an echo of the criticism of the new PR by the Trotskyists in 1937 (see page 172/3), "Going where?" (op cit, p427)

This would not have been an acceptable criticism to the editors then any more than it had been in 1937 or than it had been from Macdonald a couple of months earlier. For them, art and politics were integrated aspects of life or "experience", and to advocate a modernist aesthetic was to advocate a deconstruction of the political status quo.

By 1952 however they wished to embrace "our country and our culture" for political reasons but, since they were reluctant to concede to mass culture aesthetically, they were unable to construct a coherent discourse - unwilling either to maintain their presumption of integration (since it involved an acceptance of mass culture) or to abandon it. (See Chapter Three.)

"....the new social and political forces which alone can bring into being a new esthetic tendency are still frozen and impotent. Eliot, Joyce, Proust, James, Valéry - these represent, as Brooks says, an end and not a beginning. Their school had done its work, fought and won its battles by the end of the twenties. But it is still the most advanced cultural tendency that exists, and in a reactionary period it has come to represent again relatively the same threat to official society....."

Editorial 1941

Later, in the post-war years, the PR discourse was reassembled and American culture re-evaluated as an adjunct to the alignment with a national political base. In 1941 however, central to the discourse were two elements which had emerged during the years 1939 to 1941 - a return to "the spirit of the twenties" and an emphasis on *internationalism*.

In his editorial ("This Quarter") in Summer 1939, Rahv (in an argument echoed by Greenberg in "Avant Garde and Kitsch" in the next issue) argued that literature must constantly renew itself "both in substance and in form" but that this process had been arrested. In contrast to the generally innovative twenties, the only source of literary vitality in the thirties had been revolutionary politics which had led to a "radical school of creative writing and to a Marxist literary criticism" (Rahv, 1939, p6.) The potential of this movement however had been betrayed by Stalinism which subordinated art to politics. Art was not 'above' politics, nor however could it be subordinated, the two areas of social life - as all others - were inter-connected :

"And the lesson of all this is not that writers were mistaken to interest themselves in social causes or that they should stay out of politics. Literature does not make its own conditions; it is subject to the general process of social determination. The lesson, rather, is that politics qua politics, as the ivory tower qua the ivory tower, is neither good nor bad for literature. Both are X quantities, in their own right neither regressive nor advanced as

modes of literary response to experience. But they become meaningful insofar as they are forms or modalities that each historic situation fills with its own content, with its own time spirit. Art as such derives no special benefits from the exclusively esthetic, the social and political, the religious, or any other attitude that the artist may adopt towards life; and we should be wary of the large claims that certain critics are making for politics as a boon to art. The real question is more specific : what is the artist actually doing in politics? What is he doing with it and what is it doing to him? How does his political faith affect him as a craftsman, what influence does it exercise on the moral qualities and on the sensibility of his work?"
(Rahv, 1939, p8)

Avant-garde writing, in his opinion, did integrate art with experience and now the spirit of the twenties was resurfacing in the US. For Rahv there were only "remnants" of an avant-garde, but such as there were

"... have begun to look back at the Nineteen-twenties as at a golden age, since that period though not marked for its political wisdom, was exceedingly alive with experimentation and innovation."
(op cit, p15)

Greenberg also felt that :

"There is a revival underway, it seems, in avant-garde writing in this country.... The shades of the Twenties are abroad, returned to the daylight for the first time since politics took over."
(Greenberg, 1941, p73)

This avant-garde was, in their view, as in the twenties, inspired by a "European" sensibility. Europe, they suggested, nurtured both an intelligentsia and an intellectual art while the (to them at that time) inherently contradictory American culture did/could not.

For Rahv and Phillips in the late thirties, early forties, "the modern" was literature that could represent "experience" adequately, could unify intellect and experience. And American writers were not, on the whole, capable of expressing the American experience adequately, not capable of rendering physical reality and ideas, of (in Rahv's terms) linking object and symbol, act and meaning.

In "The Cult of Experience" (Rahv, 1940) Rahv compared American literature to European to its detriment and in "The Intellectuals Tradition" (Phillips, 1941) Phillips similarly compared the intellectual traditions. While European intellectuals had been able to maintain their independence, Americans had not developed a true intelligentsia - the national culture inhibiting the lauded "aspirations to independent thought" :

"Now, in the case of American literature, unlike that of the old world, we have a kind of negative illustration of the relation of the intelligentsia to art. For the outstanding features - not to speak of the failures - of our national culture can be largely explained by the inability of our native intelligentsia to achieve a detached and self-sufficient group existence that would permit it to sustain its traditions through succeeding epochs, and to keep abreast of European intellectual production."

(Phillips, 1941, p485)

Rahv and Phillips (and Macdonald in "Reading from Right to Left"²⁰, an assessment of For Whom the Bell Tolls, and Greenberg in "The Renaissance of the Little Mag.") argued that American writing did not reflect a proper understanding of "experience", or its complexity and the integration of the political with the social, aesthetic, economic. The proletarian school had never been able to grasp this complexity they suggested, and now American writing needed to define itself internationally rather than nationally. To learn to present experience in their writing as the modernists were capable of doing²¹. Hawthorne for instance suffered from the problem typical of late Nineteenth Century, early Twentieth Century American writers :

"the problem of the re-conquest, of the re-acquisition of experience in its cultural, esthetic, and, above all, subjective aspects. For this is the species of experience which had gradually been lost to the immigrant European man in the process of subjugating and settling the new world."

(Rahv, 1941, p381)

In a famous article originally published in Kenyon Review in Summer 1939, Rahv argued that American writers were polarised into two types, which he designated "Palefaces" and "Redskins". The Palefaces, ambivalent about their Americanism, represented the "thin solemn, semi-clerical culture of Boston and Concord"; the Redskins, glorying in their Americanism, the "literature of the lowlife world of the Frontier and of the big cities." (Rahv, 1970, p1) Palefaces, (epitomised historically by Henry James) were the highbrow intellectuals, well-versed in the cultural heritage and often innovative in literary terms, yet estranged, fetishising tradition and unable to reflect contemporary "experience". The Redskins (epitomised by Whitman) however, while able to express emotion and immediate experience could only do so directly, unmediated by a cultural consciousness. The Nineteenth Century had been dominated by the Palefaces, now the Twentieth was dominated by Redskins, their medium the novel. Until the two creative impulses could be united, American writing would be impoverished.

In "The Cult of Experience in American Writing", Rahv developed this theme, arguing that, while Whitman and James served as standard examples of the polarity, they together, yet in their different ways, represented the beginnings of the "modern" in American writing, an attempt to deal constructively with "experience", to adopt the principles of *realism* (as opposed to the *symbolism* of the Palefaces, the *naturalism* of the Redskins). In the early thirties, defenders of proletarian literature (see page 134/5) had argued that the key to successful proletarian literature was its faithful reflection of the experience of the proletariat. Now Rahv deplored the tendency of the thirties and

forties to faithfully reproduce only a fragment of reality without reference to the complexity of experience²², to present incidents but not their meaning. In the twenties, he argued, writers had attempted to represent experience but the thirties had seen the restriction of this to one aspect, that of the class war. Unlike left wing Europeans like Silone and Malraux who "enter deeply into the meaning of political ideas and beliefs" (Rahv, 1940, p419), the proletarian writers' understanding of the issues was "so deficient as to call into question their competence to deal with political materials" (op cit, p420), they - and their characters - did not think about the issues :

"In the complete works of the so-called 'proletarian school' you will not find a single viable portrait of a Marxist intellectual or of any character in the revolutionary drama who, conscious of his historical role, is not a mere automaton of spontaneous class force or impulse."
(op cit, p420, emphasis added)

Similarly, Phillips (in "The Intellectuals Tradition") noted American Marxism's failure to fulfil its international and intellectual potential:

"Consider the Marxist or proletarian school, perhaps the most confident, aggressive and most thoroughly international of recent trends. One might have expected that a movement so completely regulated by an organized body of left-wing intellectuals, committed to an all-embracing philosophy and to the principle that literature must serve as a vehicle for revolutionary ideas - that such a movement would have been able to grasp the effects of our social experience on our national mythology in more significant terms than the simple rites of awakening and conversion. As it was, radical Novelists in this country took the short cut to integration by substituting data for values and the specious unity of the narrative for the interplay of historical meanings. Sharing the general aversion and distrust of ideological fiction, they failed to create a single intellectual character - either revolutionary or conservative - thus depriving themselves of their very medium of understanding, for it is only through the consciousness of such a character that it is possible, it seems to me, to depict the modulations and tensions of belief that make up the political movement."
(Phillips, 1940, p488, emphasis added)

The Palefaces were patrician, the Redskins plebian (Rahv, 1970, p2); what was needed was an alternative, but it was not the bourgeoisie - the Twentieth Century American bourgeoisie were the new manifestation of the plebians - the Redskin novelist was the writer of the era of consumption. (op cit, p3) The Palefaces were disqualified by temperament from the materialistic age, but writing needed intellectuals, American society needed an *intelligentsia* (Rahv, 1940, p422), though it had been slow to develop and had been kept at armslength from social and political power.

For Rahv and Phillips at that time, the American polarisation of culture was a specifically national problem and one which was rooted in the nature of American society - with the "extreme individualism of a country without a long past to brood on" (Rahv, op cit, p422), and its "successful" history as a prosperous country able to resolve its "historical problems" in action (in the Revolutionary and Civil wars) but not in the intellect. "Our history", said Phillips, "has been too rapid and too expansive for the American mind to settle down and take stock of itself"; modern civilization, symbolised by the *City*, did not emerge until after the Civil war with the consequence that "our intellectual life, in its formative years could not escape the atomizing influence of ruralism, and, perhaps more importantly, the "lusty pioneer motif" "with its strong tinge of hinterland philosophy" exerted a regional pull on the intelligentsia and encouraged an "individual rather than a group solution of the cultural problem." (Phillips, 1941, p486)

In PR the individual American pioneer was rejected in favour of the urban intellectual, member of an international intelligentsia. Capable, through his/her grasp of history, of intellectual leadership.

* * * * *

In the light of the position described above, PR's post-war American turn presents another apparently dramatic rupture or *break* in the discourse, but it is only superficially so, paradoxically, it was the earlier internationalist modernism that made the post-war nationalism possible - laid the foundations for the argument that the USA must take on the role of cultural leadership now that Stalinism and Fascism were destroying European culture²³.

Most of the twenties exiles had gone to Paris, and in the late thirties, Paris became a crucial symbol²⁴ of the threat to civilisation posed by the coming war :

"Paris might be called the 'eye' of modern European civilisation.... In that benign and quickening air, the expression of the best integrated culture of modern time, the *avant-garde* - the very term is French - in art and literature has found it least impossible to survive."
(The Editors, 1939, p3))

After the fall of Paris, PR published an article by Harold Rosenberg representing Paris as having been a "cultural Klondike", not simply a national or even European cultural centre, but the centre of an international and *avant-garde* culture which was counterposed to national, traditional cultures :

"What was done in Paris demonstrated clearly and for all time that such a thing as international style culture could exist. Moreover, that this culture had a definite style : the Modern."

A whole epoch in the history of art had come into being without regard to national values. The significance of this fact is just now becoming apparent. Ten years ago, no one would have questioned the possibility of a communication above the national, nor, consequently of the presence of above-national elements even in the most national of art forms. Today however, 'sanity movements' everywhere are striving to line up art at the chauvenist soup kitchens. And to accomplish this, they attack the value and even the reality of Modernism and 'the Paris Style'. National life alone is put forward as the source of all inspiration. But the modern in literature, painting, architecture, drama, design, remains, in defiance of government bureaucracies or patriotic street cleaners, as solid evidence that a creative communion sweeping across all boundaries is not out of the reach of our time."

(Rosenberg, 1940, p441)

The mid forties saw the rejection of Europe as cultural leader and the identification of New York in place of Paris as cultural capital. This may well have been a radical change, but there was no *break*, rather a reinflection. The very premises of the internationalist ideology made possible their displacement to a new cultural nationalism - since the modern art was "international" in nature, and was only physically located in Paris, it was possible to conceive of it being shifted to a new location :

"despite the fall of Paris, the social, economic and cultural workings which define the modern epoch are active everywhere.... The world takes its shape from the modern, with consciousness or without it."

(op cit, p444)

Indeed, Rosenberg argued, Paris had for a decade been "sinking", destroyed by fascism. Paris had been the "International of culture"; as Moscow in the twenties had been the capital of the political International, but had been destroyed by Stalinism. Both were now "radical ghosts"²⁵.

Clearly the way was open for New York to take on both roles, and in the forties, the United States for many artists and intellectuals took on the role of cultural leadership as it took in European refugees. Jacques Barzun claimed in 1952 in his contribution to the "Our Country and Our Culture" symposium that, by 1945, the United States was

"quite simply the world power, which means : the center of world awareness : it was Europe that was provincial."
(Barzun, 1952, p426)

In political terms, the Second World War ended with the ascendancy of an internationalist ideology which led to the founding of the United Nations, but this was soon modified by the polarisation caused by the U.S.S.R./U.S. cold war rivalry. The United States' economic and political dominance of the "Western bloc" was clear and its cultural pre-eminence was increasing. In the late forties and early fifties, we can see the burgeoning of "Americanism" among those who had rejected it in the late thirties/early forties.

In January 1941, Roosevelt had made his "four freedoms" speech asserting the right of all to freedom of speech, religion, from want, from fear. In February 1941, Luce published an article in Life asserting "The Twentieth Century is the American Century" and called on Americans to recognise that they were the "most powerful and vital nation in the world" with a duty "to exert upon the world the full impact of our influence, for such purposes as we see fit and by such means as we see fit" (quoted by Macdonald, 1942, p304). Vice President Wallace had in turn taken Luce's slogan and re-cast it in international terms as the People's Century, the century of the common man, in May 1942. In the July-August 1942 issue Macdonald attacked both versions as imperialist,

Wallace, he noted, had in another speech proposed America as the heir to world religion and culture (Macdonald, 1942). But Macdonald's association with PR was soon to end.

A year later, Rahv, for all his admiration of Europe, was illustrating the way in which its perceived intellectual qualities were being recuperated into a new *Americanism*. In an article on Henry James' heroines "The Heiress of all the Ages" he argued that while the James heroines were cast in his generic role of "passionate pilgrim" - Americans bewildered by Europe - the heroines were able to respond positively, to :

".... plunge into experience...[to]...mediate, if not wholly resolve, the conflict between the two cultures, between innocence and experience, between the sectarian code of the fathers and the more 'civilized' though also more devious and dangerous code of the lovers." (Rahv, 1943, p227/8).

"To grasp the national-cultural values implicit in the progress of his heroine is to be done once and for all with the widely held assumption that to James the country of his birth always signified failure and sterility.... as the years passed James's awareness of the American stake in the maintenance of civilization grew increasingly more positive and imposing.... his valuations of Europe and America are not the polar opposites but the two commanding centers of his work - the contending sides whose relation is adjusted so as to make mutual assimilation feasible..." (op cit, p231/2)

He did not "glow" over America like Whitman, said Rahv, and is accused by his critics of being an expatriate, but "there is a world of difference between the status of an ambassador and the status of a fugitive. No wonder, Rahv said²⁶, the heroine of The Wings of a Dove was credited by James with :

"the great historic boon of being 'that certain sort of young American', exceptionally endowed with 'liberty of action, of choice, of appreciation, of contact.. who is more the "heir of all the ages" than any other young person whatsoever.'" (op cit, p228)

"... *coterie* writers... are inclined to be sceptical and critical... they are not at all popular... popular cultural values are debased..."

Editorial 1941.

In 1941 the Brooks-MacLeish Thesis was proposing that "coterie writers" were negative, undermining the social order - unAmerican - while "primary writers" positively promoted cultural values. In PR, *official art* (in its current and previous manifestations) was steadfastly opposed until the fifties. That which Brooks and MacLeish condemned in modern art, PR, on the contrary, promoted as its strength, the deconstruction, the decomposition of the status quo.

The belief in an intellectual minority's capacity for resistance was at the heart of the distinction consistently made in PR between *avant-garde* and *kitsch*. 'Real' art, they argued, cannot be transformed into a commodity, it makes people think, it cannot be packaged - this in itself makes it a challenge to the status quo. As early as Issue No 3, in 1934, Rahv had argued that, while "commercial art" was an "open instrument" of the propertied classes, "intellectual" art was contradictory. An *avant-garde* art could never be a direct reflection of class needs. Since it articulated despair, and "slashes certain forms of philistinism" it was critical - albeit not in class terms, but "deflected through through various crooked mirrors." (Rahv, 1934F, p41)

The 'new' PR asserted its commitment to experimental work. Work which as a consequence of its complexity was not open to recuperation; work

which (whatever its author's politics) by accurately reflecting the "sense of the age" would reflect "the decomposition of the bourgeois synthesis." (1941 editorial) This view was proposed not only by Macdonald and by Rahv and Phillips in relation to literature, but also by Macdonald in relation to film and, on somewhat different grounds, by Greenberg and Morris in relation to painting and sculpture. Contributions to PR on painting and sculpture were a significant component after 1937, with a regular feature, "Art Chronicle" (there were also "Theatre Chronicles", "Cinema Chronicles", "Music Chronicles" and even an isolated "Television Chronicle", but "Art Chronicle" was the most frequent) and occasional articles. Among the new editors in 1937 was the artist G.L.K. Morris²⁷ who provided the financial backing and in 1939 Clement Greenberg became a contributor and in 1941-3 an editor. While Morris and Greenberg had some differences of opinion (See Appendix Five) they were agreed on a commitment to modern art. In the late thirties and forties, the new PR championed the cause of abstract art and attacked politically oriented "realism"/naturalism.

Greenberg's constitutive articles "Avant-garde and Kitsch" and "Towards a Newer Laocoon" were both first published in PR when he was unknown. The two articles, I suggest here, have been read within the prevailing discourse of art criticism (see Appendix Five.) Since the success of the New York abstract artists that Greenberg championed in the 1940s, these pieces have been read largely within a formalist discourse (currently within the modernist/post-modernist debate), at the time of their writing however, they were much more ambiguous. "Avant-garde and Kitsch" was a response to Macdonald's assertion in PR that the

predeliction of the Soviet masses for kitsch socialist realism was a consequence of Stalinist "conditioning" and Greenberg's formalist thesis was expounded in the context of the debate over art's role under totalitarian (capitalist and socialist) regimes.

Macdonald's article was one of a series of three published in 1938/9 on the Soviet Cinema 1930-38 in which he praised the innovative "formalist" cinema of the post-revolutionary period and compared Stalinist Socialist Realism post-1930 dismissively with Hollywood cinema. In the third article Macdonald conceded that while the dominance of Hollywood-style films with their emphasis on "entertainment value" was state policy, there was also the "problem of mass taste" - the Russian people liked Hollywood-style movies and conventional technique. This was not suprising given their past economic privations and Czarist policies, but

"Two questions must be asked : (1) to what degree is this expression of popular taste spontaneous and to what degree is it stimulated by official policy? and, (2) could this policy conceivably have guided mass taste into other channels?"
(Macdonald, 1939, p87)

The answer, he concluded, was that it was policy and that they could have been guided - people had been "conditioned to shun 'formalism' and to admire 'socialist realism'." (op cit, p88)

This prompted Greenberg to write²⁸, "Avant-garde and Kitsch" which appeared in the Fall 1939 issue. His central theme was that avant-garde culture is self-referential; its "subject matter" is the state of art.

Greenberg diverged somewhat from the then current PR position that avant-garde art was inherently radical. For Greenberg, avant-garde art

was outlawed not because "a superior culture is inherently a more critical culture" but rather because it is too "innocent". By this he meant too difficult to inject propaganda into, and, as Rahv had argued that "commercial" (as opposed to "intellectual") art was a direct weapon, so too, Greenberg argued that kitsch was more pliable and was used by the totalitarian regimes partly because the avant-garde was inaccessible to manipulation, and partly because the masses could not understand the avant-garde and needed to be flattered by having culture brought down to their level (Greenberg, 1939, p47.) So too, capitalism in decline found art of quality a threat to its existence "advances in culture no less than advances in science and industry corrode the very society under whose aegis they are made possible." Only the avant-garde kept culture "moving". The avant-garde must align itself with socialism, not just since only under socialism could a revolutionary culture appear, but because only there could whatever living culture there was be preserved (op cit, p48/9.) In "Laocoon" he elaborated, the avant-garde embodied "art's instinct for self-preservation", abstract art was an historically superior form. The artist could either move on or return to the stale past, surrendering ambition (Greenberg, 1940, p304.)

After the war, Greenberg played a significant role in the construction of the cultural hegemony of the U.S., specifically of New York. In a series of articles in the late forties, he argued that European art was surrendering to outmoded forms, while in American there was a "capacity for fresh content" (Greenberg, 1948, p81.) In parallel with other members of the group, he highlighted the key discursive element of the

late forties, *alienation* and its role in art, arguing that "Isolation is, so to speak, the natural condition of high art in America" and that isolation, "or rather the alienation that is its cause" "is the condition under which the true reality of our age is experienced."
(Greenberg, 1948, p82)

Soon, however, he concluded that :

"the main premises of Western art have at last migrated to the United States, along with the center of gravity of industrial products and political power."
(Greenberg 1948B, p369)

and, by the end of 1949, he identified as "Our Period Style" a new unity in the visual arts, despite the apparent discord and disintegration of the age. A unity which perhaps reflected an, as yet unperceived, new principle of unity in industrialised, urbanised, society. A new spirit, characterised by :

"... economy, directness and consistency in the fitting of means to ends : in a word, by the practice of rationalisation."
(Greenberg, 1949, p1138)

And, developing the point made in "Avant-garde and Kitsch" that modern art was "innocent", he continued, that the new art :

"answers the temper of men who know no better way of attaining an end than by the rationalization of every means thereto. This art is one of the few manifestations of our time uninflated by illegitimate concern - no religion or mysticism or political certainties. And in its radical inadaptability to the uses of any interest, ideological or institutional, lies the most certain guarantee of the truth which it expresses."
(op cit, p1138)

Others have argued that it was precisely this "innocence", this post-war assumption of apoliticism, which allowed the Abstract Expressionists to become a "weapon in the cold war" (See Appendix Five.) Whether or not

that is the case, the use of American cultural products in the Cold War, the construction of cultural hegemony, is evident in PR. During the forties this was a gradual, and no doubt unconscious, adjustment of the discourse, but in the late forties it is sometimes quite explicit (see page 277).

"... they represent the end and not the beginning of a culture..."
Editorial 1941

The avant-garde were always presented as a minority, but in 1941 there was optimism that they would form a vanguard for a resurgence of modernism. Interestingly, in the light of recent debates on modernism and post-modernism, while the editors asserted that their society - the bourgeois society whose march of progress had started with the Enlightenment - was ending ("the overmastering reality of our age : the decomposition of the bourgeois synthesis...", Macdonald, 1941B. p446. "In this, the late hour of our society", Rahv, 1939, p5), they did not assert any alternative "post-modern" practice, but rather maintained the continued validity of modernism. Of course - as post-modernism is increasingly equated with the deconstruction of the bourgeois synthesis - one could argue that the "modernism" promoted by the editors was "post-modernism", but perhaps the concept (post-modernism) is only viable after modernism has become valorised as the dominant art form - and that valorisation, notably in the context of painting, was yet to come. (See for instance, Foster, 1983; Lyotard, 1984; Arac, 1986; for a discussion of "Post-modernism".)

From 1942, optimism was increasingly replaced in the pages of PR by the assertion that "failure of nerve", a retreat into a private myth, had become widespread²⁹. There was a fear that the price of rejection of Marxism's meta-narrative was a rejection of rationality. While initially highly critical of this retreat, the PR conception of

intellectuals as collective activists was gradually modified into one of individualist alienation. A phase in which the intellectuals, having rejected organised political commitments entered a period characterised by "homelessness". In late 1942 Rahv ("On the Decline of Naturalism") noted that :

"manifestly the failure of the political movement in the literature of the past decade has resulted in a revival of religio-esthetic attitudes. The young men of letters are once again watching their own image in the mirror and listening to inner promptings."
(Rahv, 1942, p483)

This was followed in early 1943 by the first part of a symposium on "The New Failure of Nerve", introduced by an article by Sidney Hook, on the fact that all fields of theoretical life were showing "signs of intellectual panic, heralded as portents of spiritual revival" (Hook, 1943, p2) and a loss of confidence in scientific method. In the early thirties, Hook had argued for a non-determinist, yet scientific, Marxism. Marxism's claim to be scientific rested, he argued then (see page 127), on its provision of a programme premised on "class values" and designed to achieve "class goals". Now Hook had abandoned the phrase "class truths" on the grounds that it suggested that values and truths were valid only for one class in the community. However, he felt that, if it had been unintelligent to believe that politics was only an expression of class interests (since there are always some common interests) it was equally unintelligent to try to understand politics without assigning weight to conflicting class interests.

Macdonald however, in his contribution ("The Future of Democratic Values") concentrated on why the tide of obscurantism was rising and attributed it to the fact that the bourgeois revolution had reached a

dead end, totalitarian state forms were taking over and it was no longer possible to believe in the inevitability of socialism. He did not however see the latter as an invalidation of Marxism, it "weakens it propagandistically but strengthens it scientifically" (Macdonald, 1943, p332). Take away the "mystique" and the "basic insights" remained : "that class struggle is the underlying pattern of history; that men act primarily from materialistic 'selfish' interests; that the development of the forces of production sets certain limits and offers certain possibilities to political action.... 'the point' of Marxism, as developed by Marx at least, was not economic determinism, but rather political activism..." (op cit, p332)

Initially, the price of resisting the dominant culture had been presented in PR as "alienation" from that culture, but not from self; the isolation of the intellectuals had been a group ethos and one which was productive :

"modern art with its highly complicated techniques, its plaintive egotism, its messianic desperation, could not have come into being except through the formation by the intelligentsia of a distinct group culture, thriving on its very anxiety over survival and its consciousness of being an elite. In no other way could it have been able to resist being absorbed by the norms of belief and behaviour; and society, for its part, while it could tolerate an enduring cult of intellectual abnormality, would certainly have had little patience with outbursts of non-conformity in esthetic matters by individuals who in every other respect remained within the fold."

(Phillips, 1941, p482)

Gradually, however, the avant-garde were represented as experiencing an alienation which included self-estrangement and individual isolation.³⁰

In 1944, Phillips commented

"What we observe today is not so much a lull in the literary life as an utter breakdown of values and distinctions and a failure of

the will to independent radical expression."
(Phillips, 1944, p120)

In his analysis of "The Intelligentsia", Koestler argued that "Neurosis is inherent in the structure of the intelligentsia", thinking and behaving independently put the intellectuals in an oppositional relation to society which extracted neurosis as its price :

"To quarrel with society means to quarrel with its projections in one's self and produces the classical neurotic split patterns. An intelligentsia deprived of the prop of an alliance with an ascending class must turn against itself and develop that hot-house atmosphere, that climate of intellectual masturbation and incest, which characterized it during the last decade."
(Koestler, 1944, p275)

The "rootless and conscience-laden" neurotic artist, said Phillips, is a "modern phenomenon" (Phillips, 1946, p553).

This application of psychoanalytic categories to the arts, or rather to the artist, was in vogue in the mid and late forties and was symptomatic in PR of the shift from a group to a more individualistic conception of the intellectual/artist. But, while it appears that elsewhere the approach sometimes degenerated to the level of "artists have to be mad to be geniuses", the assertions in PR were more restrained, concerned to avoid denying the aesthetic qualities of great art. Lionel Trilling ("A Note on Art and Neurosis") argued that, while artists might be neurotic and this might affect their work, the artistic impulse was a healthy one (Trilling, 1946.) Robert Gorham Davis ("Art and Anxiety") argued that everyone is neurotic in some way and artists shape their neurosis and make it work, satisfying emotional needs (Gorham Davis, 1945.) In the next issue, initiating "Modern Evidence", "a series of texts for the

times", Freud on "Doestoevski and Parricide" was published and, in 1946, ("Doestoevsky's Underground Man") Phillips described Doestoevsky as living "in the shadow of insanity" yet creating art out of his "'diseased mind'" (Phillips, 1946, p551). Freudian analysis, he said, was useful but could not deal with the aesthetic aspect.

The intellectual artist's ability to creatively reproduce life in art remained the key to the PR critical aesthetic. For Rahv and Phillips, while the post-war period and the passing of the convictions of the thirties encouraged rootless pessimism and the majority of the intelligentsia had succumbed, the minority's "resistance" was dependent on their ability to integrate art and life, to reproduce experience - as it had been in the thirties. What had altered for them was the nature of the experience, to be "modern" was to be able to convey a contradictory experience.

The young writers, Rahv complained in 1942 ("On the Decline of Naturalism") had turned to *symbolism*, fable and myth while the test of writing for the critic must be its relevance, its "correspondence" with (as opposed to transcription/reflection of) reality. It was not *naturalism* that was needed, but *realism*, an imaginative re-creation :

"Imaginative writing cannot include fixed and systematic definitions of reality without violating its own existential character. Yet in any imaginative effort that which we mean by the real remains the basic criterion of viability, the crucial test of relevance, even if its specific features can hardly be determined in advance but must be felt anew in each given instance. And so far as the medium of fiction is concerned, one cannot but agree with Henry James that it gains its 'air of reality' - which he considers to be its 'supreme virtue' - through 'its immense and exquisite correspondence with life.' Note that James's formulation allows both analogical and realistic techniques of representation. He speaks not of copies or reports or transcripts of life but of

relations of equivalence, of a 'correspondence' which he identifies with the 'illusion of life'."

(Rahv, 1942, p484)

The writer must be able to make the reader "experience his creative contradictions" (p485.)

Three years later (Summer 1945) Rahv reviewed Koestler - "the poet and ideologue of the homeless radical" and welcomed above all his "quality of relevance" - not topicality, but "a sense of the present in its essence." Koestler (while not in Rahv's opinion a true artist, not as good as Silone or Malraux) was a modern, not "intimidated by the demand for easy affirmations. Like Kierkegaard's 'subjective existing thinker', he understands the function of ideas that help 'to keep the wound of the negative open'." (Rahv, 1945, p398) He had that "sense of modernity", that relevance "which can take various and contradictory forms." (op cit, p401) Relevance was not a matter of "the facts" of contemporary life, but of conveying the experience of it. "In a Tolstoyan novel" Rahv wrote in 1946, ("Concerning Tolstoy") "it is never the division but always the unity of art and life which makes for illumination." (Rahv, 1946, p420) And for Phillips, ("Doestoevksy's Underground Man") "the typical Doestoevksian character is a whole man torn from top to bottom by these moral and psychological dilemmas" and Doestoevsky himself was a "unified person", his thinking had "an organic quality being part of the over-all pattern of his being." (Phillips, 1946, p556) Similarly, Rahv greeted Newton Arvin's work on Melville with enthusiasm. Arvin, he said, made good use of psychoanalytic technique but combined it with "the traditional resources of literary criticism" (Rahv, 1950, p732) and "there is no separation of man and

artist in this critical portrait but an integration of the two which enforces the understanding of both in their organic unity." (Rahv, op cit, p733)

Thus, at a time when the writers of the thirties had become a "lost generation" (Phillips, on "The Artist as Middle-aged Man, 1944), "radical writers made homeless" in the Wasteland (Rahv, "Disillusionment and Partial Answers", 1948)³¹ only a few writers were able to maintain the tradition of the modern.

For the New York intellectuals a new political and literary model was necessary and during the 1940s one gradually emerged - the 'new' *Liberalism*. Later (in 1957) Bell was to describe their generation as "twice-born", a generation who, in the thirties had ousted their elders (the "once born") and taken a dominant position in American culture, then, in the forties, led their own "counter-revolt", thus avoiding being ousted in turn by the next generation (the "after-born") who had no cause. The twice-born still dominated in the fifties and provided the key terms which dominated its discourse : "irony, paradox, ambiguity and complexity" (Bell, 1962, p300).³²

Nonetheless, some members of the "twice-born" were less than wholehearted. In 1957 Phillips published an edited collection on Art and Psychoanalysis, (which included the contributions to PR discussed above.) By then the general view was, predictably, more positive. Phillips argued that artists have always had a "double image" (Phillips, 1963, pxiii) - as obsessed, even mad, yet possessed of extraordinary

insight. Psychoanalysis had taken this unresolved contradiction and recast it. Initially psychoanalysis connected art and neurosis (though undecided whether the art expressed the neurosis or its catharsis.) However, Phillips argued in 1957, art was currently being dissociated from neurosis, and represented as a 'normal' expression by the neurotic, a "triumph of health over sickness". This change he attributed to the spirit of the times : "the need for personal tranquility and social adjustment that dominates the mood of the present" (op cit, pxiii), where abnormality and unconventionality were frowned on and confused with each other. A mood he did not embrace - it was not the individual's "neurosis" that was actually being rejected, but their experience outside society, their "alienation". It seems that, despite his proclaimed commitment to "our culture" in the fifties, Phillips was reluctant to relinquish the status of outsider, the role of the avant-gardist. Art he suggested, was currently represented as asserting or conveying "truth", its innovative, questioning function repressed.

"In our time many innovations have been carried by an *avant-garde* concerned not with the truth but with some new, irreverant, often shocking stand against prevailing moods and opinions . And perhaps the decline of the *avant-garde* has something to do with the high regard these days, not only for the notion of truth, but also for that of normality and respectability in the arts."
(Phillips, 1963, pxxiii).

The 'healthy' Americanism of the fifties entailed a commitment to popular culture that excluded Phillips' commitment to an innovative "skeptical" avant-garde. The third and final textual "exemplar", the introduction to the 1952 symposium on "Our Country and Our Culture" will be examined in the next chapter.

CHAPTER THREE

BACK TO THE ENLIGHTENMENT / BACK TO THE FUTURE

In 1952 PR ran a Symposium entitled "Our Country and Our Culture" which is taken here as a third paradigmatic moment in the transforming PR discourse, one representing PR's alignment with "official culture", or at least its proponents.

The Symposium is viewed as a bench-mark by both its participants and supporters and by their critics. Howe recently (1982) described it as a major sign of the right-ward drift of the ex-radicals in the fifties. Daniel Bell too, in 1984 (in the "re-run" of the symposium), described it as a "turning point in the attitude of the writers and intellectuals" - for him a positive change - a "retreat from a moral relativism that had dominated left wing thinking for so long" (Bell, 1984, p620); for him, a rejection of the Marxist notion that political democracy was a bourgeois sham and, for him, a recognition of the enduring validity of American democracy in the Cold War context.

In the 1952 editorial statement written by Phillips and Schwartz (Phillips, 1984, p774) a new *Americanism* was spelled out:

"The purpose of this symposium is to examine the apparent fact that American intellectuals now regard America and its institutions in a new way. Until little more than a decade ago, America was commonly thought to be hostile to art and culture. Since then however, the tide has begun to turn and many writers and intellectuals now feel closer to their country and its culture."
(Phillips and Schwartz, p282)

Phillips in his 1984 contribution makes it clear that the issues of the fifties were those of *nationalism* and *internationalism*. Before the thirties, he now argues, dissenters exiled themselves from what they saw as America's spiritually barren culture. In the thirties and forties

Marxism with its international "mystique" "absorbed the native critical tradition" and took it a step further, "advocating a 'proletarian' literature and dismissing existing culture as bourgeois" (Phillips, 1984, p774) - a mistake the Europeans did not make - but the Americans were engaged in a game of hide and seek with Europe :

"both envying and rejecting the European lineage, like children reacting against accomplished parents."
(op cit, p775)

The antipathy was primarily literary rather than political he argues, and by the fifties Marxism had lost its appeal'.

In 1941 in "The Intellectuals' Tradition", in the context of the editors' reaction against the "official" culture being advocated by Van Wyck Brooks, Phillips had critically described the "current epidemic of literary nationalism" as a "new phase of self-abnegation on the part of the intelligentsia" :

"Once again they are renouncing their values of group detachment as they permit themselves to be drawn into the tides of prevailing opinion"

and concluded

"... the intelligentsia in America, for all its efforts to preserve its intellectual identity, seems to have a deep-seated need to accept as its own - if only periodically - the official voice of society."
(Phillips, 1941, p490)

Eleven years later the attitude was very different. The editorial introducing the symposium quoted from James, 1879; Pound, 1913; Van Wyck Brooks, 1918; Dos Passos, 1937; to illustrate the isolation felt by intellectuals in the past, and from Edmund Wilson in 1947 (who said the United States was the most politically advanced country in the world and

that the democratic creativeness of the New Deal was "accompanied by a remarkable renaissance of American arts and letters") to illustrate the new commitment.

"Our Country and Our Culture

The purpose of this symposium is to examine the apparent fact that American intellectuals now regard America and its institutions in a new way. Until little more than a decade ago, America was commonly thought to be hostile to art and culture. Since then, however, the tide has begun to turn, and many writers and intellectuals now feel closer to their country and its culture.

Here, for example, is the artist-hero of a James story speaking in 1879:

*We are the disinherited of art! We are condemned to be superficial. We are excluded from the magic circle. The soil of American perception is a poor, little, barren, artificial deposit. Yes! we are wedded to imperfection. An American, to excel, has just ten times as much to learn as a European. We lack the deeper sense : we have neither taste, nor tact, nor force. How should we have them? Our crude and garish climate, our silent past, our deafening present, the constant pressure about us of unlovely circumstances are as void of all that nourishes and prompts and inspires the artist as my sad heart is void of bitterness in saying so! We poor aspirants must live in perpetual exile.
(The Madonna of the Future)*

Ezra Pound in 1913 :

*O helpless few in my country,
O remnant enslaved!*

*Artists broken against her,
Astray, lost in the villages,
Mistrusted, spoken against...*

Van Wyck Brooks in 1918 :

*How then, can our literature be anything but impotent? It is inevitably so, since it springs from a national mind that has been sealed against that experience from which literature derives all its values.
(Letters and Leadership)*

John Dos Passos in 1937 :

...The business of the day... was to buttress property and profits with anything useable in the debris of Christian ethics and eighteenth century economics that cluttered the minds of college

professors, and to reinforce the sacred, already shaky edifice with the new strong girderwork of science Herbert Spencer was throwing up for the benefit of the bosses.

(The Big Money)

And, finally, Edmund Wilson in 1947 :

My optimistic opinion is that the United States at the present time is politically more advanced than any other part of the world... We have seen in the last fifty years a revival of the democratic creativeness which presided at the birth of the Republic and flourished up through the Civil War. This began to assert itself strongly during the first two decades of this century, was stimulated by the depression that followed the blowing-up of the Stock Market, and culminated in the New Deal. It was accompanied by a remarkable renaissance of American arts and letters.

(Europe without Baedeker)

The American artist and intellectual no longer feels 'disinherited' as Henry James did, or 'astray' as Ezra Pound did in 1913. Van Wyck Brooks himself has by now entirely repudiated the view that 'the national mind has been sealed against that experience from which literature derives its values.' John Dos Passos in 1951 would deny precisely what he affirmed in 1937. And what Edmund Wilson wrote in the conclusion to his book describing a visit to post-war Europe represents a new judgment of American civilization. It is a judgment that would have been inconceivable twenty-five years ago, yet it is one which seems natural to most serious writers today. We have obviously come a long way from the earlier rejection of America as spiritually barren, from the attacks of Mencken on the 'booboisie' and the Marxist picture of America in the thirties as a land of capitalist reaction.

Essential in the shift of attitudes is the relationship of America to Europe. For more than a hundred years, America was culturally dependent on Europe; now Europe is economically dependent upon America. And America is no longer the raw and unformed land of promise from which men of superior gifts like James, Santayana, and Eliot departed, seeking in Europe what they found lacking in America. Europe is no longer regarded as a sanctuary; it no longer assures that rich experience of culture which inspired and justified a criticism of American life. The wheel has come full circle, and now America has become the protector of Western civilization, at least in a military and economic sense.

Obviously, this overwhelming change involves a new image of America. Politically, there is a recognition that the kind of democracy which exists in America has an intrinsic and positive value: it is not merely a capitalist myth but a reality which must be defended against Russian totalitarianism. The cultural consequences are bound to be far-reaching and complex, but some of them have already become apparent. For better or worse, most writers no longer accept alienation as the artist's fate in America; on the contrary, they want very much to be a part of American life. More and more writers have ceased to think of themselves as rebels and exiles. They now believe that their values, if they are to be realized at all, must be realized in America and in relation to

the actuality of American life. In one way or another, this change has involved us all, but it has not yet been the subject of critical reflection and evaluation. Hence we think there is much to be gained by the exchange of impressions which a symposium fosters.

The problem as we see it is this : the affirmative attitude toward America which has emerged since the Second World War may be a necessary corrective of the earlier extreme negation, but the affirmation cannot be unequivocal. For American economic and political institutions have not suddenly become ideally beneficent, and many intellectuals are not prepared to give up all criticism of them. In addition, the enormous and ever-increasing growth of mass culture confronts the artist and the intellectual with a new phenomenon and creates a new obstacle : the artist and intellectual who wants to be a part of American life is faced with a mass culture which makes him feel that he is still outside looking in. Ortega y Gasset has formulated the difficulty in an extreme way : 'The mass crushes beneath it everything that is different, everything that is excellent, individual, qualified and select. Anybody who is not like everybody, who does not think like everybody, runs the risk of being eliminated.' By 'mass' Ortega y Gasset does not mean any social or economic class of society. 'By mass' says Ortega y Gasset, 'is not to be specially understood the workers; it does not indicate a social class, but a kind of man to be found today in all social classes, who consequently represents our age, in which he is the predominant ruling power.'

We cannot however accept the views of Ortega y Gasset without serious qualifications, for he ignores the fact that political democracy seems to coexist with the domination of the 'masses'. Whatever the cultural consequences may be, the democratic values which America either embodies or promises are desirable in purely human terms. We are certain that these values are necessary conditions for civilization and represent the only immediate alternative as long as Russian totalitarianism threatens world domination. Nevertheless, there are serious cultural consequences : mass culture not only weakens the position of the artist and the intellectual profoundly by separating him from his natural audience, but it also removes the mass of people from the kind of art which might express their human and aesthetic needs. Its tendency is to exclude everything which does not conform to popular norms; it creates and satisfies artificial appetites in the entire populace; it has grown into a major industry which converts culture into a commodity. Its overshadowing presence cannot be disregarded in any evaluation of the future of American art and thought. Its increasing power is one of the chief causes of the spiritual and economic insecurity of the intellectual minority.

Apparently, cultural democracy is an outgrowth of political democracy under conditions of modern industrial development. And the democratization of culture involves an inevitable dislocation, though it may in the end produce a higher culture and demonstrate that a political democracy can nourish great art and thought. But whatever the future may promise, we cannot evade the fact that at present America is a nation where at the same time cultural freedom is promised and mass culture produced. This paradox, we think, creates many difficulties for

American writers and intellectuals who are trying to realize themselves in relation to their country and its cultural life."

(Phillips and Schwartz, 1952.)

The - to say the least, leading - questions posed in the symposium were:

"1. To what extent have American intellectuals actually changed their attitude toward America and its institutions?

2. Must the American intellectual and writer adapt himself to mass culture? If he must, what forms can his adaptation take? Or, do you believe that a democratic society necessarily leads to a levelling of culture, to a mass culture which will overrun intellectual and aesthetic values traditional to Western civilization?

3. Where in American life can artists and intellectuals find the basis of strength, renewal, and recognition, now that they can no longer depend fully on Europe as a cultural example and a source of vitality?

4. If a reaffirmation and rediscovery of America is under way, can the tradition of critical non-conformism (going back to Thoreau and Melville and embracing some of the major expressions of American intellectual history) be maintained as strongly as ever?"

* * * * *

To make free with Phillips' 1965 comments on the new generation of writers (Amis, Murdock, Porter, McCarthy, Malamud, Bellow) : "The cold war between the writer and his society was over"; "The outsider was now the insider." (Phillips 1967, p47). The skeptics had become "believing skeptics." (Robert Booth Fowler, Believing Skeptics : American Intellectuals 1945-64)

In his personal contribution, Phillips commented that the changes described in the editorial were so obvious that no one could have failed to see them, and added :

"If I look back at the last two decades I become aware of how much these changes have been part of my own experience."
(Phillips, 1952, p585)

However, both here and in the editorial, he did express some reservations². Reservations which reflect his concern that post-war American culture was "mass culture". Affirmation of American society could not be "unequivocal" (editorial, p284),; there was a danger of making an "overadjustment to reality" (personal contribution, p587), of becoming uncritical, of experimental art being forced into decline. Political democracy unfortunately led to cultural democracy, to mass culture. Nonetheless, Phillips argued, avant-garde art too, needed to go back to its society's cultural roots, identification with one's culture was not just reactionary flag-waving, it didn't "preclude the free play of the imagination or the dissident spirit either in literature or politics." (Personal contribution, p587)

In Philip Rahv's contribution however, a substantial element of disagreement with the editorial position is evident. Rahv and Phillips had been having personal and professional disagreements for some time, and in 1946 had had their first serious "confrontation" (Barrett, 1983, p39-43; Phillips, 1983, p273) and in the years that followed while an "armed truce" (Phillips, op cit, p274) was maintained, Phillips took more responsibility for the magazine.³ In 1965, when the editorial board voted to make Phillips editor-in-chief, Rahv instigated a lawsuit, and in 1969 resigned to start Modern Occasions.⁴ (Howe, 1984, p317)

In his contribution to the symposium, Rahv's ambivalence regarding the Liberal anti-communist position is evident. An ambivalence which

hardened into rejection during the 1950s as he followed a path which led him, against the prevailing current^s back toward the left. While he did argue that the new attitude expressed in the editorial was not just a "regression" to nationalism, he suggested that America's increased prosperity should not be overlooked as an explanatory factor : the American intelligentsia had undergone "embourgeoisement" which

"in the main accounts for the fact that the idea of socialism whether in its revolutionary or democratic reference has virtually ceased to figure in current intellectual discussion."

(Rahv, 1952B, p306)

Unlike Phillips, Rahv maintained that alienation remained necessary for the production of art. In the previous issue, in a review of Arnold Hauser's The Social History of Art ("Art and the Sixth Sense"), Rahv had commented favourably on Hauser's Marxism (which was not of the type "we have become accustomed to and against which we have so strongly reacted in the recent past") and his "radical historicism". For Rahv, the proposition that radicalism was played out was a falsification prompted by "the *Zeitgeist*", and no more accurate than that of the thirties which had "assigned to radicalism a monopoly of critical thought." (Rahv, 1952, p225.) In the Symposium he exhibited an unease with the direction anti-communism had taken. He distinguished between communism as a threat to America (great) and communism as a threat in America (not great), and condemned witch hunts.

Perhaps it is not surprising that for this generation of intellectuals a period of affluence should have coincided with their withdrawal from socialism : they had turned to it in the Depression. Phillips in 1934 ("Three Generations") had pointed out that while his literary

generation, the third generation, the "proletarian generation", may on the whole have come from petty-bourgeois homes,

"the gravity of the economic crisis has levelled most of us (and our families) to a meager, near-starvation existence."
(Phillips, 1934B, p52)

This had linked them to the proletariat he claimed, "stripped us of waverings" (op cit, p52.) Adopting a revolutionary outlook, he had said then, had been easy, they had not had to give up anything. In 1952, they did, and certainly young artists confronted with the example of the newly successful Abstract Expressionists no longer needed to feel that the only rich artist was a dead artist.⁶

In addition to Rahv, some contributors could not fully accept the Editorial argument: Burnham and Joseph Frank both questioned the superiority of the American cultural product and emphasised its debt to European culture. Burnham declared :

"Let us not build a case out of counterfeit. The objective justification for the intellectuals' reaffirmation and rediscovery of America' is in the first and sufficient instance political and military."
(Burnham, 1952, p290)

Younger authors Norman Mailer and Irving Howe were more critical, as was C. Wright Mills⁷. Echoing PR's position during the debate prompted by the Brooks-MacLeish thesis, Mailer dismissed the older intellectuals who had changed their attitude, arguing that their work since had been "singularly barren and flatulent" (Mailer, 1952, p298.)

"It is worth something to remind ourselves that the great artists - certainly the moderns - are almost always in opposition to their society, and that integration, acceptance, non-alienation, etc. etc. has been more conducive to propaganda than art."
(op cit, p301)

Nonetheless, while there may have been some equivocation, the message of the editorial was largely accepted.

By 1952 a new *Liberalism* had been constructed which recuperated the native liberal traditions of the Nineteenth Century. This was proposed as a return to the *rational* and *democratic* traditions of the Enlightenment. Although, paradoxically, it was initially proposed as the opposite (see Schlesinger on page 265.) It was a revised Liberalism, a post-holocaust Liberalism. A conception of rationality and Science premised on a rejection of Marxism's claim to be scientific and of having identified the laws of progress.

America's military and economic pre-eminence in "the West" and its role as bulwark against the Soviet threat enabled/was extended by the proposition that it had absorbed and surpassed European culture. Since American society was defined by its democracy so, by extension, was its art democratic/popular.

The editors of PR however attempted to hold on to an intellectualist avant-gardism. In the visual arts Abstract Expressionism was being successfully constructed as both American, nationalistic and avant-garde (and Herbert argues, its artists as replacements for the proletariat as historical actors, Herbert, 1984) but the editors of PR did not recognise any literary equivalent.

The discourse of anti-communism constructed a new national popular subject position, a new alliance of "the people" against the

totalitarian threat. This alignment with "our country" logically required an embrace of "our culture", but this would have required a more extensive reorganisation of the PR discourse, a redefinition of cultural and aesthetic values and an exclusion of avant-gardism - and this was an exclusion that none of the editors was prepared to make. Thus the discourse could not be *coherent*.

The following sections will examine first, the directly political elements of the discourse and trace the construction of the new Liberalism, and then the aesthetic elements and the persistent exclusion of mass or popular culture.

".... the kind of democracy that exists in America has an intrinsic and political value....."

Editorial, 1952.

After the departure of Macdonald in 1943, PR had become less overtly "political". In common with the other "homeless radicals" their aspirations to "independent thinking" had led them to question old allegiances but not yet to forge new ones. Anti-Stalinism became anti-communism as increasingly the premises of Marxism were rejected.

Marxism was European; in the period before the First World War that had for many intellectuals been part of its ambivalent attraction, but in the thirties, proletarian culture had called for an American form. Later, the rejection of Stalinism, of fascism and of "official culture" was tied to a reassertion of international, or rather European, culture - *modernism* - but after the war, *internationalism* was translated into a new hegemonic *Americanism* asserting American social and cultural superiority (economic, political and military superiority had been assumed since the middle of the Second World War.) In place of Marxism *Liberalism* was espoused. A re-made Liberalism, the title to which was claimed from the fellow-travellers and whose intellectual pedigree was located in Nineteenth Century America.

The first equation of Stalinism with communism or Leninism in PR came from James Burnham in 1945 in a three part "Controversy" over "Stalin and Lenin's Heritage" with contributions from Burnham, Macdonald and

Phillips. Here Burnham argued :

"Under Stalin the communist revolution has not been betrayed, but fulfilled."

(Burnham, 1945, p70)

Granted, he wrote, Stalin has acted counter to all the expressed principles of communism, but revolutionary movements are not to be understood by their principles or programme, but only by what "they disclose themselves to be in action." An examination of what Bolshevism did, he argued, revealed that, right from the start, it was a "conspiratorial movement for the conquest of a monopoly of power in the era of capitalist disintegration" (op cit, p71) and that all the Soviet Union's subsequent acts followed from that :

"Stalin is Lenin's heir. Stalinism is communism."

(op cit, p72)

This was not yet the view of the editors : when Macdonald in his vigorous rebuttal² said it was significant that such an article had appeared in PR without a word of dissent from the editors (he was no longer one) (Macdonald, 1945), Phillips rejected the suggestion that this implied editorial acceptance of Burnham's arguments. PR, he said, did not follow the "sectarian" practice of party organs which, if they did publish pieces disagreeing with the editorial line, warned their readers to pay no attention (Phillips, 1945, p195.) It was his opinion that Stalin wasn't Lenin's heir,

"not, at least, in the sense that we can establish a political continuity between the two figures...."

(op cit, p194)

However, a year later, Rahv, reviewing Trotsky's work on Stalin, rejected the Bolshevik one-party model in favour of a more democratic

multi-party state on the grounds that :

"Historical experience has demonstrated that the one and only party is bound to degenerate, regardless of its programmatic intentions, into a power-machine used by its bosses to perpetuate their domination."

(Rahv, 1946, p373)

In Winter 1946, William Barrett, who had recently returned from war service in Italy, had joined the magazine as an associate editor³ introducing an emphasis on philosophy to the magazine and a more explicit anti-communism, notably in the editorial "The 'Liberal' Fifth Column", described in the index as by "the editors" but written by Barrett (Barrett, 1983.) It was a response to an editorial in the New Republic (April 22nd 1946) which had said :

"It is time the United States awoke to the truth that nothing is gained for us vis-à-vis Russia by 'getting tough'."

The PR response illustrated the stepping up of the Cold War attack on "totalitarian liberals"¹⁰ that had been conducted in its pages since before the war. The NR editorial was accused in no uncertain terms of betraying the Europeans :

"... advocating a policy to sell out these millions into Stalinist slavery. When the NR published this editorial, it was actually helping to herd Social Democrats into concentration camps in Germany; helping shoot democrats of every shade and color in Germany, Poland, Rumania, Bulgaria, Hungary, Austria; helping to strengthen the French Communist Party's reign of terror over public opinion..."

(Barrett, 1946, p279/80)

These accusations, Barrett claimed, were not "political rhetoric", but "a literal description of the consequences that follow from the political behaviour of the New Republic's editors." (op cit, p280) Also damned as the focus of this fifth column of "Russian patriots" (more dangerous than the Communist Party because they deceived people

about their nature) were liberal papers PM and the Nation. The liberal position which had been under attack in the twenties from the communist movement was now attacked by erstwhile Communists for supporting Communism.

Another theme in the editorial which was to become commonplace was the suggestion that, since the liberals weren't acting like liberals, the right would take over the anti-communist movement. It was a recurrent fear among intellectual anti-Stalinists and anti-communists that the rooting out of Communism would be done by reactionaries unable to distinguish between a Commie and a left intellectual - their fears were, of course, fulfilled by McCarthy, rejected by most of these intellectuals as a "vulgar demagogue" and a "cultural vigilante." (Hook)''

In a reply to comments on the editorial, the editors identified three positions among their critics :

1. "The Trots", with their "third camp" rejection of both democratic-capitalism and totalitarian Stalinism, and their faith in a revolution of the masses - a faith that the editors no longer had.
2. "The fugitives from politics", who rejected the two opposed camps too, but, unlike the Trots, viewed Stalinism as a new form of State, and, having no faith in spontaneous proletarian revolution, had no answers, and no programme. (This category included Macdonald)
3. "The liberals" who appeared to mediate between capitalism and

socialism but who gave their game away when they called "state serfdom" socialism. (The Editors, 1946)

As to their own position, they by now were clearly seeing themselves as the real liberals and the others were referred to as "totalitarian liberals", or later, as "official liberals", or, as in the editorial, liberal was placed in quotation marks. They had chosen their side, though they put it in terms of a choice against Stalinism rather for democratic capitalism :

"The Western democratic powers are today the only major force capable of curbing the aggressions of Stalinism, and that as against this new system of totalitarianism based on a slave economy, democratic capitalism represents at the present historic moment a higher form of political, economic and cultural organization. The truth is that the countries of democratic capitalism are now the only places in the world where we can speak of civil liberties, intellectual freedom and the possibilities of human advance. This does not mean that the independent Left must cease its struggles against capitalism; all it means is that under the present circumstances no effective resistance to Stalinism is possible if we refuse to take advantage of the contradictions between Russia and the Western powers."

(op cit, p618)

Revolutionary socialism had modulated into democratic socialism :

"A positive socialist perspective is inconceivable apart from the struggle to preserve the liberties still existing in the Western world. The struggle for such liberties is in no sense contrary to the continuing tradition of socialist thought - it happens only to differ from the Leninist program of 1914."

(op cit, p618)

In 1947 PR publically aired the issue of "The Future of Socialism" in a symposium. In the editorial statement, to which contributors were asked to respond, the editors declared that the socialist perspective "can no longer serve the Left as the basis for its political life" (The Editors, 1947, p21). The Russian revolution had produced a totalitarian system;

the working class had not fulfilled its historic mission; nationalism, not internationalism dominated; and the left had fallen into "a state of intellectual disorientation and political impotence". Intellectuals had either abandoned socialism, or embraced some form of "Machiavellian theory of history" based on succeeding elites (Burnham had recently published The Machiavellians which was popularising elite theory), or retreated into pacifism. They called for the replacement of questionable presuppositions such as the "inevitability of progress", the idea that the development of socio-economic forces would "necessarily produce a socialist consciousness" and that the proletariat were the class "destined to carry humanity toward the goal of a classless society" (op cit, p24.)

In the first and central contribution Hook maintained that he was still a Marxist - albeit, he said, with so individual an interpretation of Marx that, were he correct, he would probably be the only real Marxist left and therefore had decided no longer to use the description. He elaborated the attack on determinism :

"...Nothing in a history which is made by men is 'bound' to happen; and even nonhistorical events are evitable, for their occurrence is dependent upon other events concerning which we cannot correctly say that they must happen."
(Hook, 1947, p26)

In the thirties Hook had presented Marxism as scientific, but deriving that status from its adequacy as a programme for *action*. However, action presumed a decision to take it, a decision the working class had not taken :

"Taking an historical view, the situation, as I see it, is briefly this. The whole burden of Marx's analysis and particularly his recommendation for *action* based on it, made sense only on the assumption that the working class and its allies would accept

responsibility for the role which their feelings and the situation in which they had been cast, suggested to them, and further that at the opportune moments of crisis in the development of capitalism, they would move with intelligence and courage to bring the political and cultural relations of society into line with the potentialities of its productive forces."
(op cit, p26)

The answer to the question obtained from most¹² of the contributors was essentially : there's no reason why democratic socialism shouldn't have a future, but gradualism is the order of the day. Increasingly contributors claimed to retain the "ideals" of socialism but to have rejected the "means" for achieving it. In 1942 in his exchange with Farrell (see page 206) Eastman had claimed that he and others like Corey, Hacker, Hook, dos Passos and Burnham had remained true to the aim of revolution while Farrell, Macdonald and Greenberg continued to cleave to the means (Eastman, 1942.) Hook now used this argument to justify the formation of alliances with non-socialists.

Schlesinger saw three obstacles in the way of a gradual move to democratic socialism : "the deathwish of the capitalists; the betrayal of the intellectuals; and the counter-revolution of the Soviet Union" (Schlesinger, 1947, p232.) The intellectuals, he said, must face up to their responsibilities, they must accept that the old liberalism that was a product of the Enlightenment with its belief in progress, rationality and its dismissal of evil was no longer adequate in the post war world. The fellow-travellers, the "official liberals" still clung to this myth.

"The susceptibility to wishfulness, the need for the sustaining myth, the disbelief in man's urge to destroy - all combine to reduce the capacity for critical judgement which the intellectuals' detachment from social loyalties should confer upon him. This is

the real *traishon des clerics*. Instead of contributing clarity, logic, and rigorous insistence on facts, the liberal intellectual has been more and more devoting his ingenuity to laminating his favorite myths. He has failed wretchedly to live up to his obligation to provide intellectual leadership."
(op cit, 236)

The role of the intellectual in the new world, Schlesinger argued, was to understand depravity and provide an alternative leadership.

After the holocaust, after Hiroshima, the march of progress seemed questionable. For many people, the political pessimism of post-war society with its lack of an attractive political Grail to aspire to, and the threat of total destruction provided by the atomic Sword of Damocles (which undermined the modernist faith in science, and by extension, scientific socialism¹²), led to a withdrawal from and suspicion of organised politics - either into some form of individualist isolated alienation, or, for the more political (like Macdonald), some form of anarchism. Stephen Spender had warned against this at the end of the war ("Modern Writers in the Age of Necessity". Spender, 1945), and now Schlesinger argued that intellectuals must not attempt to escape the problems of organised industrial society, but must confront them, and, if not master them, learn to live with them. In this new version of the intellectuals' role, the rational/scientific pragmatic elements of the Enlightenment and the ability of the individual to act were emphasised, not the belief in progress - particularly a "progress" which was a product of the unfolding of historic laws. (Later however, once Marxism had been dispensed with, the 'laws' of modernity/development could be re-admitted to the pantheon.)

Among those who did not retreat into individual 'solutions' (the active anti-communists), a mistrust of Parties and movements was also evident, many equated communism and fascism, Hitler and Stalin. Arendt's work on totalitarianism for instance was very influential¹⁴. The ideas on which communism (and fascism) rested were elided in favour of an emphasis on irrational drives. Communists were often represented as captives of an idea - beyond reason (see Bloom, 1986, p221-224). But, at the same time as they were undermining the significance of the ideas of the communists, the anti-communists were constructing a discourse which would eliminate the communists from the U.S. political arena - were in so doing, recognising the material force and motivating power of these ideas.

Increasingly, ex-communists were finding their intellectual base in a re-evaluation and recuperation of Liberalism. The "official" liberals were no longer attacked simply for their toleration of the Soviet Union; their right to claim the title liberal was challenged. In his contribution to "The New Failure of Nerve" in 1943, Hook had defined liberalism as "an intellectual temper, as faith in intelligence, as a tradition of the free market in the world of ideas" (Hook, 1943, p3) and in "The Future of Socialism" Granville Hicks had argued for adoption of a stance of "critical liberalism" rather than "intransigent radicalism" (The New Republic/PM/Nation position was dismissed as "neo liberalism", Hicks, 1947.) This challenge was spelt out in PR in 1949 initially in the correspondence column when Newton Arvin, Robert Gorham Davis and Daniel Aaron wrote to complain about the way that the word "liberal" had been used loosely and perjoratively in PR (by Richard Chase) and to set

a new agenda :

"it is surely a major intellectual task of our period to re-examine, to criticize and to revise the assumptions, philosophical and other, of the democratic liberalism that is our inheritance from the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries."

(Arvin, Gorham Davis and Aaron, 1949, p222)

Chase did not dissent, provided it was a "skeptical, secular liberalism" (Chase, 1949, p223.) And Barrett joined in, speculating on "What is the 'liberal' mind?". The Twentieth Century he said, "is the failure of the Nineteenth Century" (Barrett, 1949, p331) and therefore liberalism must take some of the blame, but liberalism had originated with the Enlightenment and perhaps it was time for a new slogan "Back to the Enlightenment" (op cit, p333.)

In February 1950 ("Liberalism Revisted"), Schlesinger used the term Liberal to describe the ex-communists. Their preoccupation with Marxism in the thirties had sprung he said in part from the "inadequacy of our native traditions of social thought" and therefore :

"Any thorough-going revaluation of liberalism must consequently be no less concerned with overhauling these native traditions and defining the weakness in them which created the susceptibility to communism than it is with the repudiation of communism itself."

(Schlesinger, p193)

Diana Trilling also (re)presented the communist phase of her contemporaries as a stage in an unbroken liberal trajectory. In an article on the Hiss case she used the phrase "anti-communist liberal" and talked of the liberals who had joined the Communist Party and those who had not. Both here and elsewhere (a speech to the symposium "Myth and Freedom" organised by the ACCF, May 1951) she attributed the involvement of liberals with communism to the inherent "idealism" of the

liberal philosophy; a "mistaken" idealism in this case and dangerous in its consequences, but a laudable impulse.

Thus the intellectuals were presented as having been temporarily seduced in the quest for social progress and intellectual honesty. Marxism had been simply a temporary (European and wrong) answer to the consistent questions posed by the (American) Liberal perspective.

This 'return to liberalism' permeated the writings of the intellectual community in the post-war era as thoroughly as Marxism had done in the early 1930s. Lionel Trilling was arguing that liberalism was "not only the dominant but even the sole intellectual tradition" (The Liberal Imagination, quoted Bloom, 1986, p178.) Daniel Bell was arguing that ideology had ended (while the collection of essays published as The End of Ideology was not published until 1960, the essays were essays of the 1950s), and that the motivating ideas of the 1930s, the call to radical action, had been replaced by democratic pluralism and rational social change. The new mood, Bloom suggests, was a pragmatic one, a rejection of utopia for practical politics¹⁵. The replacement, in Bell's terms, of "faith" with empiricism. ("Ideology and the Beau Geste", Dissent Winter 1961, quoted Bloom, 1986, p187.) A mood matched in an empiric^{al} social science.

The new Liberalism was to be skeptical but active. The strategy - conscious or unconscious - was to wrest from the fellow travellers the right to the title liberal and by so doing inherit its history, its American-ness, and deny it to the opposition. Deny their rationality

and their nationalism. Deny their right to intellectual leadership, their right to speak for others. (A strategy directly comparable to that of the Communist Party in 1936, see page 155.)

By the beginning of the fifties a new set of political values was in place. The intellectuals yet again the bearers of enlightenment; able by virtue of their special critical function to lead the way when the nerve of others failed. The idealism of the fellow travelling liberals was mistaken said Diana Trilling, they did not think - thinking was what intellectuals were trained to do, it was their responsibility and must not be abdicated. (ACCF speech, Trilling, 1951) Schlesinger argued that the time for "either or" politics had passed and now was the time for compromise between individualist laissez-faire liberalism and collectivist socialism. He acknowledged however that this had little appeal as an intellectual endeavour, particularly since intellectuals "had a need for doing or dying" :

"the politics of expediency, compromise, pragmatism, - or to put it another way, the politics of democracy - seem just too dull."
(Schlesinger, 1951, p246)

To combat this, the middle way must, he said, "become charged with faith" - in the words of his book (The Vital Center) the centre must become *vital*.

But it was not a middle way, "either or politics" was back. As Diana Trilling put it, "internationalism" was anti-nationalism. Anyone critical of America was pro-Russian and a policy of intervention in Europe was necessary in what Barrett was to call "World War III : the ideological conflict" (see page 278.)

".... the democratic values which America either embodies or promises are desirable in purely human terms. We are certain that these values are necessary conditions for civilization and represent the only immediate alternative as long as Russian totalitarianism threatens world domination...."

Editorial 1952

As we have seen, during the 1940s, the anti-Stalinists became anti-communists and laid claim to the title "liberals". America was cast as the protector of democracy and after the war the Soviet Union was soon re-cast as the totalitarian enemy. In order to ward off its imperialist aspirations it was considered necessary for the United States to intervene again in the European theatre - this time economically, socially and culturally rather than militarily.

France was the main post-war concern in Europe of the anti-Stalinists (soon to become anti-communists) - the strength of the French Communist Party drawn from its role in the Resistance was perceived as a serious threat, and it was in relation to France in particular that the cultural interventionist policy was developed. Despite talk of middle ways and vital centres, any possibility of a "third camp" position (i.e. committed neither to the camp of 'Western' capitalism nor to that of Soviet Communism) was rejected¹⁶ and, both in France and in America, the policy of an alliance of necessity - with the Right - was developed. Andre Malraux (Communist Party spokesman in the thirties; Popular Front advocate; break-away from the Communist Party after the Nazi-Soviet Pact; non-Communist member of the Resistance) had become an active Gaullist and in April 1948 PR printed a "dialogue" between him and James Burnham about the "double crisis" - that of the long term

transition from traditional capitalism to "managerial society" and the shorter term struggle between the Communist U.S.S.R. and "western civilization".

In the same issue, William Phillips in "The Politics of Desperation" explained :

"The desperate situation is simply that the Russian drive for world power is sweeping across the entire European continent, enslaving the populations of the occupied areas and threatening to disintegrate the political and intellectual life of those countries as yet out of the reach of the Red Army. Hence the main political and human problem today is how to stop the advance of Stalinism without losing sight of our radical goals."
(Phillips, 1948, p450)

The token commitment to "radical goals" was still there and anti-Stalinists still felt it necessary to defend their de facto alliance with the Right; justifying it by blaming (in a transfigured echo of the Communist criticisms of the liberal aesthetes during the ascendancy of proletarian culture in the 1920s) the "bohemian radicals" ("who are more concerned with making a show of their purity and intransigence than with formulating a serious opposition to Stalinism") and the "liberals" (the term had not yet been claimed by the anti-communists) for not getting involved and therefore leaving the Right (in both America and France) as the only alternative to Communism. If alliance with the Right was the only way to stop Stalinism, then so be it. Expediency had replaced ideological commitment :

"... in principle it might be stated that French radicals should be able to ally themselves with any anti-Stalinist movement however conservative or bourgeois its leanings are, so long as it is committed at least to the prevailing forms of democracy."
(Phillips, op cit, p453)

However, Phillips did feel Malraux had gone too far in actually

supporting Gaullism itself "uncritically". He and Rahv (who was also prepared to make a "strategic alliance" with the bourgeoisie, "Disillusionment and Partial Answers", 1948) still had democratic socialism as their aim and Phillips was not sure that an alliance with Gaullism was, though acceptable in principle, necessary as yet.

Increasingly, however, Malraux's position was accepted, and Sartre "and his friends" (notably Merleau Ponty and Richard Wright) were criticised by the editors of PR, and by contributors Hook and Raymond Aron, for their adherence to the third camp, and their attacks on American "imperialism", especially after the RDR (Rassemblement Democratique Revolutionnaire) group of left wing writers, critics and artists supported an International Day Against Dictatorship and War (April 30th 1949) during which, Hook claimed, anti-Americanism was stronger than anti-Stalinism (Hook, 1949.) Going on the offensive, Rahv argued (in "Disillusionment and Partial Answers") that, while there were political risks attached to a "lesser evil" policy, capitalism was running more of them than the Left - capitalism in accepting the (necessary) support of the non-Communist Left in combatting Communism would have to make concessions :

"It [American capitalism] must perforce accept democratic socialism if it is to repulse totalitarian communism."
(Rahv, 1948, p522)

For instance:

"The United States however reluctantly, is currently financing the effort to convert Great Britain into a socialist commonwealth."
(op cit, p522)

This was certainly a far cry from the positions taken in PR a decade earlier when Hook, using evidence from the Soviet Union, France and

Spain, had argued against making "strategic alliances" since in any such alliance¹⁷

"The program of the group farthest to the right prevails and must prevail for this is the purchase price of its alliance. Everything else is rhetoric."
(Hook, 1939, p34)

As the anti-communist crusade gained momentum in the United States, there was of course criticism of the position of the anti-communist intellectuals. In 1948, Rahv commented that in certain "liberal" circles :

"... the word has gone out that all these troublesome ex-communists or ex-Marxists are to be lumped together as a group of renegades neurotically 'obsessed' with the Russian question and therefore so twisted in their testimony as scarcely to deserve serious consideration."
(Rahv, 1948, p519)

Needless to say, this type of criticism did not alter matters : any liberal criticism of the anti-communists was interpreted as a defence of totalitarianism. Nor would Rahv accept accusations of bias from those "who stand aside from politics"; to win the right to comment, you had to have taken a stance yourself. Having been a Communist and having come "through it and out of it" (op cit, p520) was the pre-requisite for true understanding. People like Phillips and Rahv had come through it not just

"...with a loss of faith but also with sharpened political instincts and a sense of the pathos as well as the realities of radical politics."
(op cit, p520)

* * * * *

In 1947 PR was published in England by Horizon. The publisher's announcement in the first English edition emphasised the magazine's claim to represent a minority intellectual position but also implies the project of cultural hegemony that was made explicit in the next few years :

"One of the few hopes for progress in this decadent world is that human intelligence facilitates its own diffusion. Thought knows no frontiers. It is, therefore, quite natural that the most intellectual magazine in America, which, since it is edited from the metropolis and not subsidised by a faculty, happens also to be the most lively, should find an English publisher. In the English edition of Partisan Review the most scholarly and intransigent American writing appears here simultaneously with its publication in the USA... the peculiar quality of Partisan Review, which combines radical political thinking with an aesthetic passion for art and literature may fertilise a new internationally minded generation"

(The Editors, 1947)

At about the same time, the status of PR changed as a new financial backer came forward. In the September/October 1947 issue, the editors announced that as from January 1948 PR would be monthly :

"The publisher of the monthly PR will be Mr Allan D. Dowling who will also serve as a member of an advisory board now being formed. The editorial policy and editorial staff of the magazine will remain unchanged."

although,

"To an even greater extent than in the past an effort will be made to give representation in the magazine to the literary and ideological tendencies of post-war Europe."

(The Editors, 1947B, p452)

A condition of the funding was the establishing of an advisory board, including Dowling, Burnham, Hook. Lionel Trilling and James Johnson Sweeney^{1a}.

Quite what the significance of Dowling's funding and the nature of the controls on PR were is not clear, nor the point at which PR became formally involved with the American Committee for Cultural Freedom, offshoot of the international Congress for Cultural Freedom (shown in the 1960s to have been CIA funded.) Gilbert dates the "sponsorship" from 1959, but in mid 1951 the publishers of the magazine were listed as "The Foundation for Cultural Projects" (July/Aug 1951.) Shortly before publication of Gilbert's book, which had simply noted the CCF connection in the context of PR's increasing influence and stability, events moved him to add a footnote as postscript to this :

"The relationship of the Central Intelligence Agency to individuals who wrote for the Partisan Review and the sponsorship of the magazine after 1959 by the American Committee for Cultural Freedom raise the possibility that everything I have said in this book is misleading or irrelevant. It might further suggest the complicity (as yet undisclosed) of the magazine itself in the thought control exercised by America's supersecret and best publicized spy agency. Concrete evidence of anything of this sort has not appeared. Moreover, the discussion of intellectuals (to extend and broaden the problem) and their participation in government institutions belongs in another place and perhaps in different hands. The issue goes well beyond the CIA and any conscious or unconscious acceptance of its stipends. Men and their ideas must be considered for what they are and what they mean, not for who pays their bills. Views are most often engendered historically, and only very rarely may we catch them wearing a price tag. The important thing is that a good many intellectuals and America's leading spy agency came to the same conclusions at much the same time about America's role in world society. That event is fraught enough with historical questions to keep historians away from the pitfalls of easy explanations for a long time." -
(Gilbert, 1968, Footnote 31.)

Gilbert here presumes that "men and their ideas" can be considered for what they are and what they mean as if they were "social facts" (c.f. Durkheim). Obviously, the "truth" of whether they were or were not funded is important, but of more interest to this analysis is the way a

discourse about American art was constructed/reconstructed in the fifties and the way it is *read* now.

Two years after the adoption of the Marshall Plan in June 1947¹⁹, Sidney Hook attributed the anti-Americanism of the French left to the fact that they, and the French public, were "shockingly ignorant of the character of American life and culture" (Hook, 1949, p731)²⁰:

"Its (the French public's) picture of America is a composite of impressions derived from reading the novels of social protest and revolt (Steinbeck's The Grapes of Wrath is taken as a faithful and representative account), the novels of social degeneracy (Faulkner) and inanity (Sinclair Lewis), from seeing American movies, and from exposure to an incessant communist barrage which seeps into the non-communist press. The informational re-education of the French public seems to me to be the most fundamental as well as most pressing task of American democratic policy in France, towards which almost nothing along effective lines has been done. This does not require a propaganda campaign. If the sober facts about American life in all their nakedness, good and bad, were to be communicated to the French public it would be sufficient to produce a revolution in this attitude."
(emphasis original, op cit, p731)

In 1952 Allan Dowling (the new backer) in his contribution to the "Our Country and Our Culture" symposium, reformulated the art as a weapon/art for art's sake debate and echoed the sentiment expressed by Hook in 1949. Dowling called for state funding of the arts, especially "the one art that this country first created and did so much to develop technically, the one great new popular art, potentially the finest art form ever devised, the talking motion picture." (Dowling, 1952, p294)

"What too many people fail to realize is the importance of the propaganda factor in American pictures seen abroad. Deliberate propaganda usually defeats itself. The quality of a country's products is what really makes an impression."
(op cit, p294)

Rahv and Phillips are unlikely to have endorsed this assertion that a

popular art form might be the finest ever devised and this disruption of their avant-garde aesthetic by their patron indicates the extent to which they had returned to a position in which political/organisational allegiances delimited the PR discourse, inhibited the integration of political and aesthetic positions.

In 1950 Barrett, in an editorial "World War III : the ideological conflict", approved of Truman's sending troops to Korea and the "almost universal popular approval of it".

"... the people now know, if their political commentators do not, that Russia and the United States are now locked in a struggle for the world."

(Barrett, 1950, p651)

This was not a conventional world war, he suggested, it was a "war of ideas" - propaganda was as crucial an element in the fight for the Third World as the militaristic element. The battle was no longer nominally against Stalinism, it was against communism - in a revealing footnote relating to his use of the term Marxism, Barrett explained:

"By Marxism here it might be claimed that I really mean Leninism. The distinction would be important in a discussion of the history of ideas; in politics it is pedantic, or worse than pedantic, confusing. The only politically effective form of Marxism now in existence is Leninism (or Stalinism), and this is therefore the only form of Marxism with which political discussion can significantly deal. This shall be the meaning I attach to Marxism throughout this discussion."

(op cit, p653)

In 1949, in response to the proposed "Cultural and Scientific Conference for World Peace" which the anti-communists argued was initiated by the Cominform, Hook initiated the Ad Hoc Committee for Intellectual Freedom (Hook, 1984) and a counter-propaganda campaign. This organisation

became the nucleus of the American Committee for Cultural Freedom (founded in 1951 as the national offshoot of the International Congress for Cultural Freedom which was established in 1950 with CIA backing). (See Appendix Six.) PR reported on the proceedings of the various CCF and ACCF conferences and Phillips was on the Executive Board of the ACCF but denies that it - to his knowledge - or PR were funded by the CIA. Neither he nor Rahv, he says, were invited to the founding meeting of the CCF in 1950 which he feels indicates that they were obviously considered not sufficiently "personally or politically reliable" (Phillips, 1983, p154.)

Whatever the truth of the matter in political terms, Phillips' current criticisms of the CCF and CIA intervention hinge on the issue of cultural autonomy ("the essence of work in culture and the arts is that it must be open and freewheeling. Hidden financing means hidden control, despite any denials about pressure or censorship." Phillips, 1983, p156) and the views of many of the CCF participants about the "beneficent advances of mass culture in the United States" (Phillips on the views of Edward Shils,) were not conducive. Rahv broke away in the sixties and returned to political opposition and to promotion of modernism. Phillips did not, although he considers in retrospect that he swung too far the other way in his recoil from Stalinism and he later became critical of the hardline anti-communists (Phillips, 1983) and neither in 1952 nor after could he embrace mass culture.

Gradually the magazine had built up a larger readership²¹ and in the forties it began to build up a substantial amount of advertising, mostly

for bookshops and publishers, but including, in 1948, advertisements for country homes illustrated with reproductions of the work of leading Abstract Expressionists. With its new format, PR moved from being one of the "little magazines" to being one of the most prominent magazines for intellectuals, a "stable cultural institution" (Gilbert, 1968, p190.) Without their renunciation, indeed, denunciation of communism, Gilbert suggests, this would not have been possible in the political climate of post-war America :

"Their anti-communism was crucial, for no magazine of whatever stature in the United States could have remained communist and emerged from World War II still clinging to the pulse of the culture. The post war obsession with communism characteristic of an important segment of American intellectuals gave credence to the statements of those who had once been communists. It was felt that one's experience of ideological and spiritual darkness was a qualification to speak of the effects and the larger meanings of the political underworld."
(Gilbert, 1968, p190)

This implies a model of reaction rather than action on the part of PR and underestimates its role in the creation of the dominant post-war discourse. Many of the prominent figures in the post-war anti-communist arena were, or had been, contributors to PR since 1937, e.g. Hook, Farrell, Burnham, Orwell, Koestler; it was not really a question of PR benefiting because it reflected a popular position - it was a major part of the construction of that position among the intellectuals.

However it was a position that logically entailed an espousal of "mass culture" of a populist, popular art, of art promoting America. In a word - their word - *official art*. *Primary* rather than *coterie*. The McCarthyites echoed the Brooks-Macleish critique to which PR had responded in 1941 - modernism as a foreign challenge to American society

- and credited it with the deconstructive powers that PR had attributed (positively) to modernism in the thirties and early forties.

Congressman Dondero was a particular critic :

"Modern art is communistic because it is distorted and ugly, because it does not glorify our beautiful country, our cheerful and smiling people, and our material progress. Art which does not glorify our beautiful country in plain simple terms that everyone can understand breeds dissatisfaction. It is therefore opposed to our government and those who create and promote it are our enemies."

(Dondero, quoted in Hauptman, 1973.)

In a speech to Congress, Dondero argued that :

"Cubism aims to destroy by designed disorder.
Futurism aims to destroy by the machine myth.
Dadaism aims to destroy by ridicule.
Expressionism aims to destroy by aping the primitive and insane.
Abstractionism aims to destroy by the creation of brainstorms.
Surrealism aims to destroy by the denial of reason."
(quoted, op cit)

and that these styles or "isms" were un-American since they originated in Europe. For Dondero, the fact that some American artists were using these styles was evidence that modern art was a communist menace²².

When PR had condemned the attitude that modernism was "kulturbolschewismus", the editors would have welcomed such attacks on modernism as evidence that it was indeed avant-garde but now they were sympathetic to Americanism and to a repositioning of the intellectual in the culture. However, they were also deeply concerned about the nature of mass culture and the anti-intellectualism of the "cultural vigilantes" and "vulgar demagogues" of the Right. To the anti-communist intellectuals, McCarthy represented the irrational attack on communism, rather than the rational attack²³. It was anti-intellectual, but in

their concern to oppose communism they were being drawn into another disabling apparatus.

* * * * *

The anti-communist movement as manifested in New York among the intellectual community was premised on "cultural freedom" - as anti-Stalinism and anti-fascism had been. Evidence of, again, deliberate use of a concept with a history, with resonance, with a set of referents. (Indeed, Hook wanted to use the name of the 1939 Committee for Cultural Freedom for the 1949 Committee, see Appendix Six.)

Thus few intellectuals could oppose the concept, but there was a struggle within the ACCF over its meaning. The 'hard-liners' led by Hook felt anti-communism was paramount and issues of local civil liberties should be subsumed by it²⁴. The more 'liberal' wing wanted to resist McCarthy. In 1953, PR's refusal to publically support McCarthy led to Burnham's resignation from the Board²⁵. Rahv and Phillips, particularly Rahv, who was one of the few New York intellectuals not to join the ACCF²⁶, never went as far as contributors like Hook or Burnham. However, although they might oppose McCarthyism, they did not speak out publically against it. Howe describes Rahv at this stage as having "lost his bearings, perhaps his nerve"; against McCarthy but afraid to speak out categorically. (Howe, 1984, p214)

Phillips appears to have been significantly closer to the right than Rahv. Rahv was never a member of the Committee, while Phillips was on

the Executive and Wald reports (based on minutes in the Corey papers and notes taken by Macdonald), that in early 1952 Farrell wanted the ACCF conference "In Defense of Free Culture" to adopt a resolution proclaiming that "the main job in this country is fighting McCarthyism." His argument that domestic communism was no longer a threat (Wald, 1987, p273) corresponds to that advanced by Rahv in the "Our Country and Our Culture" symposium. Reportedly Phillips however did not support the motion. After the conference, at a meeting when Macdonald spoke in favour of condemning the McCarthy witchhunt, his notes show that Phillips joined the opposition, and Rahv the support for his motion. (Wald, 1987, p273/4) Rahv was never fully committed to the anti-communist post-war position constructed by the New York Intellectuals, and soon became known as an "anti-anti-communist" - Lilian Hellman, despite being critical of PR (as Phillips and Barrett are of her), described Rahv as "an early anti-communist and then an early anti-anti-communist." (Hellman, 1976, p151) In the sixties he publically associated himself with the left, and unlike the majority of his fellows, supported (if with reservations) the young "New Left"²⁷. In 1967, in a contribution to a Commentary symposium in which participants were asked if they would still call themselves anti-communist he said "I was never a liberal anti-communist, or, for that matter, any other kind of liberal" (Rahv, 1978, p341) and stressed his continued allegiance to democratic socialism, his anti-Stalinism rather than anti-communism. Attacking the cold-war supporters of American policy in Vietnam, he asserted "The old American Left has paid a steep price for its attainment of political respectability, and that price is self-betrayal." (op cit, p343)²⁸

"More and more writers have ceased to think of themselves as rebels and exiles. They now believe that their values, if they are to be realized at all, must be realized in America and in relation to the actuality of American life."

Editorial 1952.

The 1952 editorial was produced within the context of the communist/anti-communist debate and, more broadly, within a context in which structural analyses were being replaced by increasingly individualistic and psychologistic approaches to behaviour and social differentiation - in which *class* was becoming *life-style* - and in the context of a struggle over the definition of "mass society".

In 1937 Lewis Corey (Fraina) in Marxist Quarterly had argued that while progressive classes emphasise class interests and class struggle, conservative and reactionary classes trying to maintain their power always appeal to a false unity :

"one of the signs of multiplying social tensions in the United States is the increasing theoretical denial of classes"
(Corey, 1937, p134/5)

and

"The theory of 'no classes' is a retreat to irrationalism and reaction."
(op cit, p135)

He might have been surprised at the time had he been able to foresee the way in which social divisions became even more radically recast in the period of affluence and 'consensus' which succeeded the Second World War, with the substitution of status hierarchies for class politics and international conflict for domestic. In a polarity between "East" and

"West", America must become one nation. The "red" thirties must be explained away. Class conflict, indeed class itself, it was suggested, was a product of recession and the affluence of post-war America aided consensus - within the nation and against the Soviet 'aggressor'.

Thus, Bell in his 1961 introduction to his articles of the fifties published as The End of Ideology, :

"The politics of the 1930s was almost entirely domestic in its focus, and the social cleavages of that period were internal, almost class cleavages, in socio-economic terms. Little of this has meaning today, nor are the alignments of twenty years ago the same as those of the last decade. Politics today is not a reflex [sic] of any internal class divisions but is shaped by international events. And foreign policy, the expression of politics, is a response to many factors, the most important of which has been the estimate of Russian intentions."
(Bell, 1962, p14)

The activists of the CCF conceived of the politics of the fifties as a choice between the Soviet Union and "the West"; for them there was no alternative, no "third choice" (see for instance how even Macdonald, who had been advocating one for so long, felt he had no alternative but to "choose the West", see page 210). They claimed that they were "critically" embracing Americanism, but there was little evidence of such criticism.²⁹

Talcott Parsons argued that post-war America was undergoing two sets of changes - the change necessary to adapt to its new international role and the internal change produced by becoming "the industrial society par excellence" (Parsons, 1964, p211). The strains produced by this, he said, inevitably produced a considerable element of "irrational behaviour" with high levels of anxiety and aggression (op cit, p217).

"Post industrial" society was presented as a society without classes, at least in the Marxist sense of the term. Richard Hofstadter and Seymour Martin Lipsit were developing a distinction between classes and status groups and the kind of politics associated with the two. "Class politics" (Lipsit) or "interest politics" (Hofstadter) reflected the discord between those who favoured the redistribution of income and those who wished to preserve the status quo (Lipsit, 1964, p308), or "the clash of material interests" of groups (Hofstadter, 1964, p85); they were typical of times of economic depression. "Status politics" on the other hand, referred to the politics of those who wished to maintain or improve their status (Lipsit, op cit, p309), or "the clash of various projective rationalizations arising from status aspirations and other personal motives" (Hofstadter, op cit, p85). These were the politics particularly of the upwardly, or potentially downwardly, mobile and were representative of times of affluence. Thus, they felt, the post-war economy had produced a new social structure, one dominated by personal status anxieties rather than group mobilisation, by "status frustrations" rather than "economic deprivation" (Lipsit, op cit, p309).

This was the fluidity of "relative deprivation" and of the "revolution of rising expectations", not the certainties of historical determinism. Mass society theory of the thirties had originated in a neo-Marxist critique of capitalism, but by the fifties it was the "Frankfurt School's" work on personality which was emphasised. Adorno et. al's The Authoritarian Personality was much quoted in analyses of McCarthyism (See The New American Right/The Radical Right, essays on McCarthyism edited by Bell in 1955 and revised in 1964.) Fromm's Escape from

Freedom and Arendt's Origins of Totalitarianism were admired and much discussed.

Re-evaluations and interpretations of the recent history of American radicalism were largely psychologistic, as were the contrasts between the motivating forces of the thirties and those of the fifties. For instance, in his notable contributions, The Lonely Crowd and Faces in the Crowd, Riesman argued that the contemporary "other-directed" citizens were evidencing a "flight from politics" (Reisman, 1952, p35.) "Inner-directed" Americans had been motivated by a politics of rational self-interest (personal and group) and duty (the two inextricably intertwined), and Stalinism had proved attractive to the intellectuals, he argued, precisely because it claimed to show them their duty unproblematically, its failure produced disillusion and the "withdrawal from politics out of despair or disgust". The contemporary "faces in the crowd" were driven by "apolitical" motives : "vanity, conformity, the need for projecting guilt, masochism, sadism." (op cit, p38)

Coser and Howe explained the attractions of Stalinism, in part, in similar terms as a fulfilment of a psychological need for security, but also in terms of the frustrations engendered by awareness of "relative deprivation" and a sense of (Mertonian) *anomie* - a gap between the ideology of equality of opportunity and reality. (Coser and Howe, 1957, Chap 11.) Bell similarly attributed radicalism to frustrated aspirations, especially among intellectuals, for whom the "establishments of culture" failed to make room (Bell, 1962, p31.) As did Schlesinger in The Vital Centre (p104, quoted Bloom, 1986, 223) who

argued that people who joined the Communist Party in the US were lonely and frustrated, unfulfilled.

Thus the recent past was interpreted within the intellectual constructs of the present.

Evaluations of American society in the early fifties were ambiguous, reflecting on the one hand the sense of disillusionment, the perception of a prevailing "irrationalism", the ambivalent attitude to "mass culture", and yet on the other, a perception of American culture/society as representing democracy, individual freedom and personal opportunity - epitomised by Riesman's member of the oxymoronic Lonely Crowd. Americanism offered identification :

"... the concept of Americanism has become a compulsive ideology rather than simply a nationalist term. Americanism is a creed in a way that 'Britishness' is not."
(Lipsit, 1964, p320)

Americans, Lipsit suggested, were "converted" to Americanism, not born to it, it was a creed "much like Socialism, Communism and Fascism." (op cit, p321). A new Americanism was constructed, a Liberal Americanism that was 'rational', with which people chose to align themselves.

* * * * *

For theorists of this "new enlightenment" like Bell, accompanying the key tenets of *rationality* and *choice* is that of a separation of the social spheres. Of the possibility of taking different positions within each (e.g. Bell's claim to be "a socialist in economics, a liberal in

politics and a conservative in culture", Bell, 1979, pxi) And in PR the inevitability, and desirability, of a link between culture and politics was now challenged. The thirties challenge to the base/superstructure model had become a more radical assertion of autonomy. PR had been printing excerpts from Sartre's What is Literature? during 1948, and in 1949 Barrett reviewed it critically under the title "The End of Modern Literature". PR often contained critical comments about Sartre and "his friends" for their political activities and here Barrett criticised his commitment to "literature engagée" as simplistic. Overtly political writers were, he considered, too shallow, too naive to give any real insight into their societies - unlike Proust or Joyce. Barrett called on writers to realise that politics was a "special discipline" not something for everyone to meddle with (Barrett, 1949B).

It is proposed here that it was the expulsion from the PR discursive framework of the premise that art and experience, culture and politics are integrated that is the key to their intellectual abdication, their withdrawal from social criticism.

Analysing the history of American radicalism, Lasch asserted that a separation of culture and politics was at the root of the failure of the intellectuals to fulfil their role. In The New Radicalism in America and in The Agony of the American Left he argued that the rise of radicalism in the early Twentieth Century in the United States was synonymous with the rise of the intellectuals as a class (or, he suggests, more accurately a Weberian "status group".) The early Twentieth Century intellectuals were estranged from the dominant class and allied

themselves with, and perceived society from the point of view of, the working class; their role was inherently "critical". However, all too frequently, and most clearly in the U.S., the intellectuals distrusted their intellect, stopped operating as intellectuals³⁰ and allied themselves uncritically first with radical parties (in the thirties and forties) and then with the status quo (in the fifties); thus accepting a (false) separation of culture and politics.

Subsequent to the "cultural renaissance" in the Village and Harlem before the First World War with its coexistence of artistic experimentation and left politics - indeed the assumption that they were integral elements of the same radical project - he believes, "Partisan Review represented the most ambitious attempt to fuse radical politics and cultural modernism", an attempt which also failed :

"eventually the writers and critics around Partisan Review unable to sustain both their radicalism and their devotion to avant-garde culture, despaired of politics and confined themselves to cultural criticism."

(Lasch, 1970, p53/4)

This is debatable - the PR circle did not "despair" of politics, they changed their politics.

The valorisation of the historically active proletariat had posed problems for promotion of an avant-garde art within the Communist discursive framework (a contradiction temporarily resolved within the Trotskyite framework by the allocation of "culture bearing" to the intellectuals) now the "Marxist model" was attacked indiscriminately as disabling: in "The End of Modern Literature", Barrett asserted a contrast between the avant-garde and the mass. For him, one of the

problems with Marxism was the "plebian and populist taste embedded in the Marxist mind" (Barrett, 1949B, p944). Sartre, in aiming to extend his audience was threatening the purity of modern literature :

"For the qualities that define modern literature have been in great part the result of a desperate effort to preserve itself by a deliberate escape from a mass audience."
(op cit, p949)

However, Marxists like Sartre were not the only problem, Barrett was worried that the changes occurring in society and therefore in literature might lead to the end of the writer's "famous alienation" (op cit, p950). While democratic capitalism was being embraced in PR, its literature was not; the editors were concerned by the threat posed by cultural democracy, by the taste of the 'free' masses.

Both Pre-Second World War American Communism and Post-War American Democracy constituted a popular national subject, with the corollary of a popular national art; and, in both cases, this construction inhibited the promotion of an intellectualist and avant-garde art. An avant-garde art practice could not be integrated with the new political commitment, thus, if both were to be held onto, it could only be by a separation of Art and Politics; a fracturing of the discourse. In so far as Modernism was valorised in PR in the fifties it was a modernism divorced from politics, *modernism* rather than an *avant-garde* in Huyssen's terms (see page 28.)

"... at present America is a nation where at the same time cultural freedom is promised and mass culture produced...."
Editorial 1952

As is so often the case, the promoters of freedom and choice found the people didn't make the choices they (the promoters) wanted. Previously the proletariat had not taken up their historic mission and now they embraced mass culture. Mass culture was attacked in PR but little analysed. A view of society as atomised and irrational or as a class society in which the masses were manipulated in commercial interests was incompatible with Liberal Americanism but mass/popular culture was not to be taken seriously in PR and therefore the discourse of the fifties was ambiguous, unfocused.

Retracing our steps to the mid-forties to explore the concept of culture, we find that the avant-garde had always been defined in PR against kitsch but that from the mid forties the editors felt the distinction was blurring. In 1944 Phillips complained that the gap between "kitsch" and "literature" was closing as "cash and carry writers (like Sarayon and Steinbeck) became respected.³¹ and, in Macdonald's terms, "midcult" expanded between "masscult" and high culture (see page 300-301.) In the view of PR, as a challenge to the 'purity' of high culture was being mounted by the "middlebrow", the proponents of the avant-garde, the "highbrow", were in retreat; the intellectuals' nerve was failing, specifically they were turning to religion. This was a major concern of the PR discourse and in 1950 a

symposium on the subject was run over four issues and issued as a pamphlet. Religion was incompatible with the intellectuals' commitment to science and critical thinking (note how when they turned from Communism it was so frequently recast as a religion, see page 34/5) and if religion were to dominate a culture it would be another "official" threat to autonomous aesthetics. In the forties, the role of those who remained steadfast was increasingly formulated in defensive rather than offensive terms.

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Tim Clark has described Greenberg's approach, as exemplified in "Avant garde and Kitsch" and "Towards a Newer Laocoon", as "Eliotic Trotskyism" (Clark, 1982, p143), a phrase which can equally be applied to all the editors of PR in the late thirties/early forties. In Spring 1944 PR had published Eliot's "Notes Towards a Definition of Culture" in which he distinguished two meanings of "culture". High culture ("a refinement of living, including appreciation of philosophy and the arts, among the upper levels of society", "the culture of a class" (Eliot, p145), and a more anthropological sense - a lived culture ("the whole complex of behaviour, thought and feeling, expressing itself in customs, in art, in political and social organization, in religious structure and religious thought, which we can perceive most clearly as a whole in the less advanced societies, but one which is equally present as the peculiar character of the most highly developed people or nation. It is what we mean when speak of a culture, instead of culture without the article" (op cit, p145)), the culture of the whole people³². According to Eliot,

there could be no *culture* without a *culture*, a living culture in the people. Should the culture of the classes become divorced from the culture of the society and aspects of culture (e.g. art, religion, philosophy) become autonomous of each other and opposed, the culture would degenerate and lose its organic nature. In particular, he asserted, religion was an essential element in a total culture. Culture and modern society, Eliot felt, might be incompatible. Popular culture (in the sense presumably of an organic 'folk' culture) had disappeared and High culture had shrunk and become centralised (in Paris, London, New York.)

In a discussion of this article in the following issue the participants were all concerned about Eliot's emphasis on religion but shared his concern for culture. Only Greenberg (as he had at the end of "Avant-garde and Kitsch") still looked to socialism to preserve culture. Technological advance had, he said, made real the possibility of a "global culture" and "only socialism can realise such a culture" with its regional variations and avoid the homogenising effects of mass culture exported by advanced capitalism. While not looking to socialism, Phillips too attacked modern society with its "industrial and scientific advances and organized philistinism." Contemporary art he felt reflected the contradictory nature of society :

"...the character of modern art reflects its origins and antagonism to a society whose industrial and scientific advances and organized philistinism have led, on the one hand to an enormous expansion of consciousness and on the other, to a contraction of the moral and imaginative self. How else account for our urban, alienated, skeptical, self-indulgent art? - or its dissociation of the ego and its search for a symbolism to express its detachment as well as its identification with society as a whole?"
(Phillips, 1944, p308)

Here is encapsulated Phillips' ambivalence toward post-war American society. Eight years later he was to declare his political commitment to it, but the concerns expressed here had not been resolved. American society was anti-intellectual and, in Phillips' view, the writers of the forties and fifties were kitsch or, if they did aspire to avant-garde status, it was, in Phillips's opinion, an empty gesture. "The Moderns" had been advanced in PR as deconstructive of the status quo, their critical skepticism, their alienation, productive. The younger post-war writers were however dismissed as self-indulgently nihilistic, superficial and their expressed detachment from society was perceived as cloaking an integration into it.

Phillips differed from Eliot over the role of the intelligentsia; Eliot looked to them to conserve a particular culture, but for Phillips they were the guarantee of cultural development, of keeping culture moving (c.f. "Avant-garde and kitsch".)

"... the intelligentsia - or the elite as Mr Eliot prefers to call it - is scarcely an agency for the conservation of culture or the improvement of taste; on the contrary, its role is that of independent thinking and innovation in the arts. Hence the most advanced sections of the elite tend to be radical, dissident and uncompromising and to relate themselves, however indirectly or unconsciously, to those social forces that challenge the economic and cultural exploitation of man."
(Phillips, 1944, p309)

However, despite these brave words, the PR discourse became increasingly pessimistic that this was being achieved. In 1948 in a symposium on the state of American writing, Greenberg asserted that the avant-garde writer had been "professionalized" - the avant-garde writer "gets ahead now" (Greenberg, 1948C, p876) - but at the cost of his/her art which had become academic and predictable, providing no new aesthetic challenge.

Modernism had been de-vitalised by its success - recuperated as "midcult" (Macdonald, see page 300-301). And, at the same time, (1948) the "Pound Case" (see page 298-299) made Modernism's advocates question their commitment to aesthetic autonomy.

Increasingly, PR was proposing that Art and Politics were separate, but the discursive consequences were, on the one hand, an inability to propose a socially engaged art, art as *critical*, and on the other, an inability to condemn politically unacceptable (in this case anti-semitic) art.

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The rejection of "official" art was maintained into the late forties but, while in 1941 this had been extended from its 1937 referent (the Communist Party policy) to include the U.S. Government's sponsorship of positive, nationalistic, art, now it was losing the latter referent again. Official art was unacceptable when you were opposed to the official position, but the issue was less clearcut when you were politically aligned.

Totalitarianism however was less problematic and the "new order" bureaucracy now included the socialist government of Britain : in March 1949 Cyril Connolly wrote from London :

"What is in fact happening under socialism is a new alignment of writers against the State, including many writers who voted socialist and whose conscience in matters of social justice is now at last appeased, only to be aroused this time by apprehension of their own fate."

(Connelly, 1949, p299/300)

In the light of the recent publication of 1984, he continued :

"The writer feels that socialism is squeezing all the colour out of life besides diminishing the individuality of his own personality, threatening his bourgeois independence and leisure and offering him no compensations in return."
(op cit, p300)

In April 1949, PR announced it would award a prize (of \$1,000) with the main purpose of giving "vigorous affirmation to the importance of literary standards in the present cultural situation." (The Editors, 1949, p343) and in October they announced that it had been awarded to Orwell :

"... Mr Orwell would be much less the writer he is if he had not participated fully and actively in the international socialist movement of his period, if he had not confronted resolutely all sides of that historical fact, and, more important still, had not come through the ordeal intellectually and morally intact."
(The Editors, 1949B, p968)

Orwell had "confronted" historical fact and used his literature politically and now the debate about literary intervention was reopened. It was clear that totalitarianism should be resisted because it controlled art, but should art be used as a weapon in that resistance? One of the questions of a symposium on "The State of American Writing" published in August 1948 read :

"What is the effect on American writing of the growing tension between Soviet communism and the democratic countries? How are cultural interests affected by this struggle and do you think a writer should involve himself in it to the point of commitment?"
(The Editors, 1948, p856)

Greenberg's answer probably sums up the position generally taken : "as a person" a writer ought to involve himself, but he was under "no moral - or aesthetic - obligation whatsoever to involve himself in this struggle

as a writer" :

"That he is interested in this struggle as a person does not mean that he is necessarily interested in it qua writer. Qua writer he is only interested necessarily in what he can write about successfully."

(Greenberg, 1948C, p878/9)

However, as the discourse increasingly separated the political and the personal, life and art, it was forced to confront the issue from another perspective and one which challenged this separation.

The award of the Bollingen prize for the best poetry of 1948 to Ezra Pound highlighted the issues of form and content, the autonomy of art, the sanctity of art for art's sake. The question, should art be used for political ends? was here framed less directly as, should (or could) one ignore an artist's politics, particularly when they were apparent in the content of the work? There seemed to be little disagreement over general principles - art was autonomous, there were aesthetic standards, censorship was repellent³³ - the debate was over their application.

The Judges' statement had read :

"To permit other considerations than that of poetic achievement to sway the decision would destroy the significance of the award and would in principle deny the validity of that objective perception of value on which any civilized society must rest."

(quoted by Barrett, 1949B, p344)

The objection of the editors, as represented by Barrett's editorial, was it seemed, not to the principle, but only to the fact that it was not applied more generally :

"During the 'thirties literature was subjected uncritically to all kinds of aesthetically distorting or irrelevant political attitudes. Those political attitudes have by this time collapsed, leaving behind them a deposit of vague sentimentalities, which

while obstructing any current of new political thought, still makes it impossible for many people to separate aesthetic from other considerations."
(Barrett, 1949B, p347)

Nonetheless, a general theme in contributions to PR³⁴ on the subject (spelled out in Greenberg and Howe's responses and in Barratt's further comment) was that the aesthetic sphere was autonomous, but not "primary", in certain circumstances the autonomy of aesthetic judgement should be deliberately over-ridden in the interests of "decency". After the holocaust Pound's anti-semitism strained the commitment to aesthetic autonomy.

Howe has recently explained that he feels the debate took on a significance which went beyond the immediate occasion :

"It made us think a little more carefully about our motivating views of literature and history.

We were forced back to a consideration of what could be meant by aesthetic autonomy. We had meant, I think, that a work of literature had distinctive properties and must be perceived and judged according to categories distinctive to its kind. so far - phrasing aside - so good. Troubles began when we tried to specify the relation between the literary work acknowledged to be autonomous and the external world to which nevertheless it was related - the relation between literature and history."
(Howe, 1984, p154)

It caused an uneasiness about modernism and modernist writers to break into the open. With only Harold Rosenberg among the New York critics remaining unambiguously attached to Modernism (op cit, p155) :

"As we entered a new cultural era that we could hardly name - I wrote an essay calling it 'post-modernist', simply because I could think of nothing else - we hoped still to remain partisans of the modernism that had shaped the sensibility of our youth, but also to cultivate those critical distinctions and dissociations which the cooling of time allowed."
(op cit, p156)³⁵

Despite PR's new found commitment to political democracy, the editors remained opposed in the fifties to the culture that accompanied it. In sociological terms, they would have subscribed to the form of Mass Society theory which represented modern industrial society as de-centred and peopled by easily manipulable, non-discriminating subjects. This vision of society however is compatible with theories which propose a heirarchically structured and exploitative social system (or a structure in which most individuals are innately inadequate) but not with theories proposing mass democracy and individual choice. While a version of mass society theory was proposed by Macdonald - and clearly had the PR editors' sympathy despite its incompatibility with their new political commitment - it was rejected by contributors like Bell.

After he left PR, Macdonald developed his position on avant garde and kitsch in what is probably his most famous contribution to the debate : "Masscult and Midcult" (originally published in Politics in 1944)³⁶. Here he argued that modern industrial society, mass society, had transformed the individual into "mass man" (Macdonald, 1962, p8); the isolated atom of the "lonely crowd". The Mass was "inchoate and uncreative" (op cit, p9), its morality and its taste that of the lowest common demoninator, the least sensitive and most ignorant - the "ignoscenti" had replaced the "cognoscenti" of traditional High Culture (op cit, p34.) Their culture was "Masscult", a mere parody of High Culture, without even the "theoretical possibility of being good"; "non art", even "anti-art" (op cit, p4.) Masscult didn't even aspire to entertain, merely to distract, asking nothing of its audience, and

giving them nothing; utterly predictable, it was premised on the "Built-in Reaction" (op cit, p28).

Masscult had arisen first in England in the 18th century. During the 19th "Grub Street" had become dominant, with traditional (i.e. High Culture) authorship being marginalised ("literally eccentric - out of the center", until, by the end of the 19th century, an avant-garde had "separated itself from the market and was in systematic opposition to it." (op cit, p20.) Masscult was, however, only one part of "kitsch", even worse, because it masqueraded as culture, was "Midcult" - that "middlebrow compromise", "a peculiar hybrid" bred from the "unnatural intercourse" (op cit, p34) of Masscult and High Culture, and threatening to absorb both its parents. Having the essential qualities of masscult - "the formula, the built-in reaction, the lack of any standard except popularity" - but covering them with "a cultural figleaf" (op cit, p37.) Pretending to respect cultural standards while vulgarising them; not a raising up of Masscult, but a corruption of High Culture³⁷. The novelty of Midcult was that it exploited the discoveries of the avant-garde. The avant-garde had passed³⁸ with no successors, especially in the United States. Only the Little Magazines still worried about standards - "the darkness is still far from universal... there are still pockets of resistance" (op cit, p20.)

In 1946, in an echo of this, Barrett entitled an article on the Little Magazines (nominally a review of The Little Mag by Hoffman et al.), "The Resistance". "Bureaucratisation" of writers was the threat - in the U.S.S.R. from the totalitarian State, in the U.S.A. from Hollywood, the

Luce publications, the radio and TV. It was the audience rather than the writers who were "exploited" (a divergence he pointed out from the Marxist view of surplus value), the working class masses were :

"inert, passive masses to be manipulated by dictators in culture as well as by dictators in politics."
(Barrett, 1946, p485)

Bell was critical of this implicit acceptance of Mass Society theory, and in a paper given to the 1955 CCF Conference on "The Future of Freedom" he described mass society theory as representing a "sense of a radical dehumanization of life", a view of society as without unifying values, with members who were unsure of their roles, concerned over their status and losing their sense of self. A society where the educated elite no longer shaped opinion and taste and where "mass culture" dominated. Understandably, he rejected this vision. The notions of Gemeinschaft and Gessellschaft to which the ideas could partially be traced (the other source being Weber's work on bureaucracy) were riddled with value judgements, he asserted, and suggested substituting the term "total" for "organic" and "individualistic" for "atomistic". While "mass society" might be compartmentalised, dehumanised, status hungry, etc., it was also free. Mass society theory was, he suggested essentially elitist, "at heart a defense of an aristocratic tradition", a "conservative defense of privilege since it denied that the large mass of mankind can become educated or appreciate true culture. (Bell, 1962, p28).

Others seized the phrase "mass society" and redefined it further. In 1960, Edward Shils chaired a major conference on mass culture "Culture

for the Millions" and in his presentation argued that the new order of society, mass society, which had appeared since World War One was a society in which people had a greater sense of attachment to society and affinity with each other :

"The new society is a mass society precisely in the sense that the mass of the population has become incorporated into society"
(Shils, 1960, p61)

The consensus was strengthening, the elite and the mass were integrating; mass society enhanced individuality and liberated people. However, the PR editors were unconvinced, even Phillips, despite his espousal of "our culture", could not reconcile himself to such a position and in 1960 attacked Shils' presentation of mass culture as beneficent. (Phillips, 1983, p155) In 1959, Phillips argued that in the past when the "battle" was being fought over avant-garde and kitsch, "the big guns" were usually on the side of the avant-garde, the side of "purity and intransigence" (Phillips, 1967, p88), but now the avant-garde was, with the possible exception of painting, "on the run" (Phillips, op cit, p89.) Sociologists without literary training (like Lipsit and Shils) were entering the field and asserting the democratic nature, and therefore value, of middlebrow and mass culture. While this was superficially a reasonable position, Phillips argued, Shils was concerned with the welfare of "the culture as a whole - the culture in an anthropological sense", and therefore not concerned to promote "'high' or 'advanced' culture" (op cit, p93) or to take seriously the threat to the old elite who produced the intellectual and aesthetic tradition. This elite were now a small part only of a new bureaucratic elite - the "American establishment" - made up otherwise of :

"middlebrow writers and thinkers, academic experts who are ignorant in most areas, cultural custodians who are dedicated to the

classics but uncertain in their relation to new works, and that amorphous body of professional people who inhale and exhale the prevailing cultural modes."
(Phillips, 1967, p96)

Thus, with the assertion of alignment with "our country and our culture" in 1952, the PR discourse of the fifties was contradictory. In its brief period of Trotskyism, an avant-garde art and a vanguardist, left-wing, politics had both been asserted. Now however, while a new liberal Americanism was being advanced, there was little enthusiasm for the products of "our culture". Political leadership by the intellectuals remained a possibility, but cultural leadership in the era of mass culture was apparently considered impossible. The "canonical distinction between the avant-garde and kitsch, the foundation of the doctrine of modernism" (Wollen, 1985, p38) had broken down. Current critics suggest this breakdown produced a new form, "post-modernism", and engage critically with that form (see for instance, Foster, 1983, Lyotard, 1984, Arac, 1986), but the PR discourse did not engage creatively with new forms in the fifties. The aspiring avant-garde was perceived as both nihilistic and incorporated - "middlebrow". These were not new forms to engage with, simply corruptions of the old.³⁹ Any theorisation of the nature or role of culture is lacking in PR in the early fifties, there is simply a vacuum. The espousal of American democracy logically entailed a positive evaluation of what could now be called "popular culture" but the discourse did not attempt to engage with mass culture. Thus it was incoherent again, unable to integrate the conception of the popular national political subject with an aesthetic subject - as producer or consumer.

"... we cannot evade the fact that at present America is a nation where at the same time cultural freedom is promised and mass culture produced. This paradox, we think, creates many difficulties for American writers and intellectuals who are trying to realize themselves in relation to their country and its cultural life."

Editorial 1952

If this analysis of the PR discourse ends with the Symposium, the epitaph for the radical phase of PR comes from Irving Howe in his attack on the recuperation of the intellectuals in "This Age of Conformity". The attack turned on PR its own critical premises, its avowal of the special function of intellectuals.

Many of the New York Intellectuals wanted to believe that they were still intellectual leaders, an *intelligentsia*, simply more recognised. Rahv and Phillips were less sure (particularly Rahv who apparently commissioned Howe's article⁴⁰) and Howe was clear that the New York Intellectuals had lost their right to claim the title. Howe was an anti-Stalinist⁴¹ but felt anti-Stalinism was not a sufficient explanation for the new conformity - it might require alliances, he said, that were "distasteful" but that was no reason to compromise ideas, no reason to become "partisans of bourgeois society." (Howe, 1954, p15) No reason to stop functioning "as intellectuals", that is, as critics. Schumpeter, Howe said, had argued that capitalism would collapse, not as a result of its inherent economic contradictions, but because of a loss of ideological hegemony ("from an inability to claim people through ties of loyalty and value", op cit, p7.) The source of

this withdrawal of *consent* (Gramsci) would be the intellectuals, the "agents of discontent who infect rich and poor, high and low" (op cit, p7.)⁴² This, Howe argued, had been the role the intellectuals had claimed until a few years ago. Now they had found themselves an honoured place in capitalism :

"We have all, even the handful who still try to retain a glower of criticism, become responsible and moderate. And tame."
(op cit, p8)

Howe, at that time, remained committed to an essentially Marxist analysis⁴³ and argued that the development of "state capitalism" and "mass society" (op cit, p9) created a new role for the intellectuals, a more important role than that they had held under traditional capitalism since the "industry of mass culture" had to be staffed by intellectuals and quasi intellectuals, as did mass education. For Howe, the forties and fifties had seen not only a quantitative expansion of the educational and mass media *Ideological State Apparatuses* (Althusser), but a qualitative shift in the role of intellectuals within (in but not against) them⁴⁴. The intellectuals had lost the "certainties" of the thirties and were being absorbed into a power structure that needed their abilities.

"Bohemia gradually disappears as a setting for our intellectual life and what remains seems willed or fake."
(op cit p9)

Howe emphasised that it was absorption that was occurring, not a takeover by the intellectuals - Lionel Trilling in a contemporary article had argued that wealth "shows a tendency to submit itself, in some degree, to the rule of mind and imagination" (quoted by Howe, p11). Trilling perceived the intelligentsia as associating itself with power; Howe

argued that they had prostrated themselves before wealth, that the price of co-optation into the bureaucracy was not just the loss of their "traditional rebelliousness", but ceasing to "function as intellectuals" (Howe, op cit, p13, emphasis original) :

"the institutional world needs intellectuals because they are intellectuals but it does not want them as intellectuals."
(op cit, p13)⁴⁵

In the thirties, Communist critics had argued that the art for art's sake position presented art as if it were ideologically neutral, however, in the fifties, the "innocence" of art was being widely asserted, and Howe criticised the "new critics" for their emphasis on the text and disregard for social context. The role of the avant-garde for Howe was not just aesthetic innovation, but a response to social conditions (c.f. Huyssen); that role had been dissipated :

"All of the tendencies toward cultural conformism come to a head in the assumption that the *avant-garde*, as both concept and intellectual grouping, has become obsolete and irrelevant. Yet the future quality of American culture, I would maintain, largely depends on the survival, and the terms of survival of precisely the kind of dedicated group that the *avant-garde* has been."
(op cit, p29)

The avant-garde, he argued, had first appeared in response to the "cultural revolution" in Europe in the first two decades of the century and later a section of the avant-garde became politically active as the sensibilities "that responded to the innovations of the modern masters now responded to the crisis in modern society."

"Thus in the early years of a magazine like Partisan Review - roughly between 1936 and 1941 - these two radical impulses came together in an uneasy but fruitful union; and it was in those years that the magazine seemed most exciting and vital as a link between art and experience, between the critical consciousness and the political conscience, between the *avant-garde* of letters and the independent left of politics.

That union has since been dissolved, and there is no likelihood that it will soon be re-established. American radicalism exists only as an idea, and that barely; the literary *avant-garde* - it has become a stock comment for reviewers to make - is rapidly disintegrating without function or spirit, and held together only by an inert nostalgia."
(op cit, p29/30)⁴⁶

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The 1952 editorial had decisively declared a new political commitment but its cultural corollary, mass culture, was discursively unincorporable unless the commitment to the classic *avant-garde* was abandoned, or (in a literal contradiction in terms) the *avant-garde* became popular. There is of course no reason why political activists should not believe this to be possible, should not aim through their creative and critical practice to "raise standards", but, while this might have been the PR project in the late thirties, they had for some years perceived their role as more in the nature of a "Resistance" to the "levelling" effects of mass culture. In the opinion of Rahv and Phillips and Macdonald in the fifties, those sections of the literary/art world which aspired to the mantle of the *avant-garde* had been incorporated into the Art Institution (c.f. Burger) and their challenge defused.

"Modernist" American painting and sculpture was being valorised, becoming *official* culture, but this was less true of the literature and, more to the point, neither Rahv nor Phillips were prepared to accept that it was genuinely modernist, rather, they attacked it as nihilistic. Macdonald argued that the attempts of the Action

Painters/Abstract Expressionists and the literary Beats, the "lumpen avant-garde" (Macdonald, 1962, p58) to make it new were fruitless since their "midcult" audience were delighted to be shocked. So too, Rahv described current work as "latter-day nihilism, commercialised to the core" finding it "opportune to masquerade in the vestments of the classic avant-garde" (Rahv, 1970, pviii.) The new generation were not a true avant-garde; they were not marginal, ultimately they were kitsch : these

"self-elected spokesmen of a new aestheticism...retain nothing more than the cultist mannerisms of the classic avant-garde; they ape its dissidence and revolt while actually constituting themselves as a veritable academy, and a ruling academy at that, fawned upon in the most respectable quarters, even as it turns out art objects as consumer goods."
(Rahv, op cit, pxi)

They were, in the words of Podhoretz, "The Know-nothing Bohemians" (PR Spring 1958). They were not an *intelligentsia*, they had no intellectual project, the literary and political generation of the sixties were nothing more than "anti", they had no sense of cultural continuity :

"It's all anti these days : anti-literature, anti-art, anti-morality, anti-society, anti-ideology, anti-matter. Some people, mostly those with one foot in the past, are for something, but the young and those who have jumped on the bandwagon of youth are busy inventing new forms of rejection and secession. It's called cooling it or copping out - depending on whether you're in or out.

This is the new sensibility. Usually a new sensibility is a new literary style which reflects a new life style. At present the lifestyle is so strong that it has taken over the functions of art."
(Phillips, 1967, p44.)

"... suddenly the intellectual mood became a radical one again. The moderates and conservatives were brushed aside. The thinkers who had presided over the return to the fold were abruptly dismissed as having nothing to say to this period: having played out their role as apologists they could now be installed as the elder statesmen of the status quo. The campuses were teeming with meetings, and marches, and protests, first on the issue of civil rights and then on the issue of nuclear war. And writers began to

exhibit again the radical badges of their profession. It looked as though we were back in the 30's.

But there was a big difference: the Left was no longer political in the old sense, in the sense of having a vision of a new society, and a theory to support it."
(Phillips, 1967, p23)

Although Rahv was sympathetic to the New Left - and became a "born again radical" (Podhoretz, Breaking Ranks, p274, quoted, Bloom, 1986, p348) having an acerbic exchange with Howe in the new (1963) 'organ' of the community, the New York Review of Books, after which they never spoke to each other again, he too was critical :

"More than half a decade after its full emergence on the political scene it [the New Left] remains what it has been since its inception - an unstable mood of new-fledged radicalism and a fermentation of leftist rhetoric rather than a real movement. The fact is that it still lacks a relevant theory of revolutionary change and a strategy of action."
(Rahv, 1978, p350)

The editors had resisted the totalising project of the Stalinist American Communist Party in the thirties, but they had done so on intellectual grounds, couched their reservations in terms of *science*, attempted to construct a more convincing analysis, a coherent discourse. They might not know in the fifties and sixties what a "theory" of society and change might be, might not be able to propose its specifics themselves, but they were sure that "mood" was no substitute for "theory" (both made this opposition). *Science* had been defined as a method, a tool to understand "History". The New Left failed to show an appropriate *historical sense*.

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The editors moved into the late sixties with opposed positions - while Rahv attempted to maintain a commitment to modernism in Modern Occasions (though a modernism dependent on new content rather than experimental form) Phillips somewhat reluctantly embraced the new 'post-modernism'⁴⁷ in PR. While Phillips continued to resist the New Left, Rahv reasserted Left wing commitments. However, neither seems to have participated in a discourse whose elements were articulated into a coherent position on the relations of culture and politics.

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After 1952 the PR discourse retained a commitment to the concept of the *Intellectual* but had redefined his/her *critical* function - insofar as it remained, it was to criticise internal dissidence and external threats. The aspirations of others (the "after-born") to this critical role were however denied on the grounds that they had no intellectual grasp of the scientific or historical issues. Comparably, the claims of a younger generation to the title of *avant-garde* were also denied, dismissed as mere nihilism.

This, I would argue was consistent with the editors' residual commitment to their earlier assertion that *Art* and *Politics* or *Experience* must be integrated. That the artist and the critic should have a sense of both cultural continuity and history, and should be active. While the political declaration of 1952 meant the PR discourse could no longer achieve this integration, the standard was still applied to others.

The PR discourse from 1952 was, I assert, fragmented and incoherent. Negative - in that it denied the claims of a younger generation to aesthetic or political vanguardism but offered no coherent argument in opposition.

CONCLUSION

A STITCH IN TIME?

"For the modern intellectual needs a sixth sense if he is to survive - the historical sense."

Macdonald, Editorial 1941

"... the subject of political art is history..."

Rahv, 1940, p420

"A critical judgement, as such results from a kind of forward-looking backward-seeing process...."

(Phillips, 1967, p143. first published, 1933)

"A masterpiece cannot be produced once and for all, it must be constantly reproduced. Its first author is a man. Its later ones - time, social time, history."

(Rahv, 1938, p25.)

This thesis has focused on three exemplary texts, has attempted to *map* the emergence and modification of the component elements and their shifting articulation. These texts are conceived as discursive *moments*, thus focusing our attention on temporality; on the sequencing of the elements and their successive modification (see page 17/18.) Each *moment* however is constructed not by a simple linear progression, but in the play between past, present and future. The researcher has attempted to *understand* the texts, to construct *intelligibility* (see page 14), to impose a reading over a period of twenty years and across a gap of fifty; to bind or *stitch* the texts together - to offer a *thesis*. (See page 8 and page 318/9.)

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I have proposed in the preceding pages that the component *elements* of the PR discourse take their meaning from their relation to, articulation with, the other elements of the discourse at a specific historical *moment*, as well as from their antecedents in the discourse and, further, are interpreted by the contemporary reader in the light of his/her own experience and the events of the years which intervene between us and the object of our scrutiny. In conclusion, I suggest that the PR discourse of the thirties and forties proposed a similar view of *History* and the "*Historical Sense*", and that this was abandoned in the fifties.

Macdonald and Rahv and Phillips were very conscious of the problematic of *History*. They prided themselves in the late thirties and early

forties on their possession of an *historical sense* (a phrase first used in PR in 1938, see page 187.) This ability to interpret *History* was not a matter of ordering antecedent 'facts', nor a grasp of the unfolding of "historical trends", but rather, the ability to relate the past to the present and the future (all of which were socially constructed - see Rahv on the *society* of the dead, the living and the unborn, page 317). It was both *synchronic* and *diachronic*.

This conception of the *historical sense* meshed with that of the role of *intellectuals* - it was that historical sense, that "sixth sense" that, in their view, set the intellectuals apart, that made possible the intelligentsia's role as leaders.

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In the late thirties and the early forties (before Pearl Harbour) other intellectuals were attacked - as in the 1941 editorial - for their abdication of their responsibility to be critical, for their collusion with the "official" position of the Stalinists on the one hand and the US Government on the other. In the 1941 editorial Macdonald derided the failure of most American intellectuals to interpret the contemporary historical moment in the light of the elements which had contributed to its formation. Americans, the PR editors asserted, lacked a sense of history, unlike Europeans (see Phillips on Mann, page 185/6.) In the early years of the European War, the editors criticised their contemporaries for their intellectual dislocation, their inability to learn from the First World War, their repression of memory - for the

"amnesia" which the "anti-fascist jitterbugs" had raised to the level of a principle (The Editors, 1939 and Macdonald, 1939E.) In the late forties the same arguments were turned on the fellow-travelling "official Liberals", while the New Liberals of the "Vital Centre" were credited with the ability to *read History* and provide cultural leadership (see page 269-70.) In the fifties and sixties these accusations of intellectual inadequacy were levelled at the nihilistic Beats and the anarchistic New Left. And in 1954, it was these arguments that Howe turned on PR itself (see page 305-7.)

Science, defined by its opposition to irrationality, was a consistent component of the PR discourse. Science as a method, as a sense of History. What was not consistent however was whether Marxism was felt to offer such an insight - whether it was a scientific tool. The form of Marxism advanced by the Stalinist Party had to be reformulated because it failed as Science (in the PR sense of science as a guide to action, see pages 185-189), then the reformulated Marxism was rejected for Liberalism, but at each stage the Intelligentsia was credited with historical insight and the Opposition criticised for lacking it.

To delineate the PR conception of *History* we must piece together a series of references, but while there is no paradigmatic presentation, it is clear that *History* was not a matter of determinate laws; it was a perspective derived from interpreting the past in the light of *Experience*, of the present, and applying to a possible future - the "forward-looking and backward-seeing" (Phillips) process.

Part and parcel of the *historical sense* was the integration of *Art* and *Politics* - of art and *Experience* (albeit the experience of intellectuals.) Key articles in the exposition of this position were Rahv's "The Cult of Experience in American Writing" and Phillips' "The Intellectuals Tradition". In the latter, Phillips argued that the

"major impulses of European art can be traced in practically every instance to the existence of an active intelligentsia, crucially involved in its contemporary history, and sufficiently self-conscious to be able to assimilate some new experience to the norms of its past."

(Phillips, 1941 p477)

Americans, he felt in 1941, had not achieved this relation with history.

Similarly, for Rahv :

"...the subject of political art is *history*.... A political art would succeed in lifting experience to the level of history if its perception of life - any life - were organized around a perspective relating the artist's sense of the *society* of the dead to his sense of the *society* of the living and the as yet unborn.... Experience, in the sense of 'felt life' rather than as life's total practice, is the main but by no means the total substance of literature. The part experience plays in the aesthetic sphere might well be compared to the part that the materialist conception of history assigns to economy. Experience in the sense of this analogy is the substructure of literature above which there rises a superstructure of values, ideas and judgements - in a word, of the multiple forms of consciousness. But this base and summit are not stationary : they continually act and react upon each other.

It is precisely this superstructural level which is seldom reached by the typical American writer of the modern era.

(Rahv, 1940, p420, emphasis original)

Phillips was to abandon this perspective :

"It now looks as though a radical literature and a radical politics must be kept apart... Maybe the lesson of the '30s is that radical politics has not been able to escape the dilemma of being distorted by power or left hanging without power, while literature to be radical need not - perhaps cannot - be tied to radical politics."

(Phillips, 1967, p29)

Rahv however did not and in 1969 in a collection of his essays entitled

Literature and the Sixth Sense he maintained in the Foreword the position advanced in "Art and the Sixth Sense" in 1952, in which he had argued for an historically informed analysis of the relations of text and context, an analysis which accepted that meanings are not fixed, that the synchronic relations of text and context must be examined in "the medium of historical time". The "historicity of a text" was given by its contemporary "nature and function" as well as by its past.

"Only in the medium of historical time is that context to be apprehended; and there is a dialectical relation between text and context, which, if ignored in principle, must eventually lead to the impoverishment of the critical faculty and a devitalized sense of literary art. Thus in the long run the neglect of context is paid for by the increasing misuse and misreading of the text itself. For the historicity of a text is inextricably involved in its nature and function, just as it is involved in the nature and function of language, law, religion, political institutions, etc. Nor is the historicity of a text to be equated with any given series of historical facts. The historical fact is as such no more than a neutral datum, whereas historicity is a value created by the power of the historical imagination.

The historical sense is at once an analytic instrument and a tonic resource of the modern sensibility."
(Rahv, 1952, p226/7)

The problematic of *History* was clearly central to the transforming discourse but it is never fully developed, not least perhaps because the role of *Experience* was not sufficiently elaborated - its comparison to the economic base (see Rahv on page 317) serving to confuse rather than to clarify. To trace more precisely, to consolidate and extend this key concept of *History* as past, present and future, to apply it more generally; is an area for further exploration and beyond the scope of this endeavour.

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This analysis of PR, focusing on three exemplary texts, has attempted to achieve *historicity* - to make the texts *intelligible* - both by examining their context and by identifying the stories of the elements articulated at those moments (see the diagrammatic summary, page 67.) It has been proposed that during the alliance with the Stalinists the PR discourse was incoherent as the Party's policies inhibited the discursive integration of Art and Politics. The Trotskyist framework, it is suggested, did temporarily enable such an integration, but by 1952, the commitment expressed to "Our Country" entailed a commitment to "Our Culture", to *mass culture*, which the editors were not prepared to make, but nor were they able to advance a coherent alternative. In the fifties and sixties younger writers and political activists were criticised for lacking the *historical sense*, but the PR discourse also lacked it; a key element had been excised and the discourse was disoriented. In 1941, in a critique of other American intellectuals, Phillips unconsciously pre-viewed PR eleven years hence in saying :

"In the last few decades we have run the gamut of three important trends, and we are at present in the midst of one more movement to stir the embers of the past, to discover once more the secrets of the national spirit. Yet, except for the natural persistence of certain states of mind, one cannot discern any organic linkage between these successive currents..... it is surely ironic that the current appeal to immerse ourselves in the splendors of the American tradition should ignore the critical acquisitions and revaluations of these last decades..... And what is this nationalist revival - this militant provincialism - if not a new phase of self-abnegation on the part of the intelligentsia? Once again they are renouncing the values of group detachment as they permit themselves to be drawn into the tides of prevailing opinion. In a complete reversal of role, they have come to echo all the stock objections to the complex and ambiguous symbolization of modern writing : and the improvised tradition they now offer in its place - is it not the popular, Sunday version of our history? The immediate effect is bound to be some kind of creative disorientation. But even more important, from the viewpoint of our culture as a whole, it is evident that this constant fluctuation between dissidence and conformity, this endless game of hide and seek with the past, cannot but thwart the production of a mature

and sustained literature. And the intelligentsia in America, for all its efforts to preserve its intellectual identity, seems to have a deep-seated need to accept as its own - if only periodically - the official voice of society."
(Phillips, 1941, p490)

By 1952 the PR discourse was no longer self-reflexive, the historical sense was missing.

DISCUSSION

Phillips in 1941 (see above) criticised his compatriots for abdicating their critical judgement and succumbing to a "deep-seated need" (Phillips, 1941, p490) for identification with the status quo. He identified a series of trends with no apparent "organic linkage" apart from "the natural persistence of certain states of mind" (ibid.) Here, I have suggested, he pre-viewed the allegiance asserted in the 1952 editorial "Our Country and Our Culture" but he also adumbrates the analysis of PR's history proposed in other recent accounts. These accounts (eg. Aaron, Pells, Bloom, Cooney, see pages 30 - 53) have, in my view, represented the PR discourse as, on the one hand, a product of a consistent drive (or persistent state of mind) and, on the other, as defined by radical breaks. In 1941, Phillips was criticising other American intellectuals but, within eleven years, the criticism appears to be applicable to him.

Does this suggest that there is an inevitability in the story described here, that there is a cyclical pattern of revolt and incorporation? Aaron has argued explicitly that American cultural history is one of a recurring pattern in three acts (see page 33 and footnote 21, page 385). Are there such cycles? Is there a "constant fluctuation between dissidence and conformity," an "endless game of hide and seek with the past..." (Phillips, ibid)? Does History unfold predictably? And, as a logical corollary, was, and (therefore) is, the *avant-garde* (c.f. Huyssen, see page 28) project inevitably flawed? That is, is it

impossible to maintain a radical politics and a radical art? Must art be either subordinate to politics (i.e. propaganda) or autonomous of it (i.e. art for art's sake)?

One representation of the PR story is that of a group of intellectuals who broke with a determinist account of Marxism and constructed an intellectualist and theoretical account of the relations between politics and aesthetics; briefly advanced a position indicating how art could be both aesthetically experimental and politically radical; and then became incorporated into the Establishment. This can then be explained by reference to either, the inevitable attractions of embourgeoisement, or, the inadequacy of the avant-garde enterprise.

It has been pointed out (see footnote 17, page 408) that the debates in PR and their trajectory have parallels with those of their contemporaries in the Frankfurt School. More recently in Britain, there are parallels with the debate over aesthetics and politics conducted in and around the journals Screen and New Left Review (see Bloch et al, 1977, for the source material from the thirties on which these debates worked) and, more broadly, the recent reworking of Marxism and concepts of *class* culminating in the debate in Marxism Today. An observer of these debates in the seventies and eighties, and reader of this account of PR, might conclude that theoretical explorations and reconstructions of Marxism lead to not only "post structuralism" but "post-Marxism", "post-feminism" and "post-modernism".

This is not the place to enter this general debate, but we can perhaps discuss the implications of this analysis of PR for an assessment of the viability of the avant-garde project. The questions would appear to be:

1. Does the PR history illustrate a predetermined cyclical pattern?
2. Is their conception of an avant-garde art practice operable today?

Wald, in his account, has suggested that the New York intellectuals' turn to anti-communism was not inevitable once they had rejected Stalinism. His analysis (while undoubtedly politically partisan) emphasises the specificity of the positions taken, the analyses advanced. Anti-Stalinism, was a critique, he argues, not the first stage in an inevitable progression. Of course, anti-communism was, it would appear, the next stage, but it should not be overlooked that while Phillips might have become an anti-communist, Rahv did not. If the story of PR is simplified, is presented with hindsight as a set of positions marking stages on a journey to a known destination, then certainly the destination, even the route, will seem inevitable. This account has however rejected such a view of history in favour of a mapping of the discursive transformations. The thesis advanced here is that there was no foregone conclusion, that the PR discourse was constructed by a complex and creative articulation of elements whose meaning was not fixed. It was an ongoing process of construction in which elements were incorporated, modified and expelled from the discourse. Understanding of the change in positions rests on a precise examination of the shifts and the inter-play between text and context.

A recognition of both the complexity of the process and its particularity or historical specificity.

To take an example, most other accounts have argued for an intellectual debt to American literary traditions rather than European and Soviet (thus advancing the premise that there was an underlying consistency in the PR discourse.) Specifically, the concepts of "usables" (elements from previous culture which can be incorporated into a current discourse), has been represented as inherited from Brooks exclusively rather than as an amalgam of Brooks' concept of a usable past and Trotsky's concept of cultural continuity. This concept and its alternative histories illustrates the fact that concepts and their 'utility' are not fixed. An element in a discourse has a past, present and future. Its nature at a given point or moment is a product of the articulation of that element with others and with its past and perceived future. An examination of the construction of a discourse, of the precise articulation of elements can tell us how change occurs.

The description of PR's trajectory presented here may seem to provide evidence that the debates of the present are the debates of the past but I would argue that there are significant differences. While there are lessons to be learned, the transformation of PR is not, in itself, generalisable. By examining the nature of the transformations in the PR discourse we can learn lessons about the processes by which the discourses within which we operate, and to which we contribute are constructed and transformed.

The fifties in America saw, I have argued (see page 284 - 291) a move to individualistic or psychologistic explanations of motivation and, hence, social structures. Materialist conceptions of class and class conflict were replaced by status and status aspiration. Clearly there are parallels with the "New Times", "post-Fordist", version of socialism being advanced in some quarters today (see Marxism Today) and which has recently been attacked by Sivanandan on the grounds that it is attempting to replace a materialist or political culture with a cultural politics which views "reality itself" as a "matter of interpretation, construction, presentation - of words, ideas, images." (Sivanandan, 1990.)

Without entering this debate, I shall restrict myself to pointing out the differences between our intellectual context and that of PR in the fifties. The changes in Britain - in so far as they can be represented as homogenous - are a response to the "new times" of "Thatcherism" (conveniently equatable to a decade); were a response to an electoral politics in which the Conservative Party appeared to have significantly reworked the political agenda and seemed unassailable at the polls.' It was a conscious attempt to win back rhetorical ground. Whether or not it was a good strategy (and whether or not there is a material base which it is ignoring), this project has accepted that (whether or not this is all there is to reality) words, ideas and images are crucial, that they are a key site of cultural struggle.

In an 'age' of consumerism, of status anxieties, of nationalism², the Left needs to understand how this discourse has been constructed in

order to propose an alternative. This is not, however, the activity that the PR circle were engaged in.³ The PR symposium of 1952 represents not the reworking of a dominant political discourse in its own terms for alternative political purposes, instead, it was an alignment with that discourse - at the expense of the PR aesthetic position - an acceptance of a separation of the spheres.

Let us examine again what Rahv and Phillips were arguing for in their *avant-garde* moment. In the late thirties Rahv and Phillips were arguing for a social history of art (i.e. proposing text and context are "dialectically" related, see page 318.) They rejected attempts to subordinate aesthetic considerations to political expediency and at the same time they rejected any suggestion that art was autonomous. In their formulation, art was "kinetic", by its imaginative recreation of experience it impelled social action and the critic as ideological guide to the artist was in the political vanguard - literature was a weapon in life and criticism a weapon in literature (see page 147.)

This position can of course - as it was by party activists at the time - be dismissed as mere academicism and, in turn, it can be accused of leading to art that is "academic". Such an accusation may well be levelled at formalist, consciously deconstructive art and at "inaccessible" theory (see Hicks' attack on Rahv and Phillips for handing "meaningless decalogs" from mist veiled mountaintops, page 149.) This however is to miss the point, "academic" art is clearly not *kinetic*, it has failed to imaginatively recreate experience.

This definition of art goes beyond formulations of Modernist art as self-referential, as making it endlessly new. It is what makes the art practice *avant-garde* rather than modernist (in Huyssen's terms) and, in my view, what makes it possible to argue that it remains a viable enterprise.

In his attack on *Kulturbolschewismus* in 1941 (see the second paradigmatic text, page 195-9), Macdonald attacked Macleish for promoting an art that proposed the view that "mankind is marching forward" (see page 197.) In PR in the late thirties and early forties, *avant-garde* art was art which reflected the sense or spirit of the age and, if the age was one in which the social order was decomposing, then that would be reflected in art. A *kinetic* art will reflect its own time, will therefore take different forms, will operate by exposing contradictions by imaginatively recreating a contradictory reality.

At this point then, I would argue that Modernism (to use their terminology) in PR was what we have now come to call post-modernism⁴ and that there is little to be gained here from the distinction. If that is so, then it is possible to argue that the *avant-garde* project as proposed in PR - that kinetic art will promote first, an understanding of the current social context and, then, action - remains viable.

So far, so good, this does however beg the question - how did the artist come to their understanding of the social context? One answer (applied in PR to the politically conservative modernists) is that they do not consciously understand, but simply "truthfully" reflect their

experience. The other (applied to the political avant-gardist) is that they have the appropriate "ideology" to light up their experience, which, combined with "talent" will permit the development of "great literature" (see page 148.)

Taking the logic of the first case, we are in danger of slipping into the argument that works 'write themselves' inscribing their cultural moment - a view rejected in this analysis (see page 57.) Taking the second case - which is the key to a conception of the politically active avant-gardist artist - we must then premise our argument on the artist's "ideology" (see page 148), her/his ability to understand their time(s). The political artist, according to this view, must have a theoretical grasp. This must then return us to an exploration of History, Society and the nature of the Political Culture - the central problems of macro sociology and of contemporary politics. Such an exploration is beyond the scope of this attempt to excavate a fragment of the past but it is hoped that it might make some contribution toward such an analysis.

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APPENDICES

NOTES

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APPENDIX ONE

Americanism and the Marxist Parties

Clearly there were several very significant differences between the historical development and circumstances of the United States in the Nineteenth Century and that of European countries - the lack of a feudal past; the mixture of ethnic groups; the presence of a large ex-slave population and the status of the Native Americans; and its identity as a nation which had won its independence through a "revolution"¹. In addition, the ideology of the Frontier was obviously crucial, as was the urban-rural balance - much of the history of radical protest was centred on populist farmers' movements to which both the Socialist and Communist parties had an ambivalent attitude, but without whom they were unlikely to be able to forge a broad based labour movement². Finally, the impact of successive waves of immigrants meant that the social formation was fairly fluid and divisions between the ethnic communities hampered the construction of a working class unity. (McLellan, 1979.)

The history of socialist and communist parties in the U.S. - and the explanations proffered for their relative failure - consistently reflect a tension between commitment to an internationalist movement and a desire to assert a uniquely American experience. Again and again, the difference between the American and European economies and political

institutions was asserted, and between European and American "character".

Although Marx and Engels were optimistic about the future of socialism in the US, Engels cautioned Joseph Weydemeyer when he sailed to the US in 1851 about the "special American conditions" : "the ease with which the surplus population is drained off to the farms, the necessarily rapid and rapidly growing prosperity of the country, which makes bourgeois conditions look like a *beau ideal* to them, and so forth." (quoted in Bell, 1980 p256). By the turn of the century, Werner Sombart was asking "Why is there no socialism in the US?" Sombart and other contemporary commentators attributed its absence largely to the opportunities in the US, to its natural and material resources. (Sombart's answer to his own question was that socialism had "foundered upon shoals of roast beef and apple pie", quoted in McLellan, 1979, p321)

The case for American exceptionalism has been argued since, sometimes within the Parties as grounds for a different strategy (as in 1926/7 see below), often as an explanation for the failure of organised socialism/communism to take hold in the US. Not only the specificity of American conditions were/are cited, but, perhaps more frequently, the American "character" which is perceived as being incompatible with theoretical and organisational constraint since it is presented as innately individualist or "democratic" (democracy being equated here with individual freedom, and the will of the people counterposed to a bureaucratic party or state).

Marxism is represented as a "foreign" theory inappropriate to both America and Americans, interpreted by ideologues taking no account of the American experience. This can be seen, for instance, in relation to the difference between the two Communist Parties set up in 1919, the use of Lenin's critique of infantile leftism to condemn the "conspiratorial" underground Party of the early twenties; the commitment of the Party after its emergence in 1923 to a programme based on the "actualities of the life of workers in the USA"; the debate on "American exceptionalism" in 1926/7; and the explanations offered for the failures of American socialism/communism by authors like Bell, 1962 and 1980; Howe and Coser, 1957; Myers, 1977. (See below.)

Clearly a socialist philosophy could have been expected to appeal to citizens of a nation constructed in a revolution against feudal Europe and most commentators make a distinction between the general philosophy and its organised manifestations. Howe and Coser, for instance, exclude socialism from their critique of organised Communism in their history of the American Communist Party, arguing that socialism was not "an exotic aberration or an imported disease like parrot fever" (Howe and Coser, 1957, p1) but was soon integrated into American life in the Nineteenth Century. The fact that they remained declared socialists was presumably not unrelated to this distinction, Daniel Bell, however, does not distinguish, commenting that, since both socialism and America were "unbounded dreams" (Bell, 1962, p275) it seemed as if socialism would have "its finest hour" there but, in his view, the two dreams proved incompatible - one collectivist and the other (constructed by him as) individualist³.

Rather than accepting a critique which suggests that communism confronted an innately incompatible American character, I suggest that the explanation lies in the inflexibility of the Communist Party discourse, its failure to adequately integrate elements from other discursive formations within which its members operated and defined themselves.

* * * * *

The American Socialist Party was, at the beginning of the Twentieth Century, relatively large and successful; formed in 1901, by 1912, its President Eugene Debs was able to attract 6% of the vote in the presidential elections (Howe and Coser, 1957, p3) and membership was over 100,000. As it expanded, however, it split into a right wing led by Victor Berger, a centre led by Morris Hillquit, and a left wing led by Debs and including the Marxists led by Louis Boudin, and the IWW activists led by Bill Haywood who were expelled in 1912 for refusing to renounce violent action. A decline in party fortunes between 1912 and 1915 was followed by a left wing resurgence with a Marxist, internationalist flavour and led by Boudin, Lore and Louis Fraina/Lewis Corey⁴. At the outbreak of the European war, the SP took an anti-war stance and when the US entered in 1917, the pro-war faction left the party. The June 1917 Espionage Act was used to move against Party and party members - the Party magazine American Socialist was banned from the Mails (see page 81/2 for action against Seven Arts and Masses), Debs was sentenced to ten years for an anti-war speech. (See Diagram 2 for a

visual summary of the Left Wing parties in the United States in first half of the Twentieth Century.)

The Party expanded, however, and the Russian Revolution inspired great enthusiasm and in 1919, with the founding of the Third International, the American Communist Party was formed. A formal organisation of the Left Wing in the Socialist Party was set up in early 1919 and in April they gained a majority on the National Executive but the incumbent committee declared the results a fraud and expelled them. At their June 1919 convention the majority (including Fraina, Charles Ruthenberg, Bertram Wolfe, John Reed, Benjamin Gitlow) voted to stay in the Socialist Party while a minority (The Russian Federation and the Michigan socialists) broke away. By late July, Fraina, Wolfe and Ruthenberg had also acknowledged the need for a Communist Party, leaving only Reed and Gitlow of the leaders maintaining the importance of staying in the Socialist Party (Eastman, 1919; McLellan, 1979 and Howe and Coser 1957.) In late August/early September 1919, the Socialist Party Convention met in Chicago and two Communist Parties were set up in opposition.

The Socialist Party convention was convened on August 30th, some left wing members who tried to attend were not allowed in, and they, and others who had been seated, left to form their own convention and, on the 31st, the Communist Labour Party. The Convention of the Communist Party meanwhile was convened on the September 1st and formed the CP, refusing the CLP's offer of union on equal terms (Eastman, 1919). Both Parties were driven underground by Government repression and the Palmer

raids of early 1920. In April 1920, Ruthenberg's faction left the CP and merged with the CLP to form the United Communist Party and in May 1921, the UCP and CP, in line with Moscow's anti-sectarian policy (Tenth Congress 1921), merged to form the Communist Party of America headed by Ruthenberg. This stayed underground until April 1923, but in December 1921 a legal party, the Workers' Party of America was founded (Howe and Coser, 1957.)

Max Eastman's (previously editor of The Masses and leading bohemian) report on the Socialist Party and two Communist Party Conventions of 1919 in the replacement for the Masses, The Liberator, epitomised the ambivalence to Europe and European ideas reflected in the writing and attitudes of so many of the American Left. While Eastman felt that the protagonists of the CP were more efficient and theoretically rigorous and had a better grasp of the Marxist programme, his emotional sympathies clearly lay with the enthusiastic activists of the CLP who represented the traditions of the mythic hobo poet and the "wobblies" - the individualist proletarian adventurer, the American man of action. The CLP were drawn, Eastman said, from those elements of the Socialist Party who had always been "more revolutionary than the majority... more devoted to the principle of class struggle, less willing to waste energy in office-seeking, reformism and parliamentarianism." (Eastman, 1919, p5/6) The CP however were drawn from the Foreign Language Federations who had formed an organised and unified element within the Socialist Party - which made them all the easier to identify and expel, and for them to call for a separate Communist Party. For Eastman they were a "slavic socialist machine" (op cit, p15) a "Russian Bolshevick church",

non-American, and unable to apply their theory to the reality of the American situation, and "with a pretty fixed opinion that although Americans must perforce be admitted to the church, they must not be admitted in such numbers as to endanger the machine's hold upon the dogmas and the collection box." (op cit, p15/16)

The CLP however, in Eastman's opinion, both "understood and accepted the Moscow manifesto and wanted to apply it in a concrete and realistic way to American conditions...." (op cit, p16) in a "plain spoken programme". Eastman's conclusion was that, while it was not thoroughly satisfactory, at least the CLP offered a chance for the growth of an American Communist Party while the Foreign Language Federations should stay "where the attitude of their leaders naturally places them, in a separate or autonomous Slavic Party of Communism" (op cit, p19).

The two parties were ordered by Moscow to merge in May 1921 and formed the Communist Party of America headed by Charles Ruthenberg (who had initially been in the Communist Party but had left to join the CLP six months later) and dominated by the Americanist position. This Party remained underground (the Communists having been forced underground in 1920 by the Palmer raids) until 1923 but in December 1921 a legal party - the Workers Party - was formed. When Lenin's attack on infantile leftism became available in the US in 1921 its attractions to Americanists were obvious. In October 1921 Eastman argued that the revolutionaries who had split from the Socialist Party (thanks to the then unidentified "infantile disease of leftism") had achieved nothing in two years because they had failed to understand the American

situation. They were applying the tactics of the Third International which were premised on a breakdown of capitalism which was not happening in the US as it was in Europe. An underground conspiratorial movement with heavy party discipline was not appropriate to either the American (democratic) situation or to the American character. The strategy of the party must be one of preliminary propoganda, of education of the workers (Eastman, 1921.) Ruthenberg welcomed "Communism in the open again" in February 1923 by arguing that the early CP had failed because "the practical application of the communist principles to the life of the American workers was not undertaken" but now the new programme was "based upon the actualities of the life of the workers in the US" (Ruthenberg, 1923, p12)⁵ After succeeding to the leadership (after Ruthenberg's death in 1927), Jay Lovestone took the argument further, arguing for American "exceptionalism". While this position was then accepted by the majority of Party members, unfortunately for them it coincided with Stalin's "left turn", and, although the purge of the Trotskyist left in 1928 delayed matters, the Lovestone faction (a minority after Lovestone was called to Moscow for disciplining) were purged in 1929, leaving Foster leader.

The "left" faction led by Shachtman and Cannon had left the Party in 1928 following Eastman who had been expelled for having in 1924/5/6 publicised "Lenin's Testament" (a note written by Lenin in December 1922 predicting a Stalin/Trotsky split in the Central Committee and criticising both of them as potential leaders, with a postscript dated January 1923 that as Stalin was "too rude" to be General Secretary... "therefore I propose to the comrades to find a way to remove Stalin from

that position and appoint to it another man who in all respects differs from Stalin only in superiority..." (Trotsky, 1928, p323.) In 1928 Eastman published his translation of The Real Situation in Russia which he described as "the exposition of Trotsky's thoughts" now "generally described" as "the opposition platform" (Eastman, 1928, xix).⁶ The Left formed the Workers (Communist) Party in 1928 which became the Communist League of America in 1929, the Workers party in 1934 and in 1937 the Socialist Workers party. In 1940, after a split, a Workers Party was also formed.

In their histories of the American Communist and Trotskyist parties respectively, Howe and Coser (1957), and Myers (1977), express the view that the failure of the two movements to consolidate and expand their membership is attributable to a misreading of the American personality and experience. They, as does Lasch (The Agony of the American Left) attack the "Europeanization" of socialism and its organisational form after the Bolshevik revolution (Lasch, 1970, p42). Howe and Coser criticise the Stalinist Communist Party for failing to grasp the distinctive qualities of the American situation and attempting to conflate "their vision of the European revolution" with "the actualities of American life" (Howe and Coser, 1957, p27). The left wingers were "insufficiently exceptionalist" in their view of America :

"they failed to give sufficient weight to those factors in American life which did make the political destiny of this country significantly different from that of Europe."
(op cit, p30)

The Socialist Party, Howe and Coser argue, had been American - linked to a spirit of optimism, an assumption of progress which prevailed in the early Twentieth Century; a particularly American optimism : Socialism

"seemed part of the American readiness to cross European theory with native improvisations, part of that American yearning for Utopia which had first shimmered into sight with the Atlantic settlements and may yet survive the atomic age."

(op cit, p1)

The Communists, they suggest, had not produced this ideological hybrid - from the late twenties, the parties were foreign national parties :

"no longer representative of native radical opinion and no longer responsive to the interests, be they truly grasped or totally misconceived, of the native working class."

(op cit, p505)

Further, they failed to recognise the essentially "democratic" - or individualist⁷, nature of the American - they accepted the concept of the dictatorship of the proletariat uncritically, although Howe and Coser argue it could not apply to a country like the U.S. "with its long democratic and parliamentary tradition." Trotsky too misunderstood the American situation because :

"He was still using political lenses ground in 1917, and what they allowed him to see of the American landscape was sadly blurred."

(Howe, 1984, p36)

Myers, in The Prophet's Army attributes the failure of the Trotskyist movement largely to the inappropriateness of Leninist party organisation to the, mainly middle class, American membership. In order to succeed, she argues, they would have had to develop a different form of organisation devised specifically for America.

Thus, these American historians conclude, Marxism with its European roots and its collectivist ideology proved difficult to integrate with North American individualism, to a self-definition which emphasises equality (but of opportunity rather than outcome) and individual freedom (but freedom to, rather than freedom from.)

European outsider Harold Laski in 1949 (The American Democracy) argued that Americans have laid more stress on the free individual than on the free society. In his opinion, this led them to desire progress and change but shrink from collective action and state power (Laski, 1949, p736-8.) For Laski "Americanism" was contradictory - the overt egalitarianism was in fact dominated by the drive for capital accumulation; the ethic of individualism and the (false) belief in the uniqueness of American democracy were used to limit democracy by avoiding legislation to protect rights. (See the current "radical right" assertions that the "overloaded" Welfare State is inhibiting individual freedom.) Bell, reviewing Laski's The American Democracy, in 1957, took exception to Laski's belief that the US would "despite everything" follow the European pattern of development :

"How reckless the unqualified phrase, 'despite everything', yet this conviction was held in unwavering form by most of the left-wing intelligentsia in the thirties and forties, and is one of the reasons why the 'left' so consistently misinterpreted American political developments." (Bell, 1962, p97)

This individualist, egalitarian definition is a self-definition - critics of the notion that America would follow some fixed trajectory as identified on the basis of European development replace one version of

historical necessity with an explanation based on a conception of the "American character" as somehow given by the national experience.

APPENDIX TWO

Communist Culture in the Twenties and Thirties

In 1917 the Masses was banned from the mails and the editors were prosecuted at two trials in 1918 for "conspiracy to obstruct recruiting and enlistment" (Eastman, 1918.) They were finally acquitted, but in the meantime Max Eastman and his sister Crystal had started a replacement, The Liberator. The Liberator pre-dated the formation of the Communist Parties in 1919 and carried on the eclectic traditions of the Masses reflecting an interest in Freudianism and feminism as well as an enthusiasm for the October revolution and post-revolutionary culture which laid the foundations for the policy of "proletarian art".

In 1919 Floyd Dell (associate editor) wrote an enthusiastic article about "Art under the Bolsheviks". Unlike the US he reported, which was still under the "spell of art-for-art's-sake philosophy" (Dell, 1919, p15), in Russia, revolutionary and artistic enthusiasm were mingled :

"... in the fiery crucible of revolution the hopes of art have become one with the hopes of mankind."
(ibid.)

Art was to be for and by the people and judged by them.

Two years later Mike Gold (writing as Irwin Granich) wrote "Towards Proletarian Art". The old art must be thrown away along with the old economy he declared. Art must reflect life, the life of the workers. He denounced artists and intellectuals - they had become sterile, elitist, solitary and negative; creating only confusion and doubt, while

the masses were "still primitive and clean" (Gold, 1921, p22). The masses still understood group life, collective solidarity, and the artist must turn to them for inspiration. Socialism was "life at its fullest and noblest" (op cit, p22), and the Russians were aware

"that the spiritual cement of a literature and art is needed to bind together a society. They have begun creating the religion of a new order. The '*Prolet-Kult*' is their conscious effort towards this. It is the first effort of historic Man towards such a culture."

(op cit, p23)

A culture that lay dormant in the hearts of the masses and would blossom when nurtured; an art of tranquility and strength, rather than an art reflecting the obsessions and fears of the solitary artist and intellectual.

In his call for a proletarian art in 1921 Gold represented the proletarian as rediscovering the pure instincts of natural man. Proletarian art was not the art of individualism, but of collectivism; "the instinct of human solidarity" which had been repressed under capitalism. The proletariat were discovering and asserting their humanity and Walt Whitman was the prophet of their art ("The heroic spiritual grandfather of our generation in America is Walt Whitman", op cit, p22.)

Thus an American cultural hero was re-interpreted to provide legitimacy for the movement. Whitman, Gold suggested, had been falsely represented as the prophet of individualism; Whitman who had understood the masses and been mistaken in his vision only in that he had believed in democracy as a political system.¹ Unfortunately, Gold suggested, most

of his successors were not as grounded in the masses as he, and became trapped in the class psychology of capitalism :

"But now, at last, the masses of America have awakened, through the revolutionary movement, to their souls. Now at last, are they prepared to put forth those huge hewn poets, those striking, outdoor philosophers and horny-handed creators of whom he prophesied. Now they are fully aware America is theirs. Now they can sing it. Now their brain and heart, embodied in the revolutionary element among them, are aroused, and they can relive Walt, and follow him in the massive labors of the earth-built proletarian culture."
(op cit, p23)

Gold rejected the elitist intellectual, he was deeply suspicious of theory. Prolet-Kult was attractive to him because he saw it as growing from the bottom up rather than being a theory "evolved in the brains of a few phrase-intoxicated intellectuals and foisted by them on the masses" (op cit, p23.) The new culture could not come from the "leisured class" (op cit, p24) of alienated intellectuals, but would come from the masses, the American masses : the "lusty green tree" would grow in

"the fields, factories and workshops of America - in the American life."
(op cit, p24)

In October 1922 the magazine was turned over to the Workers Party (Communist party) (Conlin, 1968, p536) and Robert Minor took over as editor in May 1923. A year later it closed and was replaced by New Masses in 1926. In 1928, coinciding with Stalin's "left turn", Gold became editor.

Aaron in his account insists that the New Masses was initially independent of the Party and reflected the desire of a wide range of

writers and artists for a non-Party journal as a substitute for the old Masses. Funds became available in 1925 when the Garland Fund (set up by a bequest from a young man of his inheritance to the radical cause) agreed a grant. Aaron claims that the accusations made by Granville Hicks that the magazine was always in the hands of the Party are incorrect, but this is rather unconvincing since the proposal to the fund was, by Aaron's account, written by Party stalwart Joseph Freeman (previously an executive editor of the Liberator when it was in Party hands) and Hicks, as a subsequent literary editor of NM, was surely in a position to know. Aaron's main source appears to have been Freeman himself who certainly insists in his semi-autobiographical An American Testament of 1936 that the journal was not Communist, but a "magazine of American experiment" with an editorial board "consisting overwhelmingly of liberals" (Freeman, 1936, p344.) However the active editors : Egmont Arens, Freeman, Hugo Gellert, Michael Gold, James Rorty and John Sloan seem to have determined policy in ways compatible, to say the least, with Communism (at least Gold and Freeman were Party members.).

In March 1928, financial problems led one faction of the Executive Board to recommend liquidation of the magazine. Gold and Gellert volunteered to take over as editors and in October 1928 Gold assumed the editorship, at which point, Aaron asserts "the magazine became what Gold had always wanted it to be : a revolutionary organ dedicated to the working class..." (Aaron, 1977, p204) and there is no doubt about its links to the Party after this point.

Before the Kharkov Conference of Revolutionary Writers of November 1930, the line presented in New Masses was clear. Intellectualism, academicism and modernism were equated and attacked. Idealist conceptions of art were rejected for a materialist analysis. Art for art's sake was presented as "an ideology", a dogma, espoused by "liberals" and "intellectuals" who presented themselves as being "above the battle", but were as much a product of their class position (petty-bourgeois) and ideology as any one else.

Gold's article "Go Left, young writers" tersely identified the social base of art and debunked the pretensions of the idealists :

"Literature is one of the products of a civilization like steel or textiles. It is not a child of eternity, but of time. It is always the mirror of its age. It is not any more mystic in its origins than a ham sandwich."
(Gold, 1929, p3)

Modernist writers were cowards, perverts and nihilists; "Greenwich village type parasites." "Intellectual" became an epithet and the concept was redefined; those who were really "pro-intellect" (Spector, 1929, p18) were the Communists. "Intellectuals" were just white collar slaves; real intelligence could only be exercised in the real world. (Freeman, p21, 1929). Academe was the mortuary chapel of capitalist imperialism. (Nearing, 1929). Artists merely provided the products with which the rich distracted themselves and placated their fears that the status quo might be overthrown. (Gold, 1929) High art was useless to the masses :

"...the communist movement in this country has no more use for a great artist than a regimental bugler has for a symphonic

orchestral score."
(Wolf, 1929, p19)

In 1926 Gold urged younger writers to look not to France for inspiration, but to the Soviet Union which offered a "new dynamism akin to our own American spirit" (Gold, 1926, p7). (Ironically, this injunction was in the context of a glowing review of Literature and Revolution.) Reflecting his attachment to the frontier spirit, the title of one of his famous pieces was "Go Left, young writers" - he explained :

"When I say 'go leftward', I don't mean the temperamental bohmeian left, the stale old Paris posing, the professional poetising etc. No, the real thing, a knowledge of working class life in America gained from first hand contacts, a hard precise philosophy of 1929 based on economics, not verbalisms."
(Gold, 1929, p3)

Lenin's "On Party Organization and Party Literature" was used during 1929 to show that art could not be above the class struggle and that "literature must become party literature" (Lenin, 1929B, p7.) It is obviously questionable whether Lenin ever intended his remarks to refer to creative literature and Eastman later, in Artists in Uniform, used the work of Soviet critic Vyacheslav Polonsky (a contemporary of Lenin) to assert that Lenin had only intended a restricted usage of the term literature and that his approach to art was compatible with Trotsky's. Lenin's comments, Polonsky pointed out in his 1928 book, were made in a highly specific context - as an injunction to the Bolshevik party press - and Lenin opposed Bogdanov and Proletcult². Whatever Lenin had actually meant, the use to which his words were then put in NM was unequivocal.

According to NM, the only worthwhile art was proletarian art. While writing an otherwise very favourable review of Literature and Revolution in 1926, Gold had rejected the suggestion that the dictatorship of the proletariat would be too transitory for the establishment of proletarian art. For Gold, a proletarian art had already begun to emerge :

"It is not a theory, it is a fact that a proletarian style is emerging in art. It will be as transitory as other styles; but it will have its day."
(Gold, 1926, p8)

By the late 1920s, of course, Trotsky's theory was not even considered by the party faithful and proletarian literature was established as the goal of the movement. It was not enough to write about the proletariat, a proletarian writer had to be read by them (Russale, 1929.) "Radical" writers like Upton Sinclair were not proletarian because in his novels the proletariat were always discovered from above. Ideally the proletarian writer of this period was of the proletariat :

"A wild youth of about 22, the son of working class parents, who himself works in the lumber camps, coal mines, steel mills, harvest fields and mountain camps of America."
(Gold, 1929, p4)

(Some were female, but that didn't suit the imagery.) But if you weren't a genuine proletarian you could work with them - after the John Reed Clubs were founded in late 1929, Gold announced that he intended to propose that each writer attach him/herself to an industry and spend the next few years in it so that they could write like insiders and "not like a bourgeois intellectual observer" (Gold, 1930, p21.)

In 1929 the first, and largest, John Reed Club, the New York Club (from which PR was to be published in 1934) was founded, followed shortly by

several others, forming a national movement by 1932.³ The JRCs were designed to promote the principles of proletcult⁴ and encourage new young writers to enter the party orbit and were clearly identified with the Party⁵ unlike many party sponsored "innocents clubs" (Selznick The Organisational Weapon : A study of bolshevik strategy and tactics, quoted Aaron, 1977, p281.)

In November 1930 the Conference of Revolutionary Writers at Kharkov changed the parameters of Communist cultural policy by establishing a dual policy - proletarian literature for Party members accompanied by a new tolerance of sympathetic intellectuals.

The Conference was reported in NM and the new dual policy for the Americans was passed on. Point one of the ten point "Program of Action for the United States", to which attention was particularly drawn in the report declared the first aim to be :

"The widening of the activity of the John Reed clubs and the New Masses in two directions : a) extending the proletarian base of our movement by drawing in new proletarian elements ; b) winning over of radicalised intellectuals"
(Ellis, et. al., 1931, p7)

The John Reed Clubs and New Masses were also told they were not to exercise hegemony; theory was to be strengthened, e.g. by publication of Plekhanov and Mehring; and New Masses was to be more democratic and organic in order to be the "cultural organ of the class-conscious workers and revolutionary intellectuals of this country." (op cit, p7)

The report warned sternly that point 1b) was not "something that was included as an afterthought, purely perfunctory in character". On the

contrary, "the Plenum laid great stress on the importance of winning over the radicalised intellectuals, particularly of the younger generation, and it was considered one of the shortcomings of our conference that so few of the sympathetic writers were present." (op cit, p8) The intellectuals disaffected by the world crisis of capitalism must be drawn into the movement; they did not have to accept the Communist programme 100%, but they should be guided and helped to clarify their social outlook.

The American contingent were out-of-step with policy when they arrived at Kharkov and were rebuked for their leftism (there, and in the special issue on Kharkov of Literature of the World Revolution.) According to Homberger, those (led by Gold) who were prepared to accept the new line were a minority, and the majority (led by A.B. Magil - who shortly retracted) were "leftists". (See Homberger, 1986, p136 and footnotes 47 and 48, p230.)

Clearly it was a somewhat contradictory policy^s with its dual standards for party activists and intellectual sympathisers, and there were divisions over it, but it was adhered to in NM and the JRC official statements. Gold in his "Notes from Kharkov", admitted to surprise that the line taken by Congress on the role of the petty-bourgeois intellectual was not "the one taken by our leftists" (Gold, 1931, p5), but that instead, "friendly intellectuals" should be enlisted, and "Every door must be opened wide to fellow travellers..." But, surprise or not, from this point, the struggle was described as being of workers and "intellectuals whose economic distress and integrity has brought

them to the side of the workers struggle..." (Workers Cultural Federation, 1931.)

As Edwin Seaver noted "The revolutionary writer has his clearly defined line of action [i.e. adhering to the Kharkov motion] from which he cannot depart without risking criticism for left or right deviation" (Seaver, 1932, p12), but the fellow travellers were less proscribed. Bourgeois intellectuals were being treated sympathetically - they were now innocent dupes of capitalism. Seaver felt it was unfair to call them "bourgeois" since they were unconscious of the fact that they transmitted the bourgeois ideology. "Writers of integrity" became the new catchphrase. The alienated, esoteric cynic was now a disaffected artist, a potential revolutionary whose basic integrity needed to be nurtured into class consciousness. The previously reviled liberalism was now the first step on a leftward path.

Sympathisers and fellow travellers were encouraged to show their support publically - when famous writers including Dreiser, Frank, Wilson and Hook went to show their support for striking miners in Kentucky⁷ it was made much of in the New Masses and in the Daily Worker. Such writers were presented as having abandoned "their role of aloofness and disillusion, of cynicism and disdain - their historic role in the 20s" (Seaver, 1932B, p9) to become participants, if only in limited terms. "The early 20s were a period of self-discovery and self expression. The early 30s point to a period of social discovery and social expression." (op cit, p10) In 1933 Joseph Freeman dismissed "Bohemia" as just a

stage, an individualistic search for freedom, a period of fruitless pessimism. (Freeman, 1933).

In New Masses, and elsewhere, well-known writers explained how they had been drawn into the movement^a. Typical was poet Maxwell Bodenheim's³ revelation in the Little Magazine that he had been a "rampant individualist" (Bodenheim, 1934 p1), secluded in art's ivory tower and consorting only with intellectuals. For him and other writers, art had been conceived of as a "holy venerated escape" (Bodenheim, 1934B, p2), but in the early thirties, they had come to realize that artists were also exploited under capitalism and that they must join the proletariat to fight for a new order. And while intellectuals and writers were urged to desert their ivory towers, party sectarians were urged to desert their "red ivory towers" (Freeman, 1934. p24)¹⁰

In the two years after Kharkov, the IURW cracked the whip over NM and in September 1932, the paper published, after a prolonged silence, the IURW's criticisms (which had previously appeared in International Literature) of NM's 1931 issues and meekly accepted its analysis.¹¹ For Aaron (in an analysis representative of the position on American exceptionalism indicated in Appendix One), the IURW's analysis displayed "an incredible ignorance of the American literary situation" (Aaron, 1977, p230), its imposed policy was, in his opinion, calculated to baffle most of the working class readers in the US and alienate the middle class radicals.

Unlike many historians however, Aaron does acknowledge the new emphasis on the winning over of the intellectuals specified at Kharkov and the impact this had on the 'leftist' JRCs where the importance of attracting the intellectuals was stressed. Gold told the delegates to the first National Conference (Chicago, May 29, 1932) that "At Kharkov the platform was simple and political. Any writer who subscribed to the political platform was admitted"; no-one would be asked to change their "mental habits", no-one would be dictated to - if Wilson believed in Proustian writing instead of proletarian, fine, bring him in : "We cannot afford to have aesthetic quarrels". (Minutes of the JRC Convention, quoted Aaron, 1977, p226.)

There was no conflict for Gold in the dual task of creating proletarian literature and at the same time winning over the middle class leftward-moving intellectuals and, despite opposition from the more hardline members², the party-line triumphed. The draft manifesto of the John Reed Clubs published in June 1932 explained that the position of the intelligentsia had changed in the last two years. American capitalism was now in decay and its culture was in a "blind alley" (another favoured phrase) :

"The class struggle in culture has assumed sharp forms. Recently we have witnessed two major movements among American intellectuals : the Humanist movement, frankly reactionary in its ideas; and a movement to the left among certain types of liberal intellectuals.

The reasons for the swing to the left are not hard to find. The best of younger American writers have come, by and large, from the middle classes. During the boom which followed the war these classes increased their income. They played the stockmarket with profit. They were beneficiaries of the New Era. The crash in the Autumn of 1929 fell on their heads like a thunderbolt. They found themselves to be the victims of the greatest expropriation in the history of the country. The articulate members of the middle classes - the writers and artists, the members of the learned

professions - lost that faith in capitalism which during the twenties trapped them into dreaming on the decadent shores of post-war European culture. These intellectuals suddenly awoke to the fact that we live in an era of imperialism and revolution; that two civilizations are in mortal combat and that they must take sides." (John Reed Clubs, 1932, p3)

The manifesto went on to outline the Kharkov programme and on the basis of this to :

"...call upon all honest intellectuals, all honest writers and artists, to abandon decisively the treacherous illusion that art can exist for art's sake, or that the artist can remain remote from the historic conflicts on which all men must take sides. We call upon them to break with bourgeois ideas which seek to conceal the violence and fraud, the corruption and decay of capitalist society. We call upon them to align themselves with the working class in its struggle against capitalist oppression and exploitation, against unemployment and terror, against fascism and war. We urge them to join with the literary and artistic movement of the working class in forging a new art that shall be a weapon in the battle for a new and superior world." (op cit, p4)

The primary aim of the John Reed Clubs was still to develop and disseminate "the revolutionary culture of the working class itself" (op cit, p4) and the distinction between proletarian literature and that of the fellow travellers was still emphasised by the party. V.J. Jerome, reviewing Grace Lumpkin's To Make my Bread noted that proletarian literature was the central, distinct, current in the "broad stream of revolutionary literature" that now included the literature of the fellow travellers (Jerome, 1933.) For the fellow travellers however, the emphasis was placed more on combatting bourgeois ideology as transmitted through the mass cultural forms (newspapers, radio, cinema.) The Daily Worker reported on Gold's speech, as John Reed Club delegate, to the nominating convention of the Communist Party : "Mike Gold declares wind of revolution blows over writers." In his speech, the role of the

intellectuals was presented as the breaking of the "ideological structure" built up in the minds of workers by the mass media. Since this "psychology" was created by the intellectual employees of the bourgeoisie it could be broken by the intellectuals who sympathised with the left (Daily Worker, 1932.)

In September 1932, the pamphlet Culture and the Crisis : an open letter to the intellectual workers of America appealing to the writers, artists, teachers, physicians, engineers, scientists and other professional workers³ of America was issued by the League of Professional groups for Foster and Ford as a contribution to the CP campaign for the Presidential elections. And in October 1932 they held two election dinners for the same purpose, of which the Daily Worker reported "2,000 professionals, writers, artists pledge support to Communists in elections" (Daily Worker, 1932B.) The press release (September 10th 1932, "Intellectuals call for support for Communist ticket") accompanying the pamphlet noted that very few of its signatories had voted Communist in 1928 : "this shows a move leftward amongst the intellectuals in America." The first 1933 issue of International Literature similarly included an article "Intellectuals go Left, USA" (International Literature, 1933, no 1.) Wald reports however that, following the election, an attempt was made to retain the organisation - as the League of Professionals - operating a programme of educational and cultural activities, but that the Party cracked down on it when the intellectuals began to show too much independence and to criticise Party policy (Wald, 1987, p58/9.)

The official 'line' on intellectuals in 1932 was spelt out in Gorky's To American Intellectuals which was ostensibly a reply to letters from American intellectuals as to what their role was/should be. Gorky was being held up at the time as the originator and inspiration of proletarian literature⁴. The function of the intellectual, Gorky explained to his American comrades, had in the past been confined primarily to distracting and placating the rich (c.f. Gold in "Art, Life and Crap-shooting") but in a culture in crisis, the services of the "consoling intellectual" were becoming obsolete. The intellectual was the "'excluded middle' whose existence is denied by logic" (Gorky, 1932, p10.) Increasingly, intellectuals were realising their exploitation and their "subjugation to the 'law of the excluded middle'" and were deciding whether to continue their usual practice of allying with the bourgeoisie, or "as honor demands" (op cit, p13) with the proletariat.

His analysis was extracted in the Daily Worker in September 1932 and reviewed by Milton Howard who explained to readers that the intellectuals were not a separate class but a secondary group serving a particular class. Historically this had been the dominant class but they were not automatically the enemies of the proletariat and could ally with them (Howard, 1932.)

APPENDIX THREE

Trotsky Papers

Trotsky's papers were bought by Harvard University in 1940 (papers from 1917 to 37) and 1946 (papers from 1937 to 40). The preliminary arrangements were made by Trotsky and completed by his wife Natalia after his death. The papers were divided into pre-exile (1917 to 28) and exile (1929 to 40), the latter being closed until 1980 (Houghton Library Index to the Trotsky Archive), although Deutscher had access to them with Natalia's permission (Deutscher, 1970, p530.) All references to these papers in this thesis are by permission of the Houghton Library.

In July 1937 before the magazine restarted publication, Macdonald made the first contact with Trotsky, explaining in a letter that PR was being revived as an independent Marxist journal and that they were "eager" to have him contribute (Macdonald, 1937.) Topics they suggested were: Silone's Bread and Wine; an application of the principles of Literature and Revolution to recent Soviet work; Doestoevsky; the relation of the theory of the dialectic to Freudian theory - possibly accompanied by an article by Edmund Wilson on Freud and literature.

Trotsky was worried by the editors' emphasis on their independence', and while expressing a willingness to collaborate in a "genuine Marxist magazine" directed against the Second and Third Internationals, he

emphasised the need for dependence on the appropriate political principles and orientation. (Trotsky, 1937)

In August, Macdonald elaborated on PR's position : commitment to Marxism and to a Leninist programme; opposition to Stalinism as individuals, but to the autonomy of literature as editors and enclosed a copy of the publicity circular for the new PR (Macdonald, 1937B.)

This response, or perhaps the revelation that PR was being branded Trotskyist by the "New Masses gang" and Macdonald's assurance that the editors, while feeling the description inaccurate were not ashamed by the link established, encouraged Trotsky, but he was not yet prepared to commit himself to a collaboration². Trotsky's reservations about the political orientation of PR were solidified in January 1938 when the editors wrote to ask him to contribute to a symposium proposed for the April issue on "What is Living and What is Dead in Marxism?" (The Editors, 1938, enclosed with a personal letter from Macdonald to Trotsky, Macdonald, 1938.) Other invitees were Karl Korsch, Boris Souvarine, Harold Laski, Meyer Schapiro, Lewis Corey, Bertram Wolfe, Sidney Hook, Ignazio Silone, August Thalheimer, Edmund Wilson, John Strachey, Victor Serge and Fenner Brockway. The symposium was prompted, they explained, by the fact that, given the success of the proletariat in only one country and the rise of fascism, there was a growing tendency to attribute the failure of the international working class to inadequacies in Marxism itself. These issues were agitating the revolutionary and liberal intelligentsia of the U.S. and PR hoped to contribute to a clarification of the issues.

The pessimism of the question enraged Trotsky and his reply³ was scathing. He accused the PR editors of having "nothing to say", of lacking commitment and of defending themselves against the Stalinists like "well-behaved young ladies whom street rowdies insult".

"You phrase the question about Marxism as if you were beginning history from a clean page. The very symposium title itself sounds extremely pretentious and at the same time confused. The majority of the writers whom you have invited⁴ have shown by their whole past - alas! - a complete incapacity for theoretical thinking. Some of them are political corpses. How can a corpse be entrusted with deciding whether Marxism is a living force? No, I categorically refuse to participate in that kind of endeavor.

A world war is approaching. The inner political struggle in all countries tends to become transformed into civil war. Currents of the highest tension are active in all fields of culture and ideology. You evidently wish to create a small cultural monastery, guarding itself from the outside world by skepticism, agnosticism and respectability. Such an endeavor does not open up any kind of perspective.

It is entirely possible that the tone of this letter will appear to you as sharp, impermissible, and 'sectarian'. In my eyes this would constitute merely supplementary proof of the fact that you wish to publish a peaceful 'little' magazine without participating actively in the cultural life of your epoch. If, on the contrary, you do not consider my 'sectarian' tone a hindrance to a future exchange of opinion then I remain fully at your service."
(Trotsky, 1938, and Siegel, 1970, p102-3)

Rahv responded for the editorial board⁵ and (contrary to Phillips' assertion that the editors had a running quarrel with Trotsky) while he defended their position (which he attributed to the objective situation in which they operated) accepted the criticisms and noted that they had themselves been dissatisfied with their editorial policies. In their first issues they had, he suggested, established their rejection of Stalinism, without slipping back into the bourgeois fold as many disillusioned intellectuals did. Now however they needed to reorient the magazine and "stiffen its political spine." They would be

publishing an editorial statement in the April issue that no-one would be able to dismiss as abstract or negative (Rahv, 1938E.) (In fact they did not, but the March issue contained Phillips' claim that Trotsky was the best Marxist literary theorist^s and the April issue Rahv's "Trials of the Mind" presenting the Moscow trials as counter-revolutionary. In his April letter Rahv says they were unable to get the editorial into shape in time and his article was a "partial substitute" Rahv, 1938F.) While defending the inclusion of "formalist" pieces in the magazine, Rahv acknowledged that "an alliance with intelligence per se" opened no prospects. However, Trotsky, Rahv asserted, bore some responsibility himself by refusing to contribute - criticism of the magazine might be helpful, but active participation would be more so. As to the symposium, only by debating Marxism could it be preserved. (Rahv 1938E)

Trotsky was mollified; Rahv's letter had pleased him greatly he said, and in his response he expressed himself ready to do anything to establish friendly collaboration. However, he was still cautious, wanting to avoid a breakdown of the collaboration after it had begun, and considered it best to prolong the preliminaries. He went on to outline a series of pointers for the future of PR for their consideration : an extension of the struggle against Stalinism; discrediting of New Masses - perhaps a special issue devoted to it; destruction of the influence of Nation and New Republic; the expansion of the circle of young intellectuals resistant to Stalinism; an orientation to the new generation of intellectuals (specifically of intellectuals, not workers.) While emphasising that PR must have a political programme, he did not feel it should have a policy of

aesthetic exclusion; it was not yet clear what the new aesthetic movement would be and therefore PR should operate an eclectic policy to allow new tendencies the chance to appear (Trotsky, 1938C.)

Presumably not all Trotsky's injunctions were welcome - it is hard to imagine the editors receiving favourably the suggestion that they aim the magazine at 18-20 year olds ("The Partisan Review should become the organ of the Youth" emphasis original, Trotsky, 1938C) - but Rahv's reply, for the board, expressed their substantial agreement with his analysis of the magazine's tasks and the intellectual scene in the US and reiterated the commitment of his previous letter to a more hard-line programme. They were particularly pleased with Trotsky's emphasis on the necessity of a policy of eclecticism aesthetically, which they felt would make the "Marxist accent" of the magazine emerge more sharply. Rahv declared their intention of restricting the creative content of the magazine and increasing the number of "pieces of a general cultural and ideological character" and reiterated the plea that Trotsky contribute, asserting that collaboration between them was "both possible and necessary" (Rahv 1938F.)

Apparently this was enough, and Trotsky expressed his pleasure in collaborating (Trotsky, 1938D) and, in a series of letters, proposed various possibilities : an article, extracts from a book on Stalin and a speech. Rahv was unhappy however, and asked for something written especially for PR and pertaining to the contemporary problems of American intellectuals (Rahv 1938G.) Trotsky obliged with "Art and Revolution" (Trotsky 1938F) which he gave to them rather than to Breton

(who was in Mexico and with whom, at Trotsky's instigation (Trotsky 1938E) PR were corresponding) who wanted it for Minotaur.

In July 1938 Breton and Rivera had written to PR from Coyoacan enclosing 'their' manifesto, which they expressed the wish that PR be the first to publish (Breton and Rivera, 1938.) Trotsky also wrote to Rahv with regard to the manifesto, describing it as elaborated by Breton and Rivera with himself participating in the discussion but without taking responsibility for the formulations⁷. PR were instructed to make use of it in very specific ways : "The Partisan Review has here, it seems to me, an excellent opportunity to use this document for an important step forward. It is high time to pass from a general and a bit vague criticism to a more precise and organizational initiative." Trotsky envisaged the creation of IFIRA as providing a basis for a "more systematic collaboration" and laid down five strictures regarding publication of the manifesto if PR should accept it : 1) a good translation into English, 2) its publication in PR and as a separate leaflet, 3) the addition of the signatures of the PR editors and endorsement of, and address of, PR, 4) the dissemination of the manifesto in the US, Great Britain and all Anglo-Saxon countries, and, 5) the opening of direct correspondence with Breton and Rivera. (Trotsky, 1938G)

Macdonald replied that he, Rahv and Dupee had read and agreed the manifesto. Morris and Phillips were out of town, but he felt able to assure Trotsky of its publication and their acceptance of the conditions (Macdonald, 1938B.) The editors were not prepared to simply accept the

manifesto, and the American unease with general programmes was evident - in September Macdonald wrote to Breton enclosing his translation and explaining he had left out certain passages because they did not seem to apply to the American situation (Macdonald, 1938C). Responding with similar letters Rivera (Rivera, 1938) and Breton (Breton, 1938) rejected the proposed deletions, partly on the grounds that by now it had been published in full elsewhere. These were backed by a letter from Trotsky suggesting that, if the editors wished, they could express their general agreement with the Breton Rivera manifesto and elaborate their own manifesto specifically for the US. (Trotsky, 1938H)

* * * * *

The brief collaboration with Trotsky was clearly a product of a fairly determined effort on the part of the editors and, while it might have suited Trotsky's purposes was not something he was prepared to enter into lightly. On the other hand, it is also evident that, while the editors did not assert their independence as fiercely as Phillips suggests, Trotsky was not as committed to aesthetic/intellectual autonomy as he claimed to be in his public statements.

A discussion Trotsky held with a delegation of SWP leaders in March 1938 in Mexico makes it clear that Trotsky was suspicious of American intellectuals and felt that 200 committed workers were better than 1,000 intellectuals. Shachtman (who noted that they had seen Trotsky's reply to Rahv - presumably the letter of 20.1.38, Trotsky 1938), questioned to what extent the SWP should collaborate with the radical intellectuals

and publish in "their reviews, like the Partisan Review" which he described as "moving towards us". Should they expand New International and start a literary section edited by "elements such as Farrell, Rahv and Rorty"? Trotsky considered the best solution was a division of labour between NI and PR on the grounds that allowing NI to be "invaded by marxist dilletantes" was dangerous. Instead, they should "establish collaboration with PR, criticize them in a friendly manner, and not take any responsibility for them" (Trotsky, 1976, p295/6.) The intellectuals would rather adhere to PR than NI and it could then be used as a "reserve from which we can attract some from time to time to the party" (Trotsky, 1976, p298)².

Trotsky was obviously prone - while castigating people brutally when they deviated - to saying what they wanted when he was courting them. To Breton he wrote in October 1938 clarifying "a point which could give rise to deplorable misunderstandings" in a letter to PR advising "having a critical, expectant, and 'eclectic' attitude toward the different artistic tendencies." To Breton, committed as he was to surrealism, Trotsky explained that PR was not the review of a school, but a "Marxist review devoted to the problems of art" and therefore had to maintain a friendly attitude to a variety of schools. It would of course be absurd to suggest to the surrealists that they become eclectic. Indeed this right of artistic tendencies to be true to themselves was "the sense of your manifesto." (Trotsky, 1974, p93)

APPENDIX FOUR

The New Order Thesis

In the late thirties and early forties Macdonald wrote a series of editorials on the forthcoming and then actual war. A central element in these, and underpinning his opposition to U.S. intervention, was his version of the new order thesis or "bureaucratic collectivism". This thesis - that the Soviet Union and, later, Germany could no longer be analysed in orthodox class terms - originated with dissident Trotskyists and became broadly accepted in a generalised version in PR in the mid forties.

Trotsky had opposed Stalin's development of bureaucratic control in the USSR and argued that the Soviet Union had become a "degenerate workers' state", nonetheless, while potentially turning towards capitalism, it remained a workers' state, since the proletariat collectively owned the means of production. Deutscher notes that the suggestion that the USSR was no longer a workers' state was made first in 1921 by the Workers Opposition group in Moscow, but Trotsky had always rejected it (Deutscher, 1970, p462.) However, towards the end of his life ("The USSR in War" in In Defense of Marxism) he was discussing the possibility that the proletariat were not destined to become the next ruling class and that the changes in the USSR did presage a new system.

In the late 1930s, a dissident faction in the SWP developed the theory of "bureaucratic collectivism". The initial elaboration of this

position is generally (e.g. Deutscher; Howe and Coser) attributed to Bruno Rizzi, an Italian ex-Trotskyist who published La Bureaucratization du Mond in Paris in 1939; but Carter/Friedman and Burnham had publically questioned the official line as early as the Autumn of 1937 (Myers, 1977, Chap 8.) The dissidents argued that as the bureaucrats controlled the means of production, they were developing into a "new class", rapidly becoming divorced from the proletariat.

The debate had clear implications for policy on the war - if the USSR was still a workers' state, albeit degenerate, it must be defended, and, if Hitler invaded this would presumably entail cooperation with the bourgeois democracies. By September 1939, the dispute among the American party had crystallised (Deutscher, 1970, p471; Myers, 1977, Chap 8) into two main factions, the "majority" under Cannon conforming to Trotsky's rejection of the new class analysis; and the "minority" led by Shachtman. They split over three theoretical issues (as well as over party organisation, with the minority wanting more internal democracy) : "defensism or defeatism" (defend the USSR despite its bureaucratic tendencies, or carry on the class struggle and defeat capitalism); "workers' state or new class"; and "collective security or no entangling alliances with capitalist powers" (Myers, 1977, Chap 8.) A third faction headed by Abern advocated a "third camp" position of standing aloof from both the democratic capitalists and the Soviets.¹

In April 1940, the dissidents were suspended, and expelled in September, when they started the Workers' Party. They took New International (the SWP theoretical journal) with them and resuscitated Labor Action².

Within a month, Burnham had left the movement and Macdonald left in 1941. After the split Macdonald was briefly active in the Workers Party, editing the first two issues of Labor Action and doing the technical work for the first two issues of New International, but by November 1940 his theoretical differences had developed, supplemented by organisational grievances, and by Spring 1941 these had come to a head (focused on an article expounding his analysis of the 'new order' in Nazi Germany, see below) and, after a row conducted through the pages of the New Bulletin, he left (Wald, 1987, p203/4.) In 1958 the remaining "Shachtmanites" rejoined the Socialist Party.

There is doubt as to whether Trotsky would have maintained the 'traditional' defeatist policy had he lived. Wald (an advocate of modifying classical Marxism as necessary in the light of historical developments) points out that in 1938 he was already advocating defeatism in certain contexts only : "....given a revolutionary movement the defeat of one's own government is a lesser evil" (quoted Wald, 1987, p196) and that in an unpublished article written after the start of the war, he "tried to come to grips with the reality that revolutionary movements did not exist, at least as viable alternatives, in any of the bourgeois democracies" (p196) and here, and in 1940, advocated joining the bourgeois armies where necessary (op cit, p197). In the event, both the SWP and the WP advocated military service, though with different theoretical justifications.

Macdonald's editorials on the war illustrate the development of his analysis of bureaucratic collectivism, fully elaborated in "The End of

Capitalism in Germany". Initially, in Spring 1939, the position he expressed was economic - the war was between competing imperialist capitalist powers and U.S. intervention would not represent a disinterested attempt to protect democracy and Western civilisation (as for instance Max Lerner was arguing in It Is Later Than You Think.) On the contrary, the US government "as a serious capitalist enterprise" (Macdonald, 1939E, p7) intended merely to destroy a threatening competitor and to defend the status quo in the interests of the bourgeoisie - the economic development of capitalism must work itself out inexorably :

"Let us grant the good intentions of Franklin D. Roosevelt. But the laws of motion of monopoly capitalism work themselves out, with brutal disregard for intentions, much the same under a Roosevelt as under a Coolidge. How can the Administration act in important matters contrary to these class interests of the dominant bourgeoisie which have shaped the American State, the American laws and Constitution. Their enormous mass throws its inertia against following new paths, impelling the republic with blind momentum along the historical path destined for it."
(op cit, p19)

Fascism was seen as a product of the decay of late capitalism, but there was as yet no reference to it as a new order, to a new class. By mid 1940 however ("Notes on a Strange War"), it was described as a "new structure", a form of "state capitalism" which had developed from the ruins of "classic capitalism" controlled by bureaucrats "increasingly independent of direct class pressure" (Macdonald, 1940, p171/2.)

During 1940 and 1941, the theory was further elaborated ("National Defense, the Case for Socialism", Macdonald, 1940B and "The End of Capitalism in Germany" Macdonald, 1941) and here, and in "Trotsky is Dead" (Macdonald, 1940C), his divergence from the Party analysis was

made explicit.² Nazi Germany and Stalinist U.S.S.R. were both examples of a new social system, "bureaucratic collectivism", each masqueraded as another form - capitalism in Germany, socialism in the Soviet Union - but while they might make use of these forms, the content expressed was different. He reserved his detailed analysis for Germany where, he argued, Finance Capital had freely surrendered power to the party bureaucracy in order to manage the contradictions of late capitalism, but, under the aegis of a war economy, had found real power being taken from them. The old forms of capitalism might superficially appear to exist, but, under capitalism the market is autonomous, "anarchic"; under fascism, production is controlled and planned; economic power is subordinate to political power.

The war was now represented not as a conflict between antagonistic capitalist powers, but as a "social war between different kinds of system" - democratic capitalism and fascism, with fascism representing a new "superior form of ruling class domination" (Macdonald, 1940, p252). Superior (but not of course morally so), in that it partially resolved the contradictions of monopoly capitalism. Capitalism could not therefore defeat fascism : "a social system cannot fight against its own future", only socialism, the most superior economic system could do so. Tactically, therefore, the position remained non-cooperation with the war and revolutionary action on the part of the proletariat.

For Burnham, on the other hand, this was no longer the case. A condensed version of The Managerial Revolution was published in the same issue as "The End of Capitalism in Germany", and had presented the

position that there was no evidence that socialism was going to occur, indeed all the "scientific" evidence was that it was not. The future for all societies, was the "managerial society". He criticised most analysts for presuming that capitalism and socialism were the only alternative economic systems for industrial society and forcing contemporary societies into one or the other mould. On the contrary, he argued, the "managerial revolution" was occurring, a transition from capitalism to the managerial society based on "state ownership of the chief means of production" with a new ruling class in control (Burnham, 1941, p188.) Leninism-Stalinism, Fascism-Nazism and "at a still more primitive level" (op cit, p190) New Dealism, were all variants of these managerial ideologies. The two developed forms were totalitarian, but it could take a democratic form. Thus, while Macdonald's and Burnham's formulations stemmed from the same initial premises, Macdonald remained committed to the possibility, and desirability, of a proletarian revolution and socialism, while Burnham did not.

Macdonald's analysis was clearly developed within the context of his, somewhat stormy, relationship with the U.S. Trotskyists, but it is unclear to what extent (if any) his position was influenced by the "continuity thesis" advanced by members of the "Frankfurt School" (notably Pollock, Horkheimer and Marcuse) in their studies of National Socialism. "The Frankfurt School" (or Institute of Social Research), then headed by Max Horkheimer, was in exile in the U.S. from 1933/4 to 1950 and it is this period which is associated with the development of a distinctive position and "critical theory" (Bottomore, 1984, p12/13). Their journal Zeitschrift fur Sozialforschung continued to be published

largely in German until Vol VIII 1939-40 when an editorial explained that while the contributors may have had their homes in the US they had not previously written in English, partly because their readers were mainly European and partly because it was easier to write in one's own language. Now however, this was less important than their desire "to devote our work - even in its external form - to American social life."

"Philosophy, art and science have lost their home in most of Europe, England is now fighting desperately against the domination of the totalitarian states. America, especially the United States, is the only continent in which the continuation of scientific life is possible. Within the framework of this country's democratic institutions, culture still enjoys the freedom without which, we believe, it is unable to exist. In publishing our journal in its new form we wish to give this belief its concrete expression."
(Horkheimer, 1940, p321)

Frederick Pollock, in particular, developed an analysis which led him to question, in 1941, "Is National Socialism a New Order?" (Pollock, 1941.) As early as 1932/3, as Hitler took power, Pollock in "Remarks on the Economic Crisis" was outlining the argument that monopoly capitalism would necessitate a planned economy as the contradictions between the monopolistic structure of productive relations and a liberal political structure asserted themselves. Thus fascism could be viewed as the political form of monopoly capitalism (Dubiel, 1985, p21/22.) In 1940/1 the Frankfurt School divided into two camps over whether fascism was capitalism, with Newmann, Kircheimer and Gurland advocating the original "continuity thesis" - that fascism is the political form most suited to monopoly capitalism - and Pollock, Horkheimer and Adorno advocating the theory of "state capitalism" - that the trajectory of National Socialism was evidence that the economic did not have primacy over the political.

State capitalism being the successor to private capitalism (Dubeil,
1985, p79/80.)

APPENDIX FIVE

Art Criticism in PR

Greenberg published "Avant-garde and Kitsch" in 1939, and "Towards a Newer Laocoon" in 1940 before joining the editorial group and after leaving he remained unofficial art editor (Barrett, 1983). Although he provided PR's "line" on art to a great extent, he did experience some internal opposition from Morris (who accused him of irresponsible criticism and poor aesthetic judgement after he had valued Matisse above Picasso and Arp in 1948 in "Cubism in Decline") and from James Johnson Sweeney who was a member of the advisory board set up in 1948 at the behest of Allan Dowling, PR's new financial backer (Barrett, op cit.)

Although there were differences in approach however, all were agreed on a commitment to modern art. Morris, comparing the work of members of the American Abstract Artists' with the Popular Front American Artists Congress commented :

"The slogan of the Congress is 'For peace, for democracy and for cultural progress' and obvious comments upon these phrases echo resoundingly from every wall. The abstract artists share these convictions, but they also believe that the esthetic impulse cannot become a tool for concrete political or philosophical dissemination - at this stage of our cultural metamorphosis at least."
(Morris, 1939, p63)

and in 1940, echoing the line that experimental form was ultimately more radical than directly political content, he attacked MOMA for promoting realism and not the avant-garde, and argued that while collectors were prepared to buy "technically antiquated renditions of the underprivileged" (Morris, 1940, p200) (e.g. Hopper, Orozoco, Rivera and

Sequieros) because it made them feel "liberal and 'up with the times'" they did not buy innovative work because it threatened their security.

Greenberg's constitutive articles "Avant-garde and Kitsch" and "Towards a Newer Laocoon" were both first published in PR when he was an unknown "young writer who works in the New York Customs House" (Notes on Contributors) The two articles themselves, I suggest, are read within the prevailing discourse of art criticism². Since the success of the New York abstract artists that Greenberg championed in the 1940s, Greenberg's pieces have been read largely within a formalist discourse (currently within the modernist/post-modernist debate.) At the time of their writing however, they were much more ambiguous. "Avant-garde and Kitsch" was a response to Macdonald's assertion in PR that the predilection of the Soviet masses for kitch socialist realism was a consequence of Stalinist "conditioning". and Greenberg's formalist thesis was expounded in the context of art's role under totalitarian, capitalist and socialist regimes³.

Greenberg is now perceived as the arch representative of an exhausted and politically recuperated modernism - for the younger artists and critics who have moved to "rethink representation", modernism has become "the official culture, the aesthetic haven of neoconservatives." (Wallis, 1984, pxii) Tim Clark, for instance, attacks Greenberg for advocating a purely self-referential modernism. For Clark, a modernism which addresses only itself is empty, it should be a resistance, it must address the cultural order. He criticises Greenberg for not attending to the "practices of negation" (Clark, 1982, p149) in modernist art.

Practices which for Clark are integral to the modernist project. Now, while Greenberg clearly was involved in the initiation of the self-referential discourse of post-war American Abstract Expressionism, and while he did not, any more than Rahv or Phillips, advance a modernist aesthetic which proposed a formalist deconstruction of perception (see pages 125/6), nonetheless, it is not reasonable to assert that in 1939/40 he failed to engage with the cultural order. Like the other editors what he rejected was directly political art.

Macdonald's article was one of a series of three published in 1938/9 on the Soviet Cinema 1930-38 in which he praised the innovative "formalist" cinema of the post-revolutionary period and lamented what he viewed as its enforced demise under Stalin⁴. In 1930, he asserted, a "sudden sterility" struck the Soviet Cinema when it was forcibly proletarianised by the "ultra leftist sectarians, theologicians and bureaucrats" with their slogan "art is a weapon." (Macdonald, 1938B, p48) But even worse, was the advent of socialist realism - not a serious aesthetic philosophy, but simply "stalinist politics applied to art. In the cinema it means, in one word Hollywood." (Macdonald, 1938C, p36) Differing "only being technically less competent" (op cit, p38.) Drawing on his class analysis (see Appendix Four) of Stalinism he argued that Stalin had found the "ultra leftist" cultural line useful in stimulating the execution of economic development, but having extended his bureaucratic control and thus betrayed socialism it became necessary to claim that socialism had been achieved and that the time was ripe for the individual to enjoy him/herself (rather than for the masses to strive collectively.)

In the third article Macdonald conceded that while the dominance of Hollywood style films with their emphasis on "entertainment value" was state policy, there was also the "problem of mass taste" - the Russian people liked Hollywood movies and conventional technique. This was not surprising given their past economic privations and Czarist policies, but

"Two questions must be asked : (1) to what degree is this expression of popular taste spontaneous and to what degree is it stimulated by official policy? and, (2) could this policy conceivably have guided mass taste into other channels?"
(Macdonald, 1939, p87)

The answer, he concluded, was that it was policy and that they could have been guided - people had been "conditioned to shun 'formalism' and to admire 'socialist realism'." (op cit, p88)

This prompted Greenberg to write "Avant-garde and Kitsch" which appeared in the Fall 1939 issue. His central theme was that avant-garde culture is self-referential; its "subject matter" is the state of art. Disagreeing with Macdonald, Greenberg said that kitsch could not be explained by "conditioning". In his opinion, Kitsch was appealing because in it the viewer could recognise life, whereas, in avant-garde art, they had to understand the technique, to reflect, in order to perceive the values the painter was illustrating. Avant-garde art could not therefore be "enjoyed" without effort and that required time that the masses did not have at their disposal under oppressive regimes.

Greenberg did not accept the view that avant-garde art was inherently radical in its political effect; this was not why it was repressed in totalitarian regimes :

"... since these regimes cannot raise the cultural level of the masses - even if they wanted to - by anything short of a surrender

to international socialism, they will flatter the masses by bringing culture down to their level. It is for this reason that the avant-garde is outlawed, and not so much because a superior culture is inherently a more critical culture... As a matter of fact, the main trouble with avant-garde art and literature from the point of view of Fascists and Stalinists, is not that they are too critical, but that they are too 'innocent', that it is too difficult to inject effective propaganda into them, that kitsch is more pliable to this end. Kitsch keeps a dictator in closer contact with the 'soul' of the people. Should the official culture be one superior to the general mass level, there would be a danger of isolation."

(Greenberg, 1939, 47)

Since the avant-garde had no appeal to the masses - who must not be alienated - it was a threat to the ruling class. Only in this sense was avant-garde art radical, not as a consequence of its inherent qualities. However, avant-garde art should align itself with socialism since only under socialism could a revolutionary culture appear, and only socialism could preserve those aspects of culture that were avant-garde from the threat of suppression by the dominant class :

"Capitalism in decline finds that whatever of quality it is still capable of producing becomes almost invariably a threat to its own existence. Advances in culture no less than advances in science and industry corrode the very society under whose aegis they are made possible. Here, as in every other question today, it becomes necessary to quote Marx word for word. Today we no longer look toward socialism for a new culture - as inevitably as one will appear, once we do have socialism. Today we look to socialism simply for the preservation of whatever living culture we have right now."

(op cit, p48/9)

In his second major contribution, "Towards a Newer Laocoon", Greenberg developed his argument that there is a "dominant" art form that other art forms imitate. From the mid seventeenth century, literature, the art form of the bourgeoisie, was dominant, and painting and sculpture had imitated it in their "subject matter"⁵. In "Avant-garde and Kitsch" he had suggested that avant-garde art developed out of, yet against,

bourgeois society. The avant-garde artists may have been for the most part unpolitical, but they proferred a critique of bourgeois society, if unconsciously, and they kept culture "moving". Now he elaborated : out of, and against, Romanticism ("the last great tendency flowing directly from bourgeois society that was able to inspire and stimulate the profoundly responsible artist", whose task was to :

"perform in opposition to bourgeois society the functions of finding new and adequate cultural forms for the expression of that same society, without succumbing to its ideological divisions and its refusal to permit the arts to be their own justification."
(Greenberg, 1940, p300)

The avant-garde embodied "art's instinct for self-preservation", it looked to artistic values for inspiration, rather than reflecting society's ideological struggles in its subject matter. Abstract art used the musical model rather than the literary, it was an "art of 'pure form'" (op cit, p304.)

As a Marxist, Greenberg said, would argue for the "superiority of sequential economic forms", he argued that abstract art was a superior form (if one with contradictions), not on the grounds of "taste", but of history :

"It suffices to say that there is nothing in the nature of abstract art which compels it to be so [superior]. The imperative comes from history, from the age in conjunction with a particular moment reached in a particular tradition of art. This conjunction holds the artist in a vise from which at the present moment he can escape only by surrendering his ambition and returning to a stale past."
(op cit, p310)

* * * * *

Fred Orton and Griselda Pollock have looked to the aesthetic/political milieu of PR and its editors and contributors in order to contextualise Clement Greenberg's analysis of the nature and role of the avant-garde and his sponsorship of the Abstract Expressionists, emphasising that an Avant-Garde like the New York School "does not simply emerge 'ready-made' from virgin soil". (Orton and Pollock, 1981, p305), but is the product of a particular historical conjuncture. Orton and Pollock quote the parenthesis which Greenberg added to his 1957 article ("New York Painting Only Yesterday", Art News) when it was republished as "The late '30s in New York" in Art and Culture :

"(Though that is not all, by far, that there was to politics in art in those years; some day it will have to be told how 'anti-Stalinism' which started out more or less as 'Trotskyism' turned into art-for-art's sake and thereby cleared the way, heroically, for what was to come.)"⁶

and comment :

"On to a trotskyst claim for a special freedom for art, and for art as a form of cognition of the world and as a necessary precondition for the building of a new consciousness, Greenberg mapped one of the strategies of the historic avant-garde 'art for art's sake', the steeping of painting in its own cause. In this transaction the momentary specificity of Trotsky's revolutionary perspective and Marxist vocabulary - some might say Trotsky's millenarianism - was erased. Opposition to prescribed subjects or functions for art - anti stalinism - was matched by a claim for the relative autonomy of artistic practices. This was then overlaid by the concept of a cultural avant-garde which, of necessity, fulfilled its social purposes at a distance from party politics and political organisation. Greenberg's participation in, and manoeuvres upon, that ideological terrain had the effect of clearing a space. He contributed to that moment by offering a special sense of group identity for some painters and by defining a function for a specific kind of painting."
(op cit, p325)

While I would agree that Greenberg's articles did have the effect of "clearing a space", that effect was not an instantaneous creation of a new discursive practice. There is no necessity for avant-garde cultural

activity to be conducted at a distance from political practice (though I would probably grant, from "Party politics") and Greenberg's contributions with Macdonald to PR in 1941 (see page 206-8) propose rather more of an engagement that is suggested above. The identity of the New York School of painters - to whose construction Greenberg contributed so significantly - was produced gradually; it was not unproblematically slotted into place in 1939.

Ten years later however, the special identity had been elaborated. In 1940 ("Laocoon") Greenberg had argued that the historical imperative urged abstract art into innovative forms, holding the artist in a "vise from which at the present moment he can escape only by surrendering his ambition and returning to a stale past." (Greenberg, 1940, p310) After the war had ended, he considered that Western art was, on the whole, doing just that; surrendering to outmoded forms rather than taking up its historically determined future. In January 1948 he reported on "The Situation at the Moment" in "Art Chronicle" (accompanied by reproductions of two Pollocks). Western art he considered was in crisis - in Europe the situation was grave and if Western art had an immediate future it was dependent on events in America where there was a "capacity for fresh content." (Greenberg, 1948, p81)

Only a group who did not allow themselves to be sucked into the faltering bourgeoisie could hope to produce the work of the future rather than the past, that group was composed of the isolated, alienated bohemians :

"Isolation is, so to speak, the natural condition of high art in America.

Yet it is precisely our more intimate and habitual acquaintance with isolation that gives us our advantage at this moment, isolation, or rather the alienation that is its cause, is the truth - isolation, alienation, naked and revealed into itself, is the condition under which the true reality of our age is experienced. And the experience of this true reality is indispensable to any ambitious art."
(op cit, p82)

Two months later in an "Art Chronicle" on "The decline of Cubism", Greenberg claimed that Cubism had been and was the style of the Twentieth Century - the style which gave insights into the realities of the time. The great art style of any period would be the one which gave such insight, yet an age could repudiate these insights, this form - artists could suffer loss of nerve - and when he considered the decline of art in Europe and compared it to recent work by American artists like Gorky, Pollock and Smith, he felt moved to conclude, to his own surprise, that :

"... the main premises of Western art have at last migrated to the United States, along with the center of gravity of industrial products and political power."
(Greenberg 1948B, p369)

In November 1949 ("Our Period Style"), Greenberg declared that, although the age seemed to be one of discord and disintegration, there was a unity of style in the visual arts - architecture, painting, sculpture. A unity which perhaps reflected an, as yet unperceived, new principle of unity in industrialised, urbanised, society. A new spirit, characterised by :

"... economy, directness and consistency in the fitting of means to ends : in a word, by the practice of rationalisation."
(Greenberg, 1949, p1138)

And, developing the point made in "Avant-garde and Kitsch" that modern art was "innocent", he continued, that the new art :

"... answers the temper of men who know no better way of attaining an end than by the rationalization of every means thereto. This art is one of the few manifestations of our time uninflated by illegitimate concern - no religion or mysticism or political certainties. And in its radical inadaptability to the uses of any interest, ideological or institutional, lies the most certain guarantee of the truth which it expresses."
(op cit, p 1138)

Despite his distinction between "subject matter" and "content", and assertion that all art has content - insofar as form or means are content - Greenberg's presumption that the new art forms were unadaptable to political/ideological ends appears to rest on the assumption (as had socialist realism) that only traditional "content" can have political effect. In "Avant-garde and Kitsch" he argued that avant-garde forms were too difficult to "inject propaganda into". This is open to the criticism that ideology operates by 'structuring' consciousness and that form is part of this process, but also by pointing to the way in which art forms can be used symbolically. Art cannot be analysed in a vacuum; the act of designating a cultural product aesthetically superior has political effects. Ownership of art objects is possession of capital, and the ability to discriminate aesthetically and to identify 'good' art from 'bad', *avant-garde* from *kitsch* is a form of "cultural capital". (C.f. Bourdieu on "taste. Hebdige. Eagleton, etc.) Moreover, one class or country's culture can be used to dominate another.

In How New York Stole the Idea of Modern Art : Abstract Expressionism, Freedom and the Cold War, Serge Guilbaut argues that it was the fact that the Abstract Expressionists had discarded overt political

commitment that made it possible for them to be used as a weapon in the Cold War. Guilbaut, building on the work of Max Kozloff and Eva Cockcroft (Kozloff, 1973; Cockcroft, 1974) attempts to tell the tale of the transformation of Trotskyism into art for art's sake and the consequences of that transformation. Exploring the relationship between the art and philosophy of the Abstract Expressionists, and the ideology, aims and activities of the American political establishment, his central thesis is :

"... that the unprecedented national and international success of an American avant-garde was due not solely to aesthetic and stylistic considerations, as both European and American commentators frequently still maintain, but also, even more, to the movement's ideological resonance."
(Guilbaut, 1983, p2)

Guilbaut documents the development of both an ideology and an artistic style culminating, he suggests, in the "victory" (op cit, p180)⁷ of the Abstract Expressionists in 1948 (when Greenberg declared that American art was pre-eminent in a series of articles in PR and the Nation) and the co-option of their art to serve the ends of American cultural imperialism. He does not suggest that this was a conspiracy, nor that the artists were themselves conscious of the political uses which their art would serve, but rather that their disavowal of direct political commitment and adoption of the stance of creative individualism made it possible for their art to be presented as emblematic of the American culture and exported to Europe to counter the "Soviet threat". He locates the emergence of this trend in the period 1941-3 (the years Greenberg was an editor of PR) :

"The period 1941-3 saw the real beginnings of an independent New York art scene without ties to Paris. It was an aggressive scene organized around new internationalist principles directly related

to the new political climate. What happened after the publication of Kootz's famous letter [a letter sent in 1941 to the New York Times calling on the New York art community to create a new experimental art, free of Paris] was that many artists' groups within the New York art world reorganized. In the jockeying for position that followed, the most vocal groups were made up of artists influenced by Trotskyism who either had been part of Meyer Schapiro's group in 1940 or had at least been attracted by the Breton-Rivera alternative, set forth in their 1938 letter, of an art that would be independent of politics. To be independent in 1943 was to refuse regimentation in art organizations aiding the war effort such as Artists for Victory. It was to develop an international style, rejecting the nationalism of Brooks and MacLeish. And finally it was to forge a new image of art in America, a 'different' image, an art with a difference capable of representing the new America. In short, to be independent was to give an affirmative response to Samuel Kootz's letter to the New York Times."

(Guilbaut, 1983, p68)

Phillips, while no doubt differing in interpretation, does not dispute Guilbaut's analysis. In a revised version of his contribution to the 1984 "re-run" of the symposium on "Our Country and Our Culture" printed in the 50th Anniversary issue of PR, Phillips comments on the relation of art to power :

"Edmund Wilson, in 1947, in Europe without Baedeker linked American growth with an advance in the arts. 'My optimistic opinion,' he wrote, 'is that the United States is politically more advanced than any other part of the world.... It has been accompanied by a remarkable renaissance of American arts and letters.' And just recently, a leftist French critic has claimed that abstract expressionism flourished because of the rise of American power and the flexing of American muscles in the cold war. Interestingly, this point also was made by Hilton Kramer some time ago, when he said that the production of a Pollock painting in Time magazine, upside down, reflected American imperialist strength and fit in with Henry Luce's thesis that this was the American century."^a

(Phillips, 1984, p778)

Whether or not the art of the Abstract Expressionists was so successful because of its aesthetic innovation and whether or not it was because of

its creators' disavowal of politics after the war, there is little doubt in this writer's mind that the art was used as a weapon in the Cold War.

There are significant differences between the discourse centring on Abstract Expressionism (or "Action Painting", Rosenberg's term) and that constructed in PR (the painters were more Redskins than Palefaces³) but the use of American cultural products for hegemonic purposes in the late forties is explicit in PR.

APPENDIX SIX

PR and the Anti-communists

In May 1949 Howe reported on the Cultural and Scientific Conference for World Peace which was accused of being a Stalinist sham (Howe, 1949). Opposition to the Conference led to the setting up, at Hook's initiative, of the Ad Hoc Committee for Intellectual Freedom (which had become Americans for Intellectual Freedom by the time of the Conference) described by Howe as a loose alliance enabling anti-Stalinists of varying positions to come together. Hook reported in 1984 that, incensed by the organisers' refusal to let him open the discussion in the plenary session on science, he had called a meeting of members of the 1939 Committee for Cultural Freedom (see page 182 and footnote 73) and other current sympathisers (including Macdonald in whose home it was held) from which the new Committee was born - he had wanted to call it the CCF to "stress our continuity with the earlier embodiment of our position" (Hook, 1984, p695) but withdrew the suggestion in view of the number of new recruits.

According to Hook, the origin of the Waldorf Conference lay in the Cominform, the Communist Information Bureau, which was responsible for a "world campaign against the democratic West" (1984, p696.) An "Open Letter to Writers and Men of Culture in the U.S." was published by a group of Soviet writers and responded to in May 1948 in Masses and Mainstream' In August 1948 a World Congress of Intellectuals was convened in Poland and Hook argues that the "Waldorf Conference" was the

work of the Continuation Committee of the Congress (Hook, 1984, p697). The Ad Hoc Committee for Intellectual Freedom organised a counter propaganda campaign. Phillips and Rahv were among the two hundred listed sponsors of the counter-rally (New York Times, March 25, 1949, Bloom, 1986, p141.)

The AIF served as the nucleus for the American Committee for Cultural Freedom (founded in 1951), the national offshoot of the International Congress for Cultural Freedom (founded in 1950.) The organisation of the CCF was the work of Michael Josselson and Melvin Lasky², both with the Office of Strategic Services in Europe during the war and resident there after it. Their initiative in organising the CCF was shown in the 1960s to be CIA funded. (Lasch, 1968)

PR reported on the first Congress for Cultural Freedom which took place in Berlin June 25th to 30th with the news of the North Korean invasion of South Korea arriving just before the first session to be interpreted (according to Hook, 1950) by the participants as a "political affirmation" of their stance. Other delegates from the U.S. included Farrell, Burnham and Schlesinger. From England, Koestler, Reed, Ayer and Trevor-Roper (who denounced the Congress in a report in the Guardian.) Sartre and Merleau Ponty had refused to attend. The Congress decided to make itself permanent and elected an International Committee of twenty-four and Executive Committee of five : Silone, Koestler, Rousset, Schmid and Brown.

Despite his reservations about the tactics of the AIF³, Phillips moved from one organisation to the other and soon "found" himself on the executive board (Phillips, 1983, p149.) He insists that the ACCF was not funded by the CIA, or at least not to his knowledge (op cit, p150), and, rather than having a single position, was riven with internal disagreements with a "right" wing (prepared to subordinate other issues to anti-communism) which included Hook and Burnham, and a "left" wing (who had sympathy with the values and aims of liberalism, or socialism, as well as anti-communism and a critical attitude to governments and institutions) which included Farrell and Bell (though Phillips reports that Bell liked to think of himself as a man of the middle) and Phillips himself. Despite this, he acknowledges that he did not take a strong anti-McCarthy line and evidence quoted by Wald suggests (see page 282/3) that he was not sympathetic to the positions advocated by Farrell.

From July/Aug 1951 PR was published by the Foundation for Cultural Projects and by the ACCF in 1959 until publication of an article critical of the CCF by PR in 1967.⁴ Phillips denies any knowledge of the CIA funding of the CCF - although there were rumours⁵ and he was suspicious about its organisation (Phillips, 1983, p152-4) - and asserts that the ACCF was independent. He certainly denies any support for PR <

".. I have been asked many times whether I would have accepted CIA support for Partisan Review, and it has been suggested that I would. All I can say is that I am now glad it was never offered; if it had been, who knows, I might have accepted it, for to be free financially was sometimes tempting."
(op cit, p158)

However, he does report that during a visit to Paris in 1949 he met the head of the CIA in Europe at a luncheon at the American Embassy and

was offered a job, which he refused, passing money to "friendly Europeans" (op cit, p104.)

There is less ambiguity about the association of the European affiliates of the CCF with magazines that were specially started : Preuves in France, Tempo Presente in Italy, and Encounter in England. Encounter was edited by Stephen Spender with Irving Kristol as co-editor and, while there is debate about the amount of editorial control by the CCF, there is little doubt that there was CIA funding and an agent (probably Melvin Lasky) serving as an editor at one point. (Based on the admission of ex-CIA official Thomas Braden in the Saturday Evening Post May 20, 1967.) When these revelations were made, Spender and the then co-editor Frank Kermode, resigned, but their protestations of innocence were not convincing to everyone. (See Bloom, 1986, p267).

Phillips describes his relation to the CCF as "often quite hostile on both sides".⁶ In 1960 he was asked to a conference in Berlin - he presumes because he had been criticising the Congress publically for excluding "people critical of it politically or organizationally" - at which he describes his role as that of one of five "disciplined and independent thinkers who might generate any kind of opposition or clear line of thinking" (the others were Mary McCarthy, Robert Oppenheimer, Richard Hoggart and Stephen Spender.) Phillips' objections to the Congress and its conference seem to have been cultural rather than political - his own confrontation with the organisers was over the fact that when attacking Edward Shils' views about the "beneficent advances of mass culture in the United States" (op cit, p154/5) Shils did not let

him speak without interruption (see page 303 for Phillips' views on mass culture.) And he reports that his objection to the CIA support of the Congress and its publications was not an opposition in principle to its clandestine activities, but to such activities being applied to cultural or "intellectual" matters :

"The matter of the CIA is actually more complex than it is made out to be by those who support its activities on national security grounds or those on the other side of the fence who oppose its secret operations from a democratic point of view. My own objections to the CIA support of the Congress and its publications were mainly that it was wasteful and ineffective and led to secret control. I recognize that certain governmental activities have to be conducted surreptitiously, and not to be aware that all governments have their secret intelligence arms - and secret political manipulations - is a species of innocence, a political luxury, that only liberals can afford.

But when it comes to intellectual matters, the problem is not the same, for the essence of work in culture and the arts is that it must be open and freewheeling. Hidden financing means hidden control, despite any denials about pressure or censorship. A literary and cultural magazine, particularly, must be responsive to new currents and ideas and hospitable to dissidence and experiments of all kinds. The defenders of the Congress for Cultural Freedom were able to argue that the organizations and publications were not intellectually controlled because generally conservative liberals rather than out-and-out conservatives were used to promote anti-Communist aims, and some latitude was permitted in the selection of pieces printed in the Congress publications. But if one examines their record carefully, the systematic bias is clear, and the deviations not only few but marginal - just enough to give some credibility to the argument that they were not official propaganda organs."

(op cit, p156/7)

NOTES TO PART ONE

1. C.f. Foucault. Or Furet distinguishing between the Marxian view of the French Revolution as an "advent" i.e. an inevitable expression of historical necessity, and the view of it as an "event", i.e. "a new form of discourse constituting new modes of political and social action." (Baker on Furet; Baker, 1982, p204.) See page 14.

2. C.f. Laclau and Mouffe - "certain discursive categories, which at first sight, appeared to be privileged condensation-points for many aspects of the crisis; and to unravel the possible meaning of a history in the various facets of this multiple refraction." and "The guiding thread of our analysis has been the transformations in the concept of hegemony, considered as discursive surface and fundamental nodal point of Marxist political theorization. Our principal conclusion is that behind the concept of 'hegemony' lies hidden....." (Laclau and Mouffe, 1985, pages 2 and 3.)

3. By contradiction is not meant two assertions about the same phenomenon which cannot both be correct, nor two opposing forces which, if connecting would eliminate or modify one or both, but rather, a contradiction intrinsic to the discourse. See page 24/5.

4. In this thesis single inverted commas (') will be used to indicate a certain skepticism about the applicability/validity of a term and double inverted commas to indicate direct quotation - except where quotations occur within quotations.

5. Wald describes an approach to the New York intellectuals which "determines membership in the circle by the extent of their involvement in Partisan Review" as a "typical misreading" (Wald, 1987, p6), not because the magazine was not a central forum, but because the New York intellectuals "must be understood as an outgrowth of the tradition of the anti-Stalinist left as it passed through an excruciatingly difficult political period" (op cit, p7). I would not disagree. PR operated as a forum for a modulating discourse; it should not be reified. Involvement in the magazine cannot in and of itself operate as a meaningful measurement, the issue is - what did "involvement" offer?

6. The editors were the 'authors' of PR as a "form of criticism" selecting contributions and writing editorials as a conscious intervention, yet they were not constituted a priori as subjects. Their intervention(s) were reflective on events and helped to interpret, and therefore to constitute, the experience of these events, yet that process changed their own identity as critics.

7. C.f. Foucault on the *oeuvre* :

"it is apparent that such a unity far from being given immediately is the result of an operation, that this operation is interpretative..." (Foucault, 1972A, p24)

8. In addition to place, one definition of locus - in mathematics - is "the curve or figure constituted by all the points which satisfy a

particular equation of relation between co-ordinates.... The Shorter Oxford Dictionary, 1973, which I take to mean the intersection of sightings on an object.

9. C.f. Furet distinguishing between a Marxian historical determinist view of the French Revolution as an "advent" and a view of it as an "event", i.e. a "new form of discourse constituting new modes of political and social action" (Baker on Furet; Baker 1982, p204)

10. This is not an idealist denial of the 'reality' of objects/events. Their materiality is not questioned by the assertion that our experience of them is within discursive categories.

11. A small 'c' is used when referring to communism as a general theory/value-set or movement and a capital 'C' when referring to the Party. (C.f. Wald on this point, see page 50 and footnote 37.)

12. "... in a genealogical understanding of history, each distinct element in a series appears as a meaningful concatenation of components. A particular element, say E, may thus be deemed to succeed another particular element D when one or more components of D are found in E. D in this case is the predecessor of E. Moreover, if E belongs to more than one series, as is usually the case, E will have an immediate predecessor in every series to which it belongs. So, if we agree to call E's predecessor elements in different series the *antecedents* of E, we may say that a particular element succeeds its antecedent elements by 'inheriting' from each one of them some component(s). Thus if A, D, E form a series of elements and C, D, E also form another series, then E has inherited components from both B and D, B and D are the antecedents of E, and the two series A, B, E and C, D, E could be described as intersecting at E. Thus an element may be said to occur, or to *emerge* when a certain number of components separate out from antecedent elements and combine to form it. Furthermore, as a parent may outlive an offspring, an antecedent element may continue to exist simultaneously with its successor, and may even outlive its successor, although of course, an antecedent must always emerge before its successor." (Noujain, 1987 p159/60)

13. Flax describes the story of modern art criticism as a war between competing "fictions" or constitutive discourses which shape responses to art. A war which was 'won' by the formalist or aesthetic fiction, triumphing over the "literary" fiction. Modern criticism, he suggests, has been, and is, dominated by an oppositional, binary structure (Flax, 1984). So too, Eagleton (commenting on the 1930s debate on realism and its reworking in the 1970s in "Aesthetics and Politics", NLR) has argued that for contemporary readers - "historically positioned as we are" - a modernist text cannot be identified without contrasting it to a "realist canon" (Eagleton, 1978, p24) from which it deviates. Realism and modernism were the "binary terms of an imaginary opposition", a "metaphysical enclosure" which we have been unable to escape, yet at other historical moments the dichotomy might not hold in the same way. (Post-modernism no doubt attempts to escape the enclosure.)

14. Laclau and Mouffe explain elsewhere that by "suture" they mean not only the notion of "lack" as used in psycho-analysis but "In a second aspect, suture implies a filling-in" (Laclau and Mouffe, 1985, p88) a possibility of closure. They use it therefore in the sense of a double movement - the filling-in determined by the openness of the social (complete suture therefore being impossible.)

15. By "modern" here is meant - to subscribe to a conception of progress and self-referential innovation. (What is perceived as "progress" is of course a value judgement.)

16. C.f. later Foucault ("The Confessions of the Flesh" in Power/Knowledge) an apparatus is a "thoroughly heterogenous ensemble consisting of discourses, institutions, architectural forms, regulatory decisions, laws, administrative measures, scientific statements, philosophical, moral and philanthropic propositions - in short, the said as much as the unsaid. Such are the elements of the apparatus. The apparatus itself is the system of relations that can be established between these elements." (Foucault, 1980, p194.)

17. Jim Hoberman, writing on Harold Rosenberg has similarly argued *à propos* Clement Greenberg's comment about how Trotskyism turned into art for art's sake (see Appendix Five) "Actually it was the other way around, art for art's sake, chafing under the crude exigencies of proletarian realism and the Popular Front, identified the Communist Party with the bourgeoisie and brilliantly re-constituted itself as Trotskyism." (Hoberman, 1986, p10)

18. Huyssen lists the "most salient manifestations" of the historical avantgarde as "expressionism and Berlin Dada in Germany; Russian constructivism, futurism, and the proletpult in the years following the Russian Revolution; and French surrealism, especially in its earlier phase." (Huyssen, 1986, pvii and viii).

19. Bell, one of the younger "second generation" of the New York Intellectuals, opens his preface to his record of his Sociological Journeys:

"These are the essays of a prodigal son. They are essays written in my middle years. Midway in the journey of a life, in that dark wood, seeking a return to the straight way of my ancestors."
(Bell, 1980, pxi)

20. There is an apparent contradiction in U.S. history between the presumption of individual responsibility and choice and that of "manifest destiny" - the assertion that America (that is, the U.S.) would expand and dominate. Examination of the concept of manifest destiny however, indicates that America's necessity to expand is in order for its own to be free. This is of course still a contradiction, but not in relation to the 'American people'.

"'Manifest Destiny' was a phrase launched by the Democratic journalist, John L. O'Sullivan, who in 1845 proclaimed that it was America's 'manifest destiny to overspread the continent allotted by Providence for the free development of our yearly multiplying millions.' It was 'manifest destiny' that the United States would

one day soon come to possess not only Texas but also California, Oregon and Canada."
(Brogan, 1986, p305.)

21. For Aaron, American cultural history is a history of periodic revolts followed by incorporation. Revolts which, while they may manifest themselves in different forms, display a "recurring pattern" (Aaron, 1977, p2) in three acts. In Act 1, a new generation of writers "comes of age". Beneficiaries of their culture, they are nonetheless critical of it, impatient, even unaware, of literary/aesthetic tradition. Making a "fresh start", they fail to build on the past. Led by a "prophet" or prophets, they attack the "Philistines". Usually this period includes the discovery and elaboration of a philosophical system, usually of foreign origin; theory borrowed from Europe and applied to American conditions. Act 2, is "customarily heralded by a manifesto" and philosophical criticism turns to social criticism; economic and social events break through the artist's isolation and "for short periods, the engaged writer takes a stand on public issues". In Act 3, "the movement declines, for literary radicalism never seems to be sustained over a long period, and the writer is gradually absorbed again into the society he has rejected." (op cit, p2-4).

22. "... the very conditions of American life, the need for self-reliance and the evidence that one could change the world by one's own efforts, gradually eroded the otherworldly foundations of Puritan New England, and stressed the need to find one's self, one's achievements, one's salvation in the here and now. To make one's faith center on *this* world, to reject theology and dogma and the immemorial rituals of classical religion was, as Harold Laski has pointed out, the central principle of Emerson's famous address to the Harvard Divinity school in 1938. the religion of America, whether we look to Emerson or Whitman, was *Americanism*." (Bell, 1980, p256).

23. Americanism was a "creed and a faith" (Bell, 1980, p257); a "doctrine" (Samson, quoted in Bell). *Americanism*, argued Samson in 1935, is "what socialism is to a socialist"; it was "surrogate socialism" (Count Keyserling, quoted in Bell) :

"Every concept of socialism has its substitutive counterconcept in Americanism, and that is why the socialist argument falls so fruitlessly on the American ear."
(Samson, quoted Bell 1980, p257)

24. Interestingly, Bell described himself as a "prodigal son" in 1946, but then the prodigal rarely returned home - having no home. The young Jew, he said then, was "left helpless, and aware. He is aware of a distance both from the Jewish culture from which he came, and the Gentile culture into which he cannot or will not enter. He is helpless, for he cannot find his roots in either." ("A parable of alienation", The Jewish Frontier, 1946, quoted in Bell 1980, p134.) But thirty years later he was arguing that the critical intellectuals of the 1920s and 30s had dissolved as a group, dispersed to universities, publishing houses and magazines and integrated (in an unusual conclusion to a diaspora) into American society, the "home" they had been searching for.

25. Apparently entitled The Winding Passage : Essays and Sociological Journeys 1960 - 1980 in the U.S.

26. Krupnick, I suggest, misrepresents the article here. He writes as if the 'three generations' Bell was writing about were the older, younger, and youngest generations of the New York Intellectuals that Bloom writes about, and that Bell identifies in "The 'Intelligentsia' in American Society" (see his "genealogy" (in the sense of "family tree") of them (Bell, 1980, p127-9.) However, the earlier article's distinctions are not simply based on age, but on different positions - the three generations were the "once-born" elders the New York Intellectuals ousted; the "twice-born" New York Intellectuals who, by holding their own "counter-revolt" avoided being ousted in turn and therefore made the next generation the "after-born".

27. i.e. the "progressive" teens when the socialist movement expanded and which ended in its split into Socialist and Communist Parties; the twenties when the left was embattled, regaining its strength towards the end of the decade; the "red decade" of the thirties when the Depression encouraged Communist Party membership; fading into the alienated forties.

28. One view of the post-war "apolitisation" of the American Abstract Expressionist painters (as advanced, for instance by James D. Herbert) is that the Abstract Expressionist movement put an image of the artist as heroic American individualist in place of the proletariat as historic actor; self rather than class realisation (Herbert, 1984). A view indebted to Harold Rosenberg's arguments about the "Action Painters" rather than to Greenberg, and not, I suggest, applicable to the literary critics of PR. (See Chapter Three.)

29. Designated with a capital 'I' to identify them as a particular group. (Bloom, 1986, footnote, p3).

30. These characteristics have been virtually ignored in some accounts (their maleness as object of analysis in almost all) or their Jewish birth treated (as by Cooney) as neither determinant, nor irrelevant, or treated as a central explanatory variable (e.g. Bloom). "Scholars have responded to the numerical dominance of Jews in the Partisan Review circle with varying strategies and interpretations. In Writers and Partisans, Gilbert handled this whole realm of identity and experience by ignoring it whenever possible. By contrast, the zealous literary theorist Grant Webster made it a point in The Republic of Letters to discuss the ethnic composition of the New York circle in order to claim that 'genetically' they were 'only partly or questionably Jewish' and that Jewishness did not matter in the least to their critical work. Looking to quite different issues than did Webster, the sociologist Stephen A. Longstaff took as the very center of his study of the New York Intellectuals the tension between universalism and particularism and, thus, the question of Jewish identity." (Cooney, 1986 p6.)

31. The young Jewish writers were, Bloom argues, engaged in a flight from their traditional past and "A strong notion of class was also buried in this entire dynamic. Only subsequently did some of the young

men come to see how clearly their own progress was tied to a desire to rise. Sociologists like Bell and Seymour Martin Lipsit would view class and status anxiety as strong motivating factors in postwar American society" (Bloom, 1986, p27).

32. Nathan Glazer confirms that "there was almost nothing on Jews and Jewish issues in PR" (Glazer, 1984, p675). When asked to contribute some current work to the 50th Anniversary Edition of PR, Glazer felt that the two pieces he was working on about anti-semitism and anti-zionism and on American Jewish political influence were "unsuitable" and, examining why he felt this, noted that despite the number of Jewish contributors to PR "Jewish topics entered only if they passed a test of universal significance.... Jewishness as such, in a word was parochial..." unlike Marxism and Modernism. But this was not sufficient an explanation :

"But I would argue Jewishness might well have had more of a claim on PR than it did; as against all other forms of parochialism, it applied to a good part of its editors and writers, as other ethnic affiliations (aside from American) did not. If American issues had a claim on them, as an American journal of literature, culture, and (on occasion) political thought, so, too, might Jewish concerns. Yet another reason for a larger claim was that the Jews and Jewishness were involved intimately in all those issues of modernity and radicalism that were the basic concern of PR. Whatever the potential claim, there was almost nothing on Jews and Jewish issues in PR. Editorial judgement alone, as I suggest, might simply have considered them too parochial. Assuming for the sake of further consideration that doesn't explain everything, what else might explain it?"

(ibid.)

While not having the answer, Glazer was clear that there was no effort to deny Jewishness. In the US, Jewishness, he said, did not have the same connotations, indeed life and death implications, as it had in Europe, and the Intellectuals' drive for universalism was fulfilled (in part at least) in turn by Marxism, socialism, democratic socialism and Americanism (op cit p677) (Germanism was obviously ruled out for German Jews in the 1930s and after.) For the future, Glazer felt that, as Marxism was "in ruins" and Modernism "old hat" (op cit, p679) that Zionist literature might make claims to universalism.

33. The term is a variant of one used originally by Rahv and Macdonald in the early forties : "cultural amnesia" then defined by Macdonald in his 1942 attack on Burnham ("The Burnhamian Revolution") as when the victim "simply cannot recall the most elementary truths from his past experience." (Macdonald, 1942, p77). Rahv continued to criticise this amnesia which he felt was very American. (See Conclusion).

34. Aaron's book, commissioned in 1955 and first published in 1961, is clearly a product of a period immediately post-McCarthy, and concerned not to make too many waves. In the event, he concluded that it had had "a therapeutic value. It dissolved feelings of shame and guilt, mitigated anxieties, and started people remembering." (Aaron, 1977, pxii) He identified problems of political amnesia in an essay on "The Treachery of Recollection."

35. The difference being that he does so acknowledge. C.f. Gouldner, Anti-Intellectualism.

36. Unlike Cooney and Bloom, Wald does not dwell at length on the non-fiction writings of the group, but, with reference to the work of Eagleton and Williams, analyses examples of their fiction, focusing on stories (by Trilling, Farrell, Wilson, McCarthy, Slesinger, Swados) which can be characterised as *roman à clef* or which were explicitly political in intent and thus offer "a literary record of their complex ideological migration." (Wald, 1987, p227)

37. "An important obstacle to the study of political culture in the United States of the 1930s and after is the mystification of the terms 'Communism' and 'communism'. The capitalization or noncapitalization of the letter 'c' makes a qualitative difference in the meaning of the term, to which the reader must be ever alert.

In 1967, thirty years after the break of Partisan Review magazine from the Communist Party, Philip Rahv, the journal's central editor, felt the need to clarify in a public symposium in Commentary that 'it was not communism, in its doctrinal formulations by Marx, or even Lenin, that we broke away from, but the Soviet embodiment of it known as Stalinism'. In other words, Rahv and his circle broke from Communism (by which they meant the official Soviet-dominated movement, which they characterized as Stalinist), but for some years remained communists (by which they meant general adherents of the revolutionary ideas of Marx and Lenin).

Following Rahv, this study uses the terms 'Communism' and 'Communists' (uppercase C) to refer to official doctrines and adherents of parties of the Soviet-dominated Third International, which after the late 1920s can be characterized as 'Stalinist'. In contrast, 'communism' and 'communists' (lowercase c) refer to doctrines and adherents of the broader movement growing out of the Russian Revolution of October 1917, which includes not only the Stalinist current but also Trotskyists (the most important for this book), Bukharinists, and council communists." (Wald, 1987, pxv)

Thus, Wald does not make the mistake that Aaron admits to - inexact "political nomenclature" (Aaron, 1977, pxv). As Joseph Freeman pointed out (to Aaron) : "An accurate history of the literary left... ought to define 'Communism' at every 'crucial point of change in at least three ways. It should show what Moscow meant by 'communism', what the Party meant by it and what various WRITERS meant by it.'" (op cit, pxv).

38. Unlike Bloom, Wald does not use a capital 'I'.

39. Andrew Kopkind, "The Return of Cold War Liberalism", Nation, April 23, 1983, reference in Wald, 1987, p347).

40. A case in point is the designation "New York Intellectuals" itself : "In fact the appellation 'New York Intellectuals' began as a somewhat mystifying euphemism for a group originally the 'Trotskyist intellectuals'. After all, many in the group came from cities other than New York (James T. Farrell, Saul Bellow, and Isaac Rosenfeld were

all from Chicago), while others, such as Benjamin Stolberg and James Rorty, would be classified by most cultural historians as journalists rather than intellectuals. Historically the phrase 'New York Intellectuals' was episodically used to refer to nonparty Trotskyist sympathisers and allies during the 1930s and early 1940s. By the 1950s, when it had wider currency, the point of reference was those former revolutionaries who had achieved some reputation in New York intellectual journals, combined with newer friends and associates who identified in various ways with that former experience." (Wald, 1987, p11, emphasis added.)

NOTES TO PART TWO

Notes to Introduction

1. I would not deny that the editors abhorred Stalinist policies in the Soviet Union, but there is little evidence that they were concerned about conditions in the Soviet Union until 1938.

Notes to Chapter One

1. Giddens draws attention to the importance of not only time, but space and "locale" in constructing social theory. (Giddens, 1979, p206)
2. Chicago provided another centre of both radical politics and avant-garde art and Rahv lived there for a period.
3. Phillips, critical of what he considers the "rewriting of history" (Phillips, 1983, p289) by the Left commended Gilbert's book in 1983 as "The only study of the early history of Partisan Review that is faithful to the facts and the spirit of the period..." (op cit, p290)
4. Aaron identifies five categories of bohemian: "*The Masses group*", led by Max Eastman and John Reed with Floyd Dell, Arturo Giovannitti. This was the most "evangelical" of the groups, purveying the glad tidings of the new social gospel, but irreverently. However, while the most overtly 'political', they were not "Party people." "What distinguished them from the 'hard' Communists of the twenties and thirties was their refusal to subordinate their art to their politics..... It took World War I and the Russian revolution to induce some of them... to renounce poetry for revolution." (Aaron, 1977, p24/25). "*The Apostolic 'Student Movement' or the Priests of Young America*" led by Van Wyck Brooks and Randolph Bourne and including Lewis Mumford, Waldo Frank, James Oppenheim, Paul Rosenfeld. Mainly Easterners from seaboard universities they were more academic, less heterogenous, more middle class and more serious and were represented by and in The Seven Arts, The Nation, The New Republic, The Dial (p26). "*The Literary Experimenters or the Priests of Art*", writers primarily preoccupied with technique and radical only in literary matters. They included Ezra Pound, Amy Lowell, Robert Frost, Maxwell Bodenheim, T.S. Eliot, Gertrude Stein, and contributed to magazines like Poetry (editor Harriet Munroe) and The Little Review (editor Margaret Anderson) (op cit, p27). "*The Journalistic Shockers*" or "Menckenians" who were at war with Academia and the least likely to become politically radical (op cit, p28) And, finally, "*The Unclassifiables*" who had no clear affiliations and included Vachel Lindsay, Theodore Dreiser, Upton Sinclair and Sherwood Anderson (op cit, p28/29). The groups may have shared much, argues Aaron, but their differences perhaps foreshadowed their varied reactions to the First World War and the Bolshevik Revolution.
5. Also used to ban the Socialist Party's The American Socialist, Gilbert, 1968 and Howe and Coser, 1957.
6. Lasch argues the different perceptions of the role of art were not critical while American radicalism remained a broad based and inclusive movement ("devoted among other things, to creating a better understanding of life under the existing order - something art is supremely equipped to do") but when the left wing within the Socialist Party "shattered" the SP (with the setting up of the Communist Parties in 1919), and "substituted for long-term efforts to revolutionize

American consciousness a mystique of immediate revolution" (Lasch, 1970, p50) art became suspect in revolutionary circles and the role of artist was redefined as propagandist.

7. The death of Reed in the Soviet Union in 1920 removed a figure who might well have maintained a link between the two wings of Bohemia.

8. A continued concern with the link between art and politics in the twenties was largely confined to the New York-based Communist offshoots of the bohemians. While some of the "expatriates" were politicised by contact with DADA and surrealism and the magazine Broom represented enthusiasm for the machine age shared by the Communist critics like Gold, most confined their interest to radical form rather than radical content. Modernist writers - Pound, Eliot, Joyce, Proust, were rejected by most of the U.S. based intellectuals : by the Brooks group in favour of Americans (this taste being reflected in the magazine the Freeman) and by the New Yorkers because of the writers' political conservatism (Gilbert).

9. However, while proletarian art and its association with the Soviet Union was questioned by some of its early supporters from the Masses, notably Dell, Calverton and Eastman, its Americanism opened the doors for a, temporary, realignment with another erstwhile faction of Bohemia, the American culturalists associated with Brooks. (Gilbert, 1968) By the end of the 1920s, Eastman, Dell and Calverton were all out of the Party. In 1938 in PR Herbert Solow published an analysis of early issues of New Masses and pointed out that the more items authors had contributed in the early issues of 1926/7, the more likely they were to be dubbed "enemies of mankind" in the issues of 1938 (Solow, 1938). In 1957, Howe and Coser referring to this piece, found a check of the contributors for 1937 :

"indicates that out of 21 editors and authors who were members of its staff or contributed five or more articles, eleven have since become 'enemies of the people', two have remained in or with the party, one died in the Spanish Civil War and seven (because of uncertainty regarding the use of pseudonyms) remain unaccounted for."

(Howe and Coser, 1957, p296)

10. Simon Hoggart writing in the Observer notes this :
"For a New Yorker, not living in New York is the worst punishment imaginable.....Americans often complain that they're not greatly liked in Britain or France, but New Yorkers disdain Americans even more. Many of them have American citizenship, nominally at least, but think of themselves as quite separate from that terrible wasteland, those 3,614,000 square miles of America which aren't New York."
(Hoggart, 1989)

11. Like those in PR the symposium was based on responses to a statement and related questions. The statement opened : "It has been accepted for several decades now that New York is the artistic capital of the Western world, and that it will remain so in the foreseeable future..." (Kramer, 1986, p4)

12. Twelve Southern writers and critics contributed to I'll Take My Stand : the South and the Agrarian Tradition in 1930 which posited the South as the repository of traditional culture against encroaching industrialism.
13. "The American intellectual today has almost no chance of continuous development in the environment which his ancestors, however humble, helped form. He must be an expatriate either to languish in a provincial university, or abroad, or, the most complete expatriation of all, in New York." (Criterion X, April 1931, quoted in Aaron, 1977.)
14. Phillips and Rahv were both entrenched urbanites - Mary McCarthy, in her obituary on Rahv (originally published in the New York Times Book Review) described him as "an obstinate city man" who when living reluctantly in the country would "hold forth darkly on the theme of rural idiocy." (McCarthy, 1978, pix)
15. In 1946 for instance, William Barrett, criticising Dwight Macdonald and his new magazine Politics as examples of a decline in the quality of intellectual life, commented that, given its contents, the magazine could have been published in Oklahoma - clearly such an association with the mid-West needed no elaboration to be as damning a criticism as he could devise. Barrett, 1946). Macdonald himself comments in his Memoirs of a Revolutionist in the context of evaluating intellectual atmosphere that "New York is America." (Macdonald, 1963, p4)
16. They were to use the twenties more explicitly in the forties.
17. This is not to say, of course, that the proletarianists could not have done the same - most events, most concepts, most literary works can be recuperated - see for instance Gold's use of Walt Whitman to bolster the cause of proletarian literature (Appendix Two.)
18. After the Second World War, the Communist Party revived "art as a weapon" in a series of articles, pamphlets and conferences. (Egbert, 1952, p710-11)
19. For instance, while Homberger describes the Popular Front policy adopted five years later as abandoning the "entire literary strategy" of the party (Homberger, 1986, p139), he also acknowledges of Kharkov that:
 "Kharkov was dominated by RAPP and by the RAPP concern that proletarian literature be regarded in terms of content and ideology and not in terms of class. The constant reference to the need to win over fellow travellers may have sounded implausible from an Averbakh, but it corresponded to the needs of Western groups. The alternative, constantly denounced, implied a leftist exclusivism."
 (op cit, p136)
20. Homberger argues that the period 1930-34 saw constant, if subterranean, struggle between the 'right' and 'left' factions. The issue can perhaps be identified however, less in terms of right/left positions, than in terms of the extent to which participants were or were not prepared to follow the Soviet 'line'.

21. However, despite the enthusiasm of many intellectuals, earlier sympathisers had been drifting away, notably Eastman, Calverton and Dell, and while leniency was the policy toward newly sympathetic liberals, vicious attacks were made on the renegades who were perceived as barring the path of the intellectuals who were "drifting leftward" (Ramsey and Calmer, 1933, p27.) Calverton's version of Plekhanov which had previously been lauded in New Masses (to which he had been a contributor) was now dismissed as mere "sociological" criticism and a vulgarisation of Plekhanov. Dell on his resignation from New Masses in 1929 had been represented by Gold as corrupted by affluence and as having been interested in sexual rather than political liberation (Gold, 1929B) and Eastman, the first important American Trotskyite, had been a legitimate target for many years.

The attack on Calverton was referred to favourably in International Literature where Calverton was described as "the official corrupter of the left intelligentsia" (Stork, 1934, p97.)

22. "... the logic of equivalence is a logic of the simplification of political space, while the logic of difference is a logic of its expansion and increasing complexity. Taking a comparative example from linguistics, we could say that the logic of difference tends to expand the syntagmatic pole of language, the number of positions that can enter into a relation of combination and hence of continuity within one another; while the logic of equivalence expands the paradigmatic pole - that is, the elements that can be substituted for one another - thereby reducing the number of positions which can possibly be combined." (Laclau and Mouffe, 1985, p130)

23. Phillips says "It was about 1934 that I first heard of the John Reed Club...." (Phillips, 1983, p34), but since the first issue of PR was February/March 1934 it must have been earlier and in 1932 he was writing for the Party's theoretical review Communist.

24. Edmund Wilson had an article of the same title in New Republic which was dismissed by Leon Dennen as not having grasped Marxism fully, having just discovered in 1932 Trotsky's 1923 book (Dennen, 1932, p8). In International Literature, Granville Hicks described literary conditions in the USA as "something of a mess" (Hicks, 1933, p129) as the fellow traveller movement entered its second stage. The first stage of emotional enthusiasm had reached its climax in the "Culture and Crisis" manifesto and now came "the stage of adaptation to the ideas, tactics, and discipline of the C.P." during which much confusion was evident. Wilson, he said, was extraordinarily naive and apparently had no idea that in his NR articles on Trotsky he was "taking a definitely anti-Communist Party stand" (op cit, p129). Note the similarity with Rahv's reservations about the fellow travellers' commitment.

25. Bloom describes how as "Ivan Greenbaum, using a variant of his mother's longer Russian name, he took Philip Rahv" (Bloom, 1986, p26). But all other sources use "Greenberg".

26. American aliases were common among those with 'foreign' names. Irving Howe (not his real name) gives three reasons why people adopted

(and retained) American party names in the thirties : for security; out of romanticism; and because they felt they had a better chance of reaching the American working class. In retrospect however, he personally feels the main reason was a desire among Jewish intellectuals to discard their past and break away from families and traditions. (Interview, New York City, August 1986 and Howe, 1984.) Phillips had two layers of such 'Americanisation' - in the early issues of PR he called himself Wallace Phelps. To the surprize of all his friends to whom he had never expressed such a commitment, Rahv on his death was found to have left his money to the State of Israel. (His second wife had died in a fire at their home which also destroyed his library and his third marriage had been unsuccessful.)

27. Thorp commenting on the problems of developing a literary line in the communist movement, asserts :

"The primary question was what a Marxist analysis of literature might establish as the aims and duties of the writer*. Some of the more individualistic spirits attempted to argue that Marx and Engels had said little about literature or art which could serve as a guide to communist aestheticians. they maintained, moreover, that Lenin and Trotsky did not require the regimentation of writers who wished to be revolutionaries. Such heretical talk became serious when Trotsky was branded as a traitor."

(Egbert, 1952, p60)

The footnote (*) read :

"Of the scores of attempts to develop a Marxian one of the most thorough was Philip Rahv's 'The Literary Class War' in the NM for August 1932."

(op cit, footnote to p60)

28. "The accepted view of the 30's... is that Marxist - or Communist - doctrine was grafted onto native radicalism. But what is usually overlooked is that American radicalism was of a very special kind. it was essentially populist, insular, antiintellectual; and most of its standard-bearers had a characteristically rough-and-ready American style.

The earlier figures, like Eugene Debs, Upton Sinclair, Jack London, Max Haywood, Floyd Dell, were particularly homegrown in their outlook and their tone. But it is most significant that even later writers, like John Reed, Mike Gold, Max Eastman and Joseph Freeman, did not break with the grass-roots tradition, and some of them - Mike Gold for example - actively promoted it. In effect, then, the radical movement in the 30's, particularly in the arts, got its accent from the more primitive, egalitarian, plain-speaking strains in American culture.

Now we know that there have been two dominant strains in American culture, and in choosing the 'folk' tradition while repudiating the 'intellectual' one, the radical movement was taking a political as well as a literary stand. And why, one must ask, did it take that stand? After all, the Marxist movement was nothing if not ideological, full of historical portents and meanings and connections. It actually was a haven for people who preferred

theories to facts; and much of the resistance to Marxism in this country came from the native empirical, antiideological temper. It seems to me, therefore, that if the radical movement had been permitted to follow its natural course it would never have become entangled with the freewheeling, grass-roots tradition. It would have been urban, intellectual, and critical, as it was in the writings of Marx and Engels, and even later in Plekhanov and Lukács. And I think left-wing writers on their own would have come to terms with literary tradition instead of rejecting it outright or latching on to its crudest expressions. They would at least have tried to relate themselves to the most advanced, the most 'radical' (in a literary sense) figures and currents: to Joyce and to Kafka rather than to Jack London and Upton Sinclair, to the School of Paris and not to our domestic naturalists. Who knows? - we might have been spared all those proletarian novels and pictures of workers that made a principle of amateurism and banality. But the movement was not a free one; and in the end it must be said that the needs of the Communist party determined the literary course of American radicalism."
(Phillips, 1967, p19/20)

29. For instance, Jameson (as a representative of the first view) argues :

"No real systemic change in this country will be possible without the minimal first step of the achievement of a social democratic movement [but] that first step will not be possible without two other preconditions... the creation of a Marxist intelligentsia, and that of a Marxist culture."

(Interview Fredric Jameson, in 1982, Diacritics, quoted Arac, 1986, px)

However, in the view of others, if such a Marxist culture is to exist, it must be grounded in active politics. Arac, giving an overview of "current debates in theory and history" in his introduction to Postmodernism and Politics, quotes Edward Said (1982) attacking literary Marxists "who are in a cloistral seclusion from the world of real politics" ("Audiences, Opponents, Constituencies, and Community" in The Anti Aesthetic, ed. Foster, quoted Arac, 1986, pxxix) and David Bromwich (1985) attacking "left wing literary people" "who in a better world would be doing political work" ("Literary Radicalism in America", Dissent 32, 1985, quoted Arac, 1986, pxxix).

30. Homberger suggests that the Americans were usually behind events in Moscow (Homberger, 1986) and certainly the approach to culture promoted in New Masses lacked any of the subtlety of, for instance, the debates in Germany (See Aesthetics and Politics).

31. Others have argued that his position in the early thirties anticipated the Popular Front (Livingstone, Anderson, Mulhern, 1977, p10) and it has already been argued here that the Popular Front policy was anticipated by Kharkov in 1930. Examination of the Soviet version of International Literature indicates that the Engels letters used by Lukács were being promoted in 1933 as support for the fellow travellers policy (see page 120). Lukács has suggested (in his 1965 introduction to the publication of some of his essays, Writers and Critics) that he

took a position in the early thirties that was against the Stalinist version of socialist realism, but he did so within the Party and in the mid-thirties was an editor of the official organ of the IURW, International Literature.

32. Although he noted that Marx himself had not rejected art because it was bourgeois and quoted the remark from the Critique that the periods of the highest development of art have no direct relation to the base. Trotsky's Literature and Revolution, he felt, was "at bottom a development of the attitude already implicit in Marx" (Hazlitt, quoted, Rahv, 1934, p278). Great writers, he felt, could "universalise" themselves and transcend the barriers of experience and class.

Interestingly, even in this publication - the IURW organ, Rahv did not acknowledge Hazlitt's reference to Trotsky and did not repudiate his approach.

33. At that time, Lukács was attacking both proletarian literature and formalist work (evidenced by two other articles in Linkskurve in 1931 and 1932 : an attack on the proletarian novels of Bredel and the experimental "reportage" novel of Ottwald.

34. The exclusions are minor - a comparison with the version included in Essays on Realism, ed. Livingstone, indicates only the omission of two excerpts from The Communist Manifesto and On the Paris Commune.

35. Evidence that the Popular Front policy was not a dramatic shift in position but a consolidation of the Kharkov realignment.

36. The editors noted that the word propaganda was the best contemporary American equivalent for "tendenz", as traditionally employed in Continental literary criticism. (footnote to Lukács 1934, p36)

37. Unlike most writers of the period, he uses the term ideology negatively : "distorted, inverted, ideological reflection" (p41)

38. Engels on Balzac : "That Balzac was thus compelled to go against his own class sympathies and political prejudices, that he saw the necessity of the downfall of his favorite nobles and described them as people deserving no better fate; that he saw the real men of the future where, for the time being, they alone were to be found - that I consider one of the greatest triumphs of realism, and one of the greatest features in old Balzac." (Engels, 1972, p50)

39. Trotsky's position on art, he argued, was ultimately Kantian idealism; Literature and Revolution presumed a 'pure' art/culture was attainable.

40. Published briefly (five issues, bi-monthly) during 1934 by editor Harry Davis.

41. The fascists themselves (while Gobbels might have considered Expressionism had "the seeds of some sound ideas" quoted in Bloch, 1977,

p17) ridiculed modernism and attacked it as "kulturbolschewismus" (see Chapter Two). Adorno drew an opposed conclusion to that of Lukács, arguing that it was popular culture that encouraged irrationalism and formalism that could disrupt ideology.

42. Born in New York in 1902 and a leftist from an early age, Hook went to City College and became a brilliant philosophy student under Morris Cohen. By 1927, he had a Ph.D from Columbia under the direction of John Dewey and was hired by New York University. He was involved in CP publishing ventures and from 1927 was involved in exchanges with Max Eastman over the scientific nature of Marxism. In 1928 he studied in Berlin (attending lectures by Korsch) and at the Marx-Engels Institute. After returning to New York Hook's unorthodox interpretations of Marx led him into dispute with the Party and in 1933 he helped to organise Muste's American Workers' Party which in 1934 amalgamated with the Trotskyists. Although Hook had been instrumental in this fusion he chose not to join. (Wald, 1987; Myers 1977; Howe and Coser, 1957.)

43. While the PR discourse was incorporating Lukács' "Hegelianism", Lukács was rejecting it. In 1938 he renounced his position in History and Class Consciousness as "reactionary because of its idealism, because of its faulty grasp of the theory of reflection..." (Lukács, 1977, p50)

44. He developed his position in 1936 in From Hegel to Marx his study of the "intellectual development of Karl Marx" in which he suggested that the apparent contradictions in Marx, "between his social determinism and class teleology, his theoretical analysis and his revolutionary activism, could be interpreted as relative emphases arising in the course of criticism of opponents whose positions were antithetical to each other." (Hook, 1936, p11)

45. Eastman, in his attack (The Last Stand of Dialectical Materialism : A Study of Sidney Hook's Marxism), said Hook's suggestion that Marx did not subscribe to the "copy theory" was absurd since Marx had read and agreed Engels' work. (Eastman, 1934.)

46. "It is well known that certain periods of the highest development of art stand in no direct connection with the general development of society, nor with the material basis and the skeleton structure of its organisation." (Marx, 1972, p37.)

47. A comparison of Rahv's review with that of Granville Hicks in New Masses indicates the extent to which the editors were constrained by the Party framework. Hicks, (then the major contributor to NM on literature, during early 1934 he contributed a seven part series on "Revolution and the Novel") had some criticisms of Parched Earth, but felt they were minor in a book which showed "so profound and so truly Marxian an insight into the action of social forces and their effect on individual lives." (Hicks, 1934, p25)

48. The first production of the Book Club set up after the 1935 Popular Front Writers Congress.

49. Calmer, in the same issue, reviewing You Can't Sleep Here, by Edward Newhouse, describes him as a representative of the "depression generation" rather than the "speakeasy generation" of the twenties exiles. (Calmer, 1934, p89) This "polarisation" with its alliance of a segment of the intellectual petty-bourgeoisie with the proletariat was reversed in the 1950s with the experience of post-war affluence. See Rahv and Phillips and their different reactions expressed in "Our Country and Our Culture." While Phillips expressed some nostalgia for the "cold water flat", but associated himself with the dominant U.S. culture, Rahv attributed the increasing conservatism of his generation to their new found affluence. (See pages 255/6.)

50. But while under attack from the CP 'establishment', PR was also attacked from the margins. Fred Miller, the editor of Blast attacking (in February 1935) NM's monopolistic attempt to freeze out competition also levelled the accusation at PR, which he considered "a symptom of the new gentility afflicting the left" (Aaron, 1977, p296).

51. Cooney however argues that at no time did Phillips and Rahv lose editorial control despite the fact that they were increasingly coming under attack in the Party press and even within the magazine and that there are various reports that Trachtenberg wanted the magazine suppressed (see Gilbert, Cooney, Conroy). Gilbert reports that the League considered making PR their official organ, and PR of accepting, but that minutes of the Executive Committee of the League reveal that some members opposed this because the magazine was "too left". (Gilbert, 1968, p142.)

52. C.f. Lenin in "What is to be done?" : "...the only choice is - either bourgeois or socialist ideology. There is no middle course (for mankind has not created a 'third' ideology, and, moreover, in a society torn by class antagonisms there can never be a non-class or an above class-ideology. Hence, to belittle the socialist ideology in any way, to turn aside from it in the slightest degree means to strengthen bourgeois ideology." (Quoted, McLellan, 1986, p25)

53. Their view of history is somewhat unclear. Here they refer to its necessary development, and they often refer to Marxism as science, yet implicit in their analysis is a view of the active agent.

54. See for instance accounts by Richard Wright and Leon Dennen (Aaron, 1977, p282).

55. New Letters was reviewed critically by Hicks in NM (in October after the June Writers Congress in which Rahv and Phillips had made their break with the CP) and while Gregory defended the collection, he concurred with the criticism of "Leon Trotsky's friends", detractors who "attempt to break up union activity as well as bewilder fledgling intellectuals and who consistently quibble, bicker, nag and deny." (Gregory, 1937, p17)

56. Cooney reports, on the basis of evidence from the diaries of James T. Farrell, that during the Summer and Autumn of 1936, Rahv and Phillips were vacillating. They were negotiating with the (Popular Front) League

of American Writers, but at the same time were in touch with Farrell (whose dissident literary views were expressed in Note on Literary Criticism.) According to Farrell's diary, it seems the editors' waverings continued until March 1937 when they found they were being "read out of the movement" (quoted in Cooney, 1986, p100), their decision being made for them.

57. The third, held in June 1939, was relatively harmonious with no premonitions of the imminent demise of the Popular Front with the signing of the Pact two months later and the consequent departure of most non-Communist members of the League. This was reported as Fighting Words, 1940. In June 1941, again with unfortunate timing, just before the German invasion of the Soviet Union, a joint Artists and Writers Congress met. Since the policy of this conference had been against the European war the proceedings were quietly buried. (Thorp, 1952)

58. A contemporary of Mary McCarthy at Vassar and a Trotskyist sympathiser who married one of Trotsky's secretaries (Jan Frankel) before drifting away from the party in 1940. (Wald, 1987, p248.) Author of a series of novels and associate editor of New Letters in America in which Rahv and Phillips had published their critique of American Communist literature, see page 159-61.)

59. In the Sept/Oct 1940 issue, the editors announced that from Jan/Feb 1941 the magazine would change its name to The Forties because "the old name, pertinent when the magazine first appeared in 1934, has more recently led to many misunderstandings of the magazine's purpose and character". However, the adverse reaction of readers led them to shelve the idea and although the question was raised intermittently over the next few years and a variety of new names considered, no change was made. While they never changed the name, they effectively repudiated their 1934/6 incarnation - in the Jan/Feb 1941 issue, for instance, they refer to PR as "entering on its 4th year"

60. McCarthy later represented her experiences of this period in her *roman à clef* The Oasis and self-mockingly has one of her characters in The Group, Libby MacAusland, who is trying to break into publishing attempting to impress Mr LeRoy who she often finds "reading a magazine : the New Masses, she noticed, or another one called Anvil, or still another with the peculiar name of Partisan Review, which she had tried to read in the Washington Square Bookshop. That was what gave her the idea of slipping words like 'laborer' into her conversation, to remind him that she too was one of the downtrodden." (McCarthy, 1963, p197)

61. He was a member of the SWP, then the Workers Party, from 1939 to 41. In Memoirs of a Revolutionist he explains his decision to join the party in the Fall of 1939 was "perhaps typically, moral rather than intellectual", inspired by the outbreak of war in Europe :

"I remember reading Marx and Engels intensively in the Summer of 1939 in an effort to find out whether I was a Marxist or not. I could never really make up my mind : the critical side attracted me, and also the protest against capitalist injustice, but the dogmatism and the insistence on explaining everything by one system of thought repelled me (as did a certain moral callousness). When

the war began however, I felt I should stand with the party"
(Macdonald, 1963, p17)

62. I.F. Wolpert in an analysis, with which Rahv and Phillips would surely have agreed, of the "bohemians" ("those intellectuals who form the avant-garde in the creation and dissemination of ideas" Wolpert, 1947, p476) claimed :

"If they reject the Stalinist ideologists to whom they are initially drawn, it is often because of an esthetic sensitivity which brings home to them the true meaning of communism. Manipulation of ideas and of the processes of art for party ends hampers the free flow of intellectual creativity to which the bohemian is committed."
(op cit, p479)

63. Who made a two part contribution on Thomas Mann in 1938.

64. Socialist Appeal had been started in 1934 as the organ of the Trotskyist-oriented wing of the Socialist Party by Goldman (who had left Muste's American Workers Party just before the merger with the, then, CLA) and Erber of the YPSL. In 1936 during the split in the SP occasioned by the entry of the Trotskyists from the Workers Party, it was banned and when the Trotskyite faction was expelled in 1937 Socialist Appeal reappeared as the organ of the Local New York Socialist Party (left wing branches) briefly, then the SWP when it was formed in December 1937. In 1939 it came under the control of the Cannonite faction and after the split in the SWP was transformed into the Militant.

65. Alan Wald notes that George Novack stated he was the author of this unsigned editorial (Wald, 1982, footnote 28 to p224). Novack had earlier in 1937 been an initiating editor of Marxist Quarterly but resigned, along with Burnham, after the first issue (Harrington, introduction to the reprint edition of Marxist Quarterly.)

66. This trend was also represented on the cultural scene by the publication in 1937, of the magazine Marxist Quarterly whose editors were James Burnham, Lewis Corey (Louis Fraina's alias), Louis Hacker, Francis Henson, Will Herberg, Sidney Hook, Corliss Lamont, George Novack Meyer Schapiro, Sterling Spero, Bertram Wolfe and Herbert Zam. Burnham and Novack both resigned after the first issue, and the magazine was only able to maintain publication for three issues, illustrating the difficulties of collaboration on the non-Stalinist left at the time of the trials and the Spanish Civil War. (Harrington, Introduction to the 1968 reprint edition of Marxist Quarterly.) Burnham had previously edited Symposium (1930-33), a philosophy journal which supported revolutionary change but disavowed the C.P. Burnham and Hook were leading figures in the American Workers' Party, Fraina editor of New International and Novack a leading figure in the Non Partisan Labor Defense, the Trotskyite Labour organisation set up in 1933 as an alternative to the CP dominated International Labor Defense. (Meyers) Hook and Schapiro had both contributed to PR, Burnham was to do so, and Hook was later on the editorial advisory board created in 1948.

67. This is included however in an appendix - "Trotsky and 'Partisan Review' : A Correspondence" - by Homberger and readers will now be able to form their own conclusions.

68. While Trotsky's contribution was presented as a letter it can more accurately be described as an article. The term "letter" is placed in quotation marks in the introduction to the section of Writers and Politics, the recent PR reader edited by Kurzweil and Phillips.

69. A reference to a letter in PR from the editor of a Chicago magazine who had referred to Trotskyites as "anemic splinters who have no mass base" which Trotsky quoted and attacked in his own letter.

70. Trotsky responded in PR in December 1938 nominally congratulating Breton and Rivera on "their" creation of IFIRA :

"The struggle for revolutionary ideas in art must begin once again with the struggle for artistic truth; not in terms of any single school, but in terms of the invaluable faith of the artist in his own inner self. Without this there is no art."

(Trotsky, 1938J, p127, emphasis original)

71. The 50s would seem to bear this out - see "Our Country and Our Culture" in PR in 1952 and Kozloff, Cockcroft and Guilbaut on the Abstract Expressionists.

72. After publication of the manifesto Macdonald reported that only three responses had been received, but PR called a meeting of approximately forty writers and artists (Macdonald, 1938B and C). The meeting, attended by approximately thirty people, adopted a general statement formulated by George Novack and voted to set up an organisation - The League for Cultural Freedom and Socialism - and elected an editorial committee to draw up a programme of action and a manifesto (Macdonald, 1939C.)

73. Gilbert claims that Rahv and Phillips had more sympathy with the Committee for Cultural Freedom (which published its Manifesto on May 31st 1939 in New Republic) headed by Hook and Dewey which had no claims to being revolutionary, but Wald asserts that all the editors of PR "aggressively resisted" the CCF (originally the League Against Totalitarianism) which he describes as representing "the first organized effort by New York intellectuals to separate anti-Stalinism from a revolutionary Marxist context." (Wald, 1987, p279) The League for Cultural Freedom and Socialism was not only anti-fascist, and anti Stalinist, but argued "that the liberation of culture is inseparable from the liberation of the working class of all humanity." They asked rhetorically :

"Shall we abandon the ideals of revolutionary socialism because one political group, while clinging to its name, has so miserably betrayed its principles? Shall we revert to a program of middle class democracy because the Kremlin government in obedience to its own interests - which are no longer the interests of the Soviet people or of the masses anywhere - directs us to do so? On the contrary, we reject all such demands. Democracy under industrial capitalism can offer no permanent haven to the intellectual worker

and artist. In its instability, it becomes the breeding ground of dictatorship, and such liberties as it grants us today, it will violently revoke tomorrow. The idea of democracy must come to flower in a socialist democracy. In the revolutionary reconstruction of society lies the hope of the world, the promise of a free humanity, a new art, an unrestricted science.

The defense of intellectual freedom requires, moreover, that we reject all theories and practices which tend to make culture the creature of politics, even revolutionary politics. We demand COMPLETE FREEDOM FOR ART AND SCIENCE. NO DICTATION BY PARTY OR GOVERNMENT. Culture not only does not seek orders but by its very nature cannot tolerate them. Truly intellectual creation is incompatible with the spirit of conformity; and if art and science are to be true to the revolution, they must first be true to themselves."

(League for Cultural Freedom and Socialism, 1939, p127)

and allied themselves with the Breton/Rivera manifesto. The commitment to IFIRA was apparently not wholehearted however; in a letter to Trotsky enclosing the manifesto, Macdonald emphasised that while the organisation was sympathetic to IFIRA, it had not affiliated itself (Macdonald, 1939C). Their attachment to artistic autonomy being, it seems, rather more genuine than Trotsky's. (See Appendix Three) In Socialist Appeal Macdonald, in his column "Sparks in the News" greeted the debut of Hook's Committee with the headline "Mountain labors, bears mouse (dead)" (Macdonald, 1939F) and argued that since it did not criticise totalitarianism from the position of the workers it was by default bourgeois. On the announcement of the League, Socialist Appeal declared with rather less panache, "Left wing writers form League, issue manifesto" and described it as "launched in terms which clearly distinguish the new organisation from the Stalinist controlled pro-war league of American Writers and from the bourgeois-democratic Hook-Dewey group" (Socialist Appeal, 1939, p1). Ironically, Hook reports that when in 1949 he called a meeting of the 1939 members of the CCF plus "some of its erstwhile revolutionary critics who had been sobered by the post-war experience" that the meeting was held in Macdonald's home. (Hook, 1984, p694)

74. It may well be the case that Trotsky's actual commitment to autonomy for the magazine was questionable - see Appendix Three - but the rhetoric was enabling theoretically.

75. Macdonald too, in his third article on Soviet Cinema commented that while Lenin didn't "understand" art, he and other bolshevist politicians didn't interfere with avant-garde art. Quoting Lenin :

"...every artist and everyone who regards himself as such, claims as his proper right the liberty to work freely according to his ideal, whether it is any good or not."

and Trotsky :

"Art has its own laws."

Stalin, on the other hand, was "a philistine, so unconscious of his own limitations that he does not hesitate to interfere in the most intimate way in all fields of culture." (Macdonald, 1939 p82)

76. Shortly after, Mann came to the U.S. to live and associated himself with the pro-war camp, leading PR to attack him.

Notes to Chapter Two

1. The League, said Brooks, was the heir of the old Progressive movement and the call to the 1937 Conference was, according to Gilbert (1968), a deliberate attempt to identify the League with the pre-First World War "Renaissance".

2. Deutscher notes that the suggestion that the U.S.S.R. was no longer a workers' state was made first in 1921 by the Workers Opposition group in Moscow, but Trotsky had always rejected it. (Deutscher, 1970, p462) However, towards the end of his life (see "The U.S.S.R. in War" in In Defense of Marxism) he was discussing the possibility that the proletariat were not destined to become the next ruling class and that the changes in the U.S.S.R. did presage a new system, and Howe (1984, p77) feels the article reveals that he was modifying his views.

3. Not all contributors did accept it, Paul Mattick questioned "How new is the 'New Order' of fascism?" and concluded fascism was not a new order, the fundamental capitalist relations persisted (Mattick, 1941.) Victor Serge responding in "What is Fascism? The discussion continued" (July/Aug 1941) agreed with Macdonald's general thesis (although he disagreed with his "defeatist" war policy) but attacked Burnham whose criticisms of Marxism he felt were of "vulgar" Marxism. Marxism might need modification he felt, but only Marxism itself could explain the failure of socialism (by an analysis of the weakening of the social position of the w.c. and the growth in class consciousness of the reactionaries). Marxism was still science :

"The defeats of the socialist movement are not necessarily defeats for Marxism. Marxism is an impassioned method of scientific investigation..."

(Serge, 1941, p420)

Marceau Pivert contributed a more 'orthodox' interpretation - Fascism was not post-capitalist, it was just degenerated capitalism, there was no "New Order" merely "a stage of super barbarianism in the old order." (Pivert, 1941, p425)

4. As Deutscher points out, underlying all the theories of bureaucratic collectivism was a belief that the working class had shown itself incapable of fulfilling its historic mission (Deutscher, 1970, p466). Capitalism, Marxism postulated, could not continue to function effectively, but the bureaucratic collectivist theories argued that it was being replaced by a bureaucratic form of collectivist economy rather than a socialist form - thereby presuming the failure of the proletariat to seize the initiative (or to maintain it in the case of the U.S.S.R.). Deutscher argued that if the role of the proletariat could be recast, the logical extension was to question every other "principle of the Marxist Leninist programme, including dialectics and morality" (op cit, p472). Irving Howe's description of the debate, in which he participated, (Howe, 1984, p76-80) supports this view, acknowledging that to question the class status of the Soviet Union, and, by implication, the capability of the working class to fulfil their historic task, was to question the whole perspective of socialism.

5. In "Lenin's Heir" Burnham was to argue exactly that, but that was in the future (Burnham, 1945.) In a letter to Trotsky in April, Rahv said he was working on an essay intended as an attack on the "new revisionists, the Kronstadt wailers" (Rahv, 1938F) who were attempting to discredit the October revolution and identify Leninism with Stalinism.

6. It is perhaps significant that at this time (Fall 1939), when PR announced that it was changing from a quarterly to a bi-monthly, the subtitle "A quarterly of literature and Marxism" was abandoned.

7. Bernard Rosenberg notes that Edward Shils, a prominent defender of mass culture in the 1950s, accused the writers who attacked Mass Culture of being in the main disillusioned Marxists angry at the masses they had foolishly idealised in the thirties. (Rosenberg, p9). An accusation which Rosenberg rejected for himself, but which seems to have some justice as applied to PR, particularly with regard to Macdonald.

8. In support of Deutscher's contention (see footnote 4) this failure of the working class to play its historic role or to give any indication that it might, is at the core of the arguments for a modification, or a rejection of Marxism that appeared in PR around this time. See for instance, "The Future of Socialism" in the first four issues of 1947.

9. "After Pearl Harbor Rahv and Phillips had come to feel it was their war and their country, while I had remained disaffected. They wanted to reduce the magazine's political content and concentrate on literary criticism, while I wanted to continue the mixture as before.... we had some first-class rows, and finally I resigned, writing a sharp letter-to-the-editors which appeared in PR with an answer in kind." (Macdonald, 1963, p25.)

10. "A Statement by the Editors

The country is now actually at war. PARTISAN REVIEW, while primarily a cultural magazine, has always been concerned with politics. A question, therefore, as to our future editorial policy naturally arises.

For some time, as recent issues of the magazine have made clear, the editors have disagreed on major political questions. The complexity of the world situation, indeed, is reflected in the fact that no two editors hold the same position on all major issues. The actual outbreak of hostilities has not altered this line-up. It is clear, therefore, that PARTISAN REVIEW cannot undertake to present the kind of programmatic guidance one expects of a political party. Our main task now is to preserve cultural values against all types of pressure and coercion. Obviously we cannot even speak of the survival of democratic civilization apart from the survival of our entire cultural tradition. This includes the fullest freedom of expression on political matters. All of us can at least agree on this : that in times like these it is a necessity not a luxury for PARTISAN REVIEW to continue to give space to radical - in the literal sense of 'going to the roots' - analysis

of social issues and the war. No intelligent decisions can be made without a full consideration of alternatives."

(The Editors, 1942)

11. Cooney cites evidence (Farrell's diaries and correspondence between the editors) that during the Summer of 1940 Macdonald had felt PR should cease. Opposed in this, he apparently suggested "liquidating Dupee and Phillips" (in a letter to Morris, quoted p185 Cooney) in favour of Greenberg and Harold Rosenberg - who would have provided him with political support. Macdonald's attempts to shift control rested on his friendship with Morris, the banker of the magazine, but Morris, it seems, was not prepared to let Macdonald take over. Shortly after, Dupee left and Greenberg did join the board. In 1941, Rahv married and temporarily left New York for Chicago where his wife was working, thus removing Macdonald's most significant opponent from the scene. Rahv's plan to resign was soon reversed however, and when Greenberg and Macdonald published "Ten Propositions" he returned to the fray (Cooney, 1986, p185).

Disagreement continued to build after the 1942 statement and, with the departure of Greenberg from the magazine in early 1943 when he was drafted, Macdonald became more isolated in his stance. When Morris announced he could no longer provide the finance, it was agreed that, if Rahv and Phillips could find new funding they would edit the magazine and Macdonald would resign; if not, Macdonald would take over and they would resign (Phillips, 1983, p138). Rahv and Phillips did find new funding - from a Mrs Norton who wished her backing to remain anonymous and requested that PR avoid provoking political controversy (Cooney, based on letters between Macdonald and Schwartz and Rahv) - and Macdonald was replaced by Delmore Schwartz. Apparently, Macdonald was allowed to choose his successor - Schwartz was a Trotskyist sympathiser, if not an activist (Wald, 1987, p209).

12. Howe was Macdonald's assistant there from 1946 and wrote one of the "jabs" himself.

13. The "Open Letter to the Intellectual Workers of America" issued in 1932 by the League of Professional Groups for Foster and Ford. Intellectuals were represented one of the two classes that do the work, "the class of brain workers" (League, 1932, p3.)

14. A *roman à clef* about the bohemian-radical circle of Eliot Cohen and written by Slesinger after her departure from the circle and her marriage to the, by then, Trotskyist Herbert Solow and dedicated to them "because its contents explained the reasons for her departure." (Wald, 1987, p39.)

15. Rahv counterposed "intellectual" to "commercial" art in "Wasteland to Flower Garden".

16. The failure of the proletariat to accept the intellectuals' lead was, it can be argued, at the root of the PR editors' rejection of Marxism. (see p206)

17. The Frankfurt School, with whose theoretical trajectory that of the PR editors has many parallels (whether there is a chain of influence is not established), similarly maintained in the late 1930s and early 40s that the proletariat had been integrated into bourgeois society and were no longer the bearers of political emancipation, thus leaving only a "lonely" and marginalised intelligentsia capable of adequate theoretical understanding (Dubiel, 1985, p82). For Adorno and Horkheimer, only modernist challenges to intellectual, linguistic - and aesthetic - conventions could avoid recuperation.

See too the resurgence in the last 20 years of the view of avant-garde/marginal culture as less recuperable and therefore more radical. While one strand of left criticism has examined popular culture, others continue the approach (most identified in Britain in the seventies with Screen) which could be (over) simplistically characterised as valorising the de-constructive capacity of (avant-garde) form. Both approaches share the premise that counter-hegemonic elements can and do exist in the crevices of the dominant culture and can be exploited.

The continued interest in the work of the Frankfurt School is attributable to both the nature of their work on the power of culture/ideology and the significance of form and the abandonment of a totalising view premised on the primacy of the economic.

If totalising theory and the vanguard role of the intellectuals in interpreting that theory (or meta-discourse) and/or representing the 'true' interest of the proletariat are rejected however, the role of "intellectuals" must be questioned and the apparent response of the New York Intellectuals, the Frankfurt School and, perhaps, the "post-modernism" of the eighties, indicate the difficulties of avoiding pessimism followed by incorporation. As Paul Bové puts it, (in an analysis of the work of Aronowitz), if the radical intellectual adopts a "critical science of tendencies in place of the attempt to develop and transmit a master discourse" the questions remain : "how does this provide social leadership? For whom does the intellectual work? To whom does the intellectual show 'how these forms are produced'? What are the social consequences of this educational gesture?" (Bové, 1985, p20)

18. Howe and Coser use the concept in 1957, citing Merton, to explain the involvement of intellectuals in the Communist Party. (Howe and Coser, 1957, Chap 11).

19. A year later Rahv's review of The Yogi and the Commissar in which the essay appeared made it clear that he agreed with this conception, if not with other aspects of Koestler's formulation, notably the assertion that "neurosis" was inherent in the nature of intellectuals, see page 242.

20. A reversal of the title of his column in New International "Reading from Left to Right".

21. Much later, Bell in The Cultural Contradictions of Capitalism (first published 1976), uses the phrase the "cult of experience" very

differently. He identified change in self consciousness as one of the (of four) characteristics of the mass society, of, for him, modernity. Rather than deriving our sense of identity from our inherited place in society - "I am the son of my father" as the response to the question "Who are you?", modern man replies "I am I, I come out of myself, and in choice and action I make myself." "Experience rather than tradition, authority, revealed utterance, or even reason has become the source of understanding and identity." (Bell, 1979, p89) This emergence of "self consciousness" Bell describes as "the cult of experience". (op cit, p90) An assumption that the emancipative potential of modernity is a product of increase in choice typical of neo-conservatives is questioned by Claus Offé (Offé, 1987.)

22. Burger, defining experience as "a bundle of perceptions and reflections that have been worked through" (Burger, 1984, p33) argues that the progressive division of labour produces a "shrinking of experience" (ibid) whereby the specialist can no longer translate experiences in his/her partial sphere back into the praxis of life. With regard to the aesthetic sphere, aestheticism expresses that shrinkage, and the distinctiveness of art.

23. Howe argues that the New York critics, particularly those writing in PR, helped to complete a process begun during the mid Nineteenth Century of "internationalising American culture (also, by the way, Americanizing international culture)." (Howe, 1970, p223).

Lerner represented the traditional ambivalent relationship as a symbolic slaying of the father, but argued in the fifties that the position had been reversed - Americans had previously wanted the approval of the world, but now they had the self-confidence of power and Europeans, smarting from resentment at having been "saved" by the US in the War, were experiencing the contradictory emotions of attraction toward America, yet rejection of it. (Lerner, 1958.)
(The book was balefully described by Macdonald as a "midcult classic" (p54) in which Lerner "amassed 1,036 pages of data and interpretations without offending any religious, racial, political or social group.")

24. Macdonald wrote that "Rosenberg has intuitively seized the symbolic significance of Paris, for a century and a half the center of the most advanced European cultural and political consciousness..." (Macdonald, 1940B, p250)

25. In the context of this article and Macdonald's Kulturbolshevismus editorial, Guilbaut argues that the war did more for Modernism than "all the efforts of PR" :

"Rejected by Fascism, modernism was in the United States confounded with culture more broadly and abstractly defined. As a result, what the mass media were defending without knowing it was the concept of modernism with all its attendant ambiguities and contradictions. Though modernism had previously not caught on in the United States, now it slipped through the back door, as it were, and established itself in the national consciousness. As things turned out, the war was to do more for modern culture in the United States than all the efforts of Partisan Review put

together."

(Guilbaut, 1983, p55)

However, this is to ignore the way in which the fall of Paris was represented in PR. The PR discourse was instrumental in the production of this conception of modernism, this equation of modernism with "culture".

26. Although Rahv never embraced Americanism unambiguously, in his introduction to the 1960 edition of Discovery of Europe (his collection of material from 1772 to the First World War by Americans on Europe) Rahv described Europe as one of the poles of American culture, the Frontier being the other. (Rahv, 1960, pviii) Just as neither the Palefaces nor the Redskins were satisfactory, writers should accept the ambiguous nature of their relation with Europe; to reject its traditions was not necessarily "American". The relations between Europe and America were ones of combined attraction and repulsion, and

"perhaps those Americans who have felt the attraction are in their way just as 'true' to the national ethos as those who have felt nothing but the repulsion."

(op cit. pix)

27. Described by Greenberg succinctly in "The late '30s in New York" as a "leader of the American Abstract Artists; he lived uptown and bought art..." Greenberg, 1965, page 231.)

28. Macdonald reports in a recent interview with Diana Trilling that the article began as a letter to the editors refuting Macdonald's position on formalism and kitsch :

"DM : I got Greenberg on the magazine. In fact, I invented Clem Greenberg. As follows. He was a clerk in the Customs House in New York City and apparently had no contact with literary circles and I wrote an article in PR, a three part series on the Soviet cinema. In the last part I made the daring speculation that the Soviet cinema was very popular with the peasants of Russia. I don't know where I ever got such a weird idea. And then I said, look at what wonderful things the Africans do. Well, Greenberg wrote an absolutely brilliant letter to the editor refuting this whole position, called 'Avant Garde and Kitsch'.

DT : "His most famous piece.

DM : But it began as a letter to the editor and he was absolutely right. He pointed out that the first thing that these marvelous native tribesmen in Africa and Australia, who do such wonderful abstract work, demand of the explorer is not the works of Picasso but picture postcards, gaudy, horrible. So I said, listen, you're right, this is too good for a letter to the editor. And that's how it all began. Now, as for his suddenly bursting into the Nation as the art critic, I'm not so sure that he did know anything about art. But he had something that was very important : a moralistic approach to everything. He made people feel guilty if they didn't like Jackson Pollock, that's what it amounts to. And that's very powerful medicine with all this worried, jumped-up wartime-educated public."

(Macdonald, 1984, p806)

29. In The End of Ideology Bell describes the drift of the Left intelligentsia during the forties and fifties into an anti-rationalistic skepticism which he dubbed "anti-ideological". Since they had lost faith in the "rationalistic" claims of socialism, he suggests, they found solace in Freudianism and neo-orthodox theology (Bell, 1962, p310/11.)

30. Bloom links this continued emphasis on alienation to the uniquely marginal status of the Jewish intellectual. In the 1930s they had, he suggests, submerged their marginality in a commitment to a universalistic radicalism and asserted their active role as an intellectual elite. But, in the uncertainties of the post-war period, he suggests, they "claimed to offer a uniquely appropriate view of modern society, thanks to their ethnic background.... In a world of alienated individuals, Jewish intellectuals had the best training and the most to offer." (Bloom, 1986, p151). However, as Bloom points out, there is an irony in this - their success in presenting themselves as pathfinders led to the end of their peripheral status.

31. Epitomised by Koestler - reviews of his work by Rosenberg and Rahv were entitled "The Case of the Baffled Radical" (Rosenberg, Winter 1944, vol 11, no 1) and "Testament of a Homeless Radical" (Rahv, Summer 1945, vol 12, no 3).

32. In 1968, Paul Goodman, in the New York Times Magazine was to blame the intellectuals of the forties and fifties for allowing themselves to be co-opted and leaving the young of the sixties with no social programme.

Notes to Chapter Three

1. Today, Phillips dismisses attacks on Americanism and describes assertions that American culture is bourgeois, masculine, or racist as "kitsch politics" - a politics which looks Marxist but is a patchwork of cliches, failing to distinguish between a "critical non-conformism essential to all serious art and thought and politics" and "political and cultural self-hatred" (Phillips, 1984 p779.)

2. In 1958, Max Lerner America as a Civilization argued that with the exception of a minority, "... the strong trend among the intellectuals is toward a critical acceptance of what was called (in a Partisan Review symposium) 'Our Country and Our Culture'." (p930) but stressed it was a critical acceptance.

3. Macdonald describes them as together but fighting like hell : "staying together for the sake of the child" he quipped at the time (Macdonald, 1984 p807)

4. He died in 1973.

5. Despite his interest in American literature - Hawthorne, Melville, James in particular - and his insights into Americanism, Rahv remained "essentially a European" and "outside the American framework" according to Mary McCarthy (McCarthy, 1978, pix). All his life neither paleface nor redskin; an outsider. He never abandoned (his version of) Marxism, returning to the margins both politically (with his attacks on the war in Vietnam) and culturally (with his defense of modernism in Modern Occasions).

"Philip Rahv, one of the central forces, if not the central force behind the formation of the community, had begun to drift away from the intellectual road taken by his peers." (Bloom, 1986, p282, on Rahv in the early 1950s.)

6. In 1986, Phillips contributed to a symposium in New Critierion on "New York in the Eighties" and noted that in the past young writers and painters had accepted poverty as inevitable. Commenting on this in his introduction, editor Hilton Kramer, noted of contemporary New York that:

"What has changed, of course, is not only the price of real estate, but an entire attitude toward life. It is my impression, anyway, that the appeals of the bohemian life had begun to lose their allure for artists and writers as soon as the prospect of some real alternative made itself felt on a significant scale. It was the emergence of this alternative in the 1950s which made that decade an important turning point in the history of American cultural life" (Kramer, 1986, p2)

Americans began to believe that "a dedicated career in the arts no longer necessarily entailed a vow to poverty and obscurity" (ibid); there was a "possibility of success." (ibid).

7. Mailer had moved left from a Popular Front position under the influence of his "quasi-Trotskyist translator Jean Malaquais". Howe was in his last months of membership of the ISL (the new name for the Shachtman wing of the 1940 split in the Trotskyist party). C. Wright Mills had "come close to the Workers Party during World War II" (Wald, 1987, p275).

8. Like the others, Macdonald changed his mind later - in the Spring 1948 issue of Politics he said in the thirties he had thought he was fairly well educated about the Soviet Union... "Yet I have recently come to think that I seriously underestimated the evils of Stalinism and the degree of continuity between it and the Bolshevism of the first revolutionary decade." (Macdonald, 1963, p309.)

9. In the next issue, his friend Delmore Schwartz (who since Sept/Oct 1943 had been the only other editor) was also listed as an associate, leaving Rahv and Phillips the full editors.

10. This phrase had been described by Daniel Bell as an example of the "Word Surrealism" produced by contradictory times, and defined by him as "one who voices the liberal tradition yet through his actions helps create the totalitarian society". Macdonald in "What is Totalitarian Liberalism?" (Politics August 1945) identified the following basic features of it as manifested in New Republic and, to a lesser extent, Nation :

"1. Principles yield to circumstances."

"2. A double standard of political morality is employed."

"3. Effective power carries its own justification; to be weak is the only unforgivable crime."

"4. Abstractly put : the form is liberal, the content totalitarian."

"5. Concretely put : Soviet Russia is the repository of all political virtue."

"6. Society is the end : human beings the means."

(Macdonald, 1963, p295/6)

11. Indeed, Rahv and Phillips' refusal to condone McCarthy's activities led to a split with Burnham and his resignation from the Advisory Board in 1953. (Gilbert, 1968.)

12. Victor Serge alone expressed a continued commitment to socialism as an ideology (that is, as a political analysis and programme), arguing that one did not give up an ideology just because times (i.e. Stalinism) were bad.

13. Macdonald was explicit about this (Politics Winter 1949, in, Macdonald, 1963) as was Hook in his contribution to the future of socialism symposium : "The absurdity of assuming social laws is underscored by the atomic bomb which may destroy civilization." (Hook, 1947, p26)

14. Although her later work on the Eichmann trials with its suggestion of the culpability of the Jewish leadership - aroused strong reactions (see Howe, Barrett, Macdonald.)

15. For Wald, however, these 'new' views were based on old ideas about the nature of the Soviet Union and socialism which had been advanced by the Mensheviks. (Wald, 1987, p218)

16. Gilbert views the post-war activities of the PR editors essentially in negative terms - a loss of old faiths with no positive cause seeming to have relevance (Gilbert, 1968, p274). Yet, he says, "the old urge to choose, to commit oneself persisted." (op cit, p255)

17. He distinguished then between a popular front and a "united front" which acts together over a specific issue only and therefore where policy differences do not have to come into conflict.

18. William Barrett (in The Truants) describes Dowling as an angel (the description of him at the time, see Time) one who had "seemingly appeared, as angels do in the Bible, out of nowhere". (Barrett, 1983, p144). According to Barrett, all Dowling wanted was :

"the gratification of sharing in an intellectual enterprise and perhaps thereby of having some sense of belonging to an intellectual community, however small."
(op cit, p145)

Phillips explains that Dowling wrote to PR offering to support the magazine financially and enable it to enlarge its scope and become a monthly. The editors had mixed feelings - elated, yet reluctant to lose the status and "purity" of a little magazine and acquire the problems of more commercial publication. But "you do not say no to progress, expansion, financial stability and the opportunity to pay higher fees." (Phillips, 1983 p141) Time cited the support ("Angel with a Red Beard", vol XLIX, June 1947) as \$50,000 a year and Phillips confirms that they calculated the need for bigger offices and staff would produce a deficit of approximately \$40,000 a year which Dowling agreed to cover.

19. In March 1947, Truman announced ("The Truman Doctrine") that the U.S. would aid "free peoples" to resist threats by "armed minorities or by outside pressure." (Quoted Ward, 1985 p240) "He carefully did not name Communism as the enemy, but no one had any doubt as to what he meant" and in June 1947 the Marshall Plan was launched : "a vast programme of American economic aid to Europe. Over the next few years \$15,000 million was made available for post-war reconstruction to sixteen 'free world' nations." (ibid) An alternative view is presented by Howe : "The Marshall Plan, which only the most doctrinaire Marxists could dismiss as a scheme of American imperialism to consolidate its hold over Europe, would soon help countries like France, Germany and Italy start upon a period of relative prosperity." (Howe, 1984, p105/6) Nonetheless Howe does represent it as an attempt to bolster up "liberal, anti-communist forces" against the Soviet threat. A threat which at that time was strong and he believes fear of it "warranted". (op cit, p206))

20. Phillips, critically, describes Simone de Beavoir on a visit to New York in 1946 as admiring Steinbeck, McCoy, Sinclair, Lewis, but being ignorant of writers like Frost, Stevens, Carlos Williams, Penn Warren and Trilling, McCarthy, Lowell and Schwartz, who "might as well have been Eskimoes for all she knew about them" (Phillips, 1983, p125).

21. In Summer 1946 they announced that it had doubled since 1944, and in 1950 that it had doubled again since 1947. Phillips calculates that at its peak, during its period as a monthly, there were about 13,000 or 14,000 buyers - and they estimated there were ten readers per copy (Phillips, 1983, p145)
22. Alfred Barr provided a response from the art world when he pointed out in the New York Times Magazine that Lenin and Stalin (and Hitler) had disliked modern art so it obviously was not a weapon of the Kremlin. (Barr, 1952)
23. Indeed, while the ex-communists may have considered their St Paul status best qualified them to critique communism, others were less convinced and both Rahv and Phillips were called before a grand jury to answer questions about the membership lists of the John Reed Club (Phillips, 1983, p181/2.)
24. Hook was prepared for instance to argue that membership of the Communist Party should disqualify people from teaching posts. In 1953, he published Heresy, Yes, Conspiracy, No in which he argued that, while there should always be freedom to express dissenting ideas in a democracy ("A heresy is a set of unpopular ideas or opinions on matters of grave concern to the community. The right to profess a heresy publically on any theme is an essential element of a liberal society."); attacks on the society were not acceptable ("A conspiracy, as distinct from a heresy, is a secret or underground movement which seeks to attain its ends not by normal political or educational processes, but by playing outside the rules of the game.... a conspiracy cannot be tolerated." quoted in Bloom 1986, p224.) Communism was of course a conspiracy - but the people who should determine who were Communists should not be the anti-intellectual McCarthyites, but the academic community itself who, in an echo of the call to intellectuals in the 1930s, should come down from their ivory tower and become politically active in rooting out the communists and fellow travellers. (Hook, 1949B.)
25. In 1954 he resigned from the ACCF which he, as a right-winger, criticised because it was 'anti-McCarthy', while liberals like Schlesinger were concerned that it was not sufficiently anti. (Bloom 1986, p270).
26. Meyer Schapiro and Irving Howe were others (Bloom 1986, p270).
27. While Rahv was sympathetic to the sixties political radicals, Phillips was sympathetic to the young writers.
28. While Rahv could be described as a left anti-Communist, and Phillips a liberal anti-communist; Barrett (author of the 'hard-line' editorial "The Liberal Fifth Column") was sympathetic to the right wing of the community who were to develop into neo-conservatives. Phillips is critical of his views, and his representation of history in The Truants, suggesting that Barrett revised history "in order to fit a picture of the rise of neo-conservatism and the ebb of liberalism". (Phillips, 1983, p13)

29. When Macdonald in 1958 submitted an article "America! America!" to Encounter (founded in 1953 to combat the "anti-Americanism" which the British exhibited, Lasch 1968, p329) in which he suggested the intellectuals in their rush to rediscover their native land had produced an uncritical acquiescence, the editors refused to publish it (Lasch.)

30. The roots of the destruction of the intellectual class lay for Lasch in the collapse of the Socialist Party as a mass radical party. This destruction of socialism isolated the intellectuals and left them unsure what their role was. Instead of exploring the relation between "cultural values and political action" (Lasch, 1966, p299) as Lasch feels they should have done, intellectuals increasingly committed themselves either to direct political activism and quarrels over the virtues of liberalism and radicalism as systems of ideas, or withdrew into cultural practices.

31. He also saw no evidence of a new "movement" among younger writers - the exceptions he cited : Karl Schapiro, Randall Jarrrell, Mary McCarthy, Elizabeth Bishop, Saul Bellow, H.J. Kaplan, Isaac Rosenfeld, were all published by PR.

32. C.f. Hall's identification of "literary-moral" definitions of culture as opposed to "anthropological" (Hall, 1980, p19.) Eliot's concept of a culture was perhaps less broad than that used by others - closer to Williams than to Thompson.

33. Auden however said he would be prepared to use censorship if people were going to suffer from the consequences of a work (he didn't think they were in this case), but he would award the prize first.

34. Elsewhere, Macdonald, in an editorial in Politics, was not ambivalent - for him the autonomy of various spheres of human activity was the main consideration. While condemning Pound's "detestable social and racial prejudices" (Macdonald, 1963, p215), he applauded the award as the "brightest political act in a dark period" (Macdonald, 1963, p215). The fact that a literary prize could be awarded to a man under arrest for treason being evidence that, unlike the totalitarian USSR, America was a free society.

35. In 1970, Howe introduced a collection of his essays (The Decline of the New) written over a period of years from 1957, with the observation that they dealt not only with literary modernism, but with the possibility that he was living through it breaking up. (Howe, 1970, pvii)

Howe asserted that the better writers approached post-war society obliquely, apparently writing about something else and it was their "distance from fixed social categories" and concern with the metaphysical implications of this that led Howe to describe them as "post-modern" (p203)

Daniel Bell in The Cultural Contradictions of Capitalism also described post-war American culture as "post-modern", but for him it was the logic of modernism carried to its extreme. He identified three "realms of

society - the economic, political and cultural. (In the foreword to the 1978 edition, Bell rejects descriptions of him as a neo-conservative, and distinguishes between his position in the three realms. He is, he asserts, a socialist in economics; because here the community must take precedence over the individual, with the basic needs of all being met by a "social minimum". A liberal in politics; because here the individual should be the primary actor, not the group, the law/state should treat people equally (equality of opportunity) not aim to make them equal. A social minimum should be established as a baseline, but above this there should be (in the spirit of functionalist stratification theory) differentials to reward those with merit - who should be free to dispose of their excess above the minimum as they wish. A conservative in culture; because he is a respecter of tradition.) The "cultural contradictions" of capitalism lie in the separation of the realms and the contradiction between the drive to efficiency in the economic, the drive to equality and participation in the political and the drive for self-expression and self-gratification in culture.

Culture for Bell was "the effort to provide a coherent set of answers to the existential predicaments that confront all human beings in the passage of their lives" (pxv) and therefore required continuity - the passing on of the knowledge of how the previous generations resolved those predicaments. Culture should not be indiscriminate, there are standards, judgments can be made and cultural authority asserted. Modernism had erased both the continuity and the standards with its emphasis on self-expression and endless change.

In a similar (but negative), analysis to that of Howe, Bell continued that, in its assertion of the autonomy of culture, modernism attacked the bourgeois order; it is the avowed enemy of the bourgeois world view (rationalist, matter-of-fact, pragmatic.) Initially the capitalist economic drive and the cultural drive for modernity showed a common individualistic impulse, but the obsession with self-exploration soon came into conflict with the rationalism of work and it was the economic sphere that became dominated by the cultural - production has become geared to the demands of the "life styles" (which with their status differences have replaced classes) created in culture. In the mass society, mass consumption dominates. The culture itself has become trivial, the endless search for the new, for the shock which cannot be found because the new has become institutionalised. Here he departs from Howe, arguing that this is because no one defends bourgeois culture - the avant-garde has not been incorporated by capitalism, on the contrary, it has won the battle, destroyed the opposition.

36. In his 1962 introduction to Against the American Grain (a collection of essays whose common theme was "the influence of mass culture on high culture" pix) Macdonald suggested that there were two logical solutions to the vulgarisation of high culture by mass culture :
"a) an attempt to integrate the masses into high culture, or b) a contrary attempt to define two cultures, one for the masses and the other for the classes."

By class here, he explained, he meant intellectual elite, and noted that when he first wrote "Masscult and Midcult" in Politics in 1944 he favoured a), by 1953, when a revised version appeared in Diogenes, he

was "edging toward" b), and by 1962, he felt it was the "only practical solution". (px) He himself attributed the change to either "hardening of the arteries or belated maturity". (Macdonald, 1962, px)

37. Mass and Midcult were not for Macdonald "popular culture" in the sense it may be used today. High culture was not always opposed to mass or midcult. These were new phenomena, phenomena of mass society. In the past the masses had had a 'valid' culture of their own "Folk Art". Masscult was, to some extent, a continuation of folk art, but folk art had grown from below, it was a culture shaped by people to fit their own needs. Jazz, he felt, was the only survival of folk art.

Thus folk art can be equated with contemporary usage of the term popular culture. See for instance the Open University course on Popular culture In the section "defining our terms", four uses of the term are distinguished :

1. quantitatively - as in well liked by many people
2. as a residual category - referring to those cultural forms "left over" after High Culture has been defined
3. more typically in academic debate, perjoratively - as a synonym for mass culture and as a contrast with a more "organic" folk culture of the past
4. or, in a contrary usage - as "those forms of cultural activity and expression that are firmly and clearly rooted in the creative impulses of the people or particular sections of the people" (p83).

It is suggested that what is needed is a definition that falls somewhere between 3. and 4. :

"Somewhere between popular culture as an 'imposed from above' mass culture and popular culture as an 'emerging from below' spontaneously oppositional culture, and a definition which would enable one to focus analytically on the relationships between the two. According to such a definition, popular culture would be viewed as an area of exchange between the culture and ideology of the dominant classes in society and the culture and ideology of subordinate classes, of 'the people'." (Bennett, 1982, p86)

For Macdonald, Folk art and High art were class cultures, and the blurring of the lines between the classes "however desirable politically" (Macdonald, 1962, p34) had been unfortunate culturally.

"Folk art was the peoples' own institution, their private little kitchen-garden walled off from the great formal park of their masters."

Mass cult however was imposed from above, a commercial creation. Masscult had broken down the wall between the class cultures, "integrating the masses into a debased form of High Culture and thus becoming an instrument of domination." This fact he argued would, if nothing else did, "expose capitalism as a class society" however, the integrative capacity of Masscult was utilised even more strongly in the Soviet Union; their masscult was "both worse and more pervasive", a fact which was not readily apparent or recognised because (departing from his analysis of Soviet Cinema in 1938) its form differed, aiming at "propaganda and pedagogy rather than distraction". But it too was imposed from above and exploited rather than satisfied the needs of the

masses - if for political rather than commercial reasons (Macdonald, 1962, p14)

38. Diverging from Greenberg's assessment of them, Macdonald suggested that the action painters and the "beatnik academy of letters" (p57) tried to shock the Midcult audience but without effect -

"The more fantastic their efforts, the more delighted are their Midcult admirers. '*Pour Épater les Bourgeois*' was the defiant slogan of the 19th century avant-gardists but now the bourgeoisie have developed a passion for being shocked." (Macdonald, 1962, p57) they were merely a "lumpen-avant-garde" (op cit, p58).

This sentiment has been expressed elsewhere from somewhat different perspectives, for Burger, for instance, the methods of the avant-garde have been recuperated and neutralised by the Art Institution. Bell also argues that the new has lost the power to shock and experiment has become institutionalised but, while Burger looks to the avant-garde to destroy the institution of art, to integrate art and praxis, Bell attacks modernism's "erasure of the distinction between art and life" (Bell, 1979, p xv), its emphasis on experience and self-expression rather than tradition. Unlike most of the PR writers, Bell sees modernism, the avant-garde, as having successfully destroyed the bourgeois world view and gained "hegemony in the culture" (op cit, pxxi). The fact that there is no longer an avant garde is in his opinion because modernity has triumphed. Modernists might like to think of themselves as an "adversary culture" (Trilling) but they are not.

High Culture, Macdonald continued, had apparently spread in the age of post-war affluence, but it was a case of consuming rather than creating. Old work (work that had been "stamped PRIME QUALITY by the proper authorities") was being "caught up" with, but there was no properly discriminating audience, no "cultural community" (Macdonald, 1962, p61) of the type necessary to sustain an avant-garde. The avant-garde was an elite, not one based on wealth or birth necessarily, but on taste. Macdonald was not against Kitsch as such, but rather the threat it posed to 'real' culture :

"If there were a clearly defined cultural elite here, then the masses could have their *kitsch* and the classes could have their high culture, with everybody happy" (op cit, p34)

But instead, the compromise of Midcult was reached which threatened to become the norm.

39. In the sixties Phillips was to become more enthusiastic about new work.

40. Bloom reports that Howe in an interview said that Rahv had initiated the article : "He wasn't a very courageous person; he wouldn't stick his neck out. He wanted such a piece to be written, but he wouldn't write it himself. So he commissioned me to do it..." (quoted in Bloom, 1986, p282.)

41. Howe had joined the Young Socialists in 1935 when he was 14; a supporter of the Socialist Appeal faction, he had moved with the expelled Trotskyists to the SWP in 1937 and with the Shachtman faction

to the WP in 1940 where he became editor of Labor Action. After war service in Alaska he returned to New York where his disagreements with the Workers Party leadership started in 1948. In 1952 he resigned, rejecting the "third camp" policy in favour of becoming "the socialist wing of the West" (quoted in Wald, 1987 p322). He worked for Macdonald on Politics, from which vantage point he joined with Macdonald in criticising PR's "increasing sedateness" (Howe, 1984, p115). For Howe it was important to attack PR because it was : "the vibrant center of our intellectual life" and he sent Rahv an attack on PR's post-war retreat from Marxism. Although Rahv didn't publish it he did offer him reviewing work, starting a fairly strong if ambivalent - critical yet admiring - link with the magazine. In 1954, discontented with the rightward turn of most of his former colleagues, he started Dissent with Coser, Schapiro, Geltman and Plastrik; later commenting "when intellectuals can do nothing else they start a magazine". (Howe, 1984, p234) In a footnote to The Decline of the New, he reported that while "This Age of Conformity" was "polemical", apart from a few gratuitous sentences, he believed "its main thrust still holds" (Howe, 1970, footnote, p232.) Lilian Hellman praised the article as a "distinguished piece" (Hellman, 1976, p86) in the context of her criticism of PR for not taking a clear editorial position against McCarthy.

42. Later, in The American Communist Party his 1957 "critical history" written with Lewis Coser, they argued that intellectuals are "gatekeepers of society", who, with their "trained receptivity to new ideological currents" are among the first to criticise the status quo, to confront society with its contradictions. They are "strategically placed to facilitate or hinder the penetration of ideologies that might corrode traditional patterns of life." (Howe and Coser, 1957, p515).

43. In the symposium "Our Country and Our Culture", he had taken issue with Barrett's equation of Marxism and Leninism/Stalinism (see page 278) and had declared that for him Marxism was still "the best available method of understanding and making history" (p577).

44. "It is a society in which ideology plays an unprecedented part : as social relations become more abstract and elusive, the human object is bound to the state with ideological slogans and abstractions - and for this chore intellectuals are indispensable, no one else can do the job as well. Because industrialism grants large quantities of leisure time without any creative sense of how to employ it there springs up a vast new industry that must be staffed by intellectuals and quasi-intellectuals : the industry of mass culture. And because the state subsidizes mass education and our uneasy prosperity allows additional millions to gain a 'higher' education, many new jobs suddenly become available in the academy : some fall to intellectuals."

45. Interestingly, in The American Communist Party, exactly the same argument is used in relation to intellectuals and the Communist Party :
"Like the institutions of mass culture in our society, the Party learned to appreciate the uses to which intellectuals could be put, and it learned that to use them effectively it could allow them neither to remain nor entirely to cease being what they had been. The party wanted them because they were intellectuals, but it did

not want them as intellectuals. It needed them for their knowledge, their talent, their inclinations and passions; it insisted that they retain a measure of these endowments, without which they would be of no use to it whatever. And what was still more astonishing in this grandiose deception; the party persuaded the intellectuals not merely that it was their duty to submit, but that submission was good and joyful and spiritually renovating."
(Howe and Coser, 1957, p284)

46. In "This Age of Conformity" Howe presented a contemporary analysis which parallels more recent retrospective analyses of the role of intellectuals during the "Cold War". Lasch, in "The Cultural Cold War : a short history of the Congress for Cultural Freedom", argued in the sixties (he later joined the Board of PR) that intellectuals are identified with the modern state and its interests. Lasch's analysis differed in some respects from Howe's however. While both emphasised the incorporation of the intellectual into the state, Howe argued that the intellectual then became unable to function as an intellectual, while Lasch (as does Guilbaut) emphasised the importance for the state of the intellectual continuing to operate 'freely' outside the formal bureaucratic apparatus. Howe was concerned with the incorporation of intellectuals into policy making and implementation positions; Lasch with more indirect construction and transmission of ideology. Howe presents the intellectuals as consciously acting a role (whether to disrupt or to propagate an ideology - pro or anti the status quo), whereas Lasch emphasised that the intellectuals were blind to the way in which they were being used:

"Especially in the fifties, American intellectuals, on a scale that is only beginning to be understood, lent themselves to purposes having nothing to do with the values they professed - purposes, indeed, that were diametrically opposed to them."

(Lasch, 1968, p322/3)

and Guilbaut that it was the, genuine, attempt to distance their work from overtly political ideologies which made possible the utilisation of the art of the Abstract Expressionists.

In the fifties and sixties, Howe continued to develop the position on modernism illustrated in PR in the late thirties and early forties. For him, modern literature was "difficult" literature, its difficulty a sign of its modernity. Its authors revolting against the prevalent contemporary style(s), the work embodying his/her "unyielding rage against the official order" (Howe, 1970, p3). Since writers challenge the assumptions of their day, their impact is revolutionary, whether this was their intent or not. This modernism must always 'make it new', engaged in an endless struggle against the dominant order - a struggle which, should it win, it would have lost : after a time modernism "must struggle in order not to triumph" (p3, emphasis original), c.f. Burger. Modernism need not come to an end, but it does fall upon "days of exhaustion" (op cit, p4). The avant garde had constituted a "special caste" (op cit, p15) on the margins of society, but it had been assimilated - the "bracing emnity" of bourgeois society had given way to "wet embraces" (op cit, p16). Additionally (in an echo of the attack in PR on the "failure of nerve" in the early forties), the confusion of

values in the "mass society" of the post war decades left writers adrift in a shapeless world, unable to focus their resistance.

For Howe the tragedy of the New York intellectuals represented in PR was that "they came late" (1970, p217, emphasis original) - at the end of the modernist experience, when the battle had already been won, when modernism was no longer a literature of opposition, but becoming consolidated in the academy. For a brief period at the end of the thirties, aesthetic and political radicalism came together, but after the second world war this avant-garde moment was dissipated, both political and aesthetic commitments were left behind - "ideology" was abandoned, the avant garde idea was replaced by the "style of fashion" (op cit, p236) as intellectuals raced, or stumbled, from novelty to novelty. But this was not modernism; the search for the new had become "the predictable old" (op cit, p259). While the modernists of the thirties had confronted nihilism, the swingers of the sixties trivialised alienation and removed the threat of nihilism by complying with it. The New York intellectuals were left uncertain, attracted by the claims to modernism of the new art, yet reluctant to abandon their critical standards.

The PR of the sixties, he felt, betrayed a

"hopeless clash between its editors' capacity to apply serious standards and their yearnings to embrace the moment."

(op cit, p262)

47. In 1957 Rahv had taken a teaching post at Brandeis and had become decreasingly involved in PR. Phillips now dominated the magazine with the support of new critics like Richard Poirier. While not whole hearted in his support of the new work he was enthusiastic about some of it, notably that of Susan Sontag. For many readers however, the PR of the 60s was jaded and uninspiring, influenced by fashion not conviction, see Howe. So too, Rahv was disappointed in modernism. Introducing a selection of work from Modern Occasions he said that there was no true "avant-garde" any more, the "cultist mannerisms" of the work that aspired to be so were all that was left.

Notes to Discussion

1. In the last year the events in the Soviet Union, China and Eastern Europe which have so decisively (at present) challenged institutionalised Socialism/Communism have underscored the drive to rework socialism and communism.
2. Nationalism has been a key element in the Conservative project - in justifying Defence, in resisting a European Federation, in the Falklands and, most recently, in response to German Reunification. The Left has also turned its attention to this, most notably in the examination of The Making and Un-making of British Identity (History Workshop.)
3. There are closer parallels with the Communist Party activity in relation to Americanism in the late thirties and the anti-communist activity in relation to the term Liberal in the late forties.
4. "... postmodernism as it is generally understood involves a radical break, both with a dominant culture and aesthetic, and with a rather different moment of socioeconomic organization against which its structural novelties and innovations are measured: a new social and economic moment (or even system), which has variously been called media society, the 'society of the spectacle' (Guy Debord), consumer society (or the 'société de consommation'), the 'bureaucratic society of controlled consumption' (Henri Lefebvre), 'postindustrial society' (Daniel Bell.)"
(Jameson, 1984, pvii)

NOTES TO APPENDIX ONE

1. Eastman noted caustically, in his introduction to his translation of Trotsky's writings published as The Real Situation in Russia, that in the US "the worst deprivations of the exploiting oligarchy are always undertaken in the name of 'liberty' and 'democracy' and... the 'Daughters of the American Revolution' are the most fervid anti-revolutionary body in the country." (Eastman, 1928, pviii)

2. The Communist Party made an ill-fated attempt to form a Farmer-Labour movement in 1922/3 when they formed an alliance with Fitzpatrick's 1919 Farmer-Labor Party and after his withdrawal were instrumental in organising the unsuccessful Federated Farmer-Labor Party. Attempts to ally with la Folette were rejected and the openly Communist Foster-Gitlow slate in 1924 gathered few votes. (Howe and Coser, 1957, Chap 3.)

3. According to Bell, the socialists failed because they could not reconcile their utopian "ethics" with the pragmatics of "politics", while the Communists - who had no such problem since they adopted whatever means were appropriate to their ultimate goal - made little headway in the US because of this lack of scruple. (Bell, 1962, p296)

4. American aliases were common among those with 'foreign' names. Irving Howe gives three reasons why people adopted (and retained) American party names in the thirties : for security; out of romanticism; and because they felt they had a better chance of reaching the American working class. In retrospect however, he personally feels the main reason was a desire among Jewish intellectuals to discard their past and break away from families and traditions. (Interview, New York City, August 1986, and Howe, 1984)

5. Of course these opinions would not have been unrelated to the pressure from Moscow to unite and form a legal party, but there was apparently significant opposition to becoming legal among the American party and in 1921 the opponents were in the majority while Ruthenberg was part of the minority who wanted the legal Workers Party to be the arm of American communism. (Howe and Coser, 1957, Chapter 3)

6. The proceeds from sales were used to fund the launch of the Trotskyist CLA's Militant.

7. In their conclusion they are explicit about this - the early socialists/radicals they argue were individualists, but Stalinism was anti-individualist. This was one of its, ambivalent, attractions since the Party provided security in a society where anomie was pervasive, especially among marginal groups like intellectuals. Other commentators have suggested that while the party organisation may have undermined the possibility of long-term commitment among Americans, it was, paradoxically, the certainties of the party programme (Reisman, 1952, p38) and the elitism of Leninist vanguardism that attracted a

"dispossessed intelligentsia" (Bell, 1962, p297; and Lasch. See page 287/8.

NOTES TO APPENDIX TWO

1. In the thirties, Whitman was praised in International Literature and D.S. Mirsky ("Walt Whitman, Poet of American Democracy") used the triumph of realism argument to validate Whitman. Whitman "affirmed actuality" (Mirsky, 1937, p19), represented the concrete relations of American democracy in his poetry, even if in his ideas he nurtured illusions.

2. This analysis was, of course, rejected by the International Union of Revolutionary Writers (formed in 1928 from the 1927 International Organisation of Revolutionary Literature. Homberger, 1986, p131/2) (see Storks, 1934).

3. Drawing on archival sources, (Aaron, 1977, p280/81) and Homberger 1986, p129-32, and footnote 31, p227), note that by the National Convention of the JRCs in 1934, there were 30 Clubs with over 1,200 members, a JRC Bulletin, the various literary magazines, and regular talks, courses and exhibitions.

4. Homberger argues that this was an unfortunate time to adopt this line. Just as the Americans were discovering Proletcult it had lost its independence in the Soviet Union :

"Not for the last time, Americans were poorly informed about events in the Soviet Union and found themselves enthusiastically supporting positions which were being abandoned there."

(Homberger, 1986, p119/20)

Nonetheless, while Proletcult itself might have been restricted by Lenin, supporters of proletarian culture in the Soviet Union were more successful than their opponents in internal struggles, and RAPP had emerged as the dominant, if temporarily, cultural force by the late 1920s.

5. Phillips must surely have been being disingenuous in commenting on his own association with them that they were "associated more closely with the Communist Party than I realized at the time." (Phillips, 1983, p33)

6. Gilbert notes the criticisms of NM made at the Conference, and in the special issue of Literature of the World Revolution and the injunction to be wary of and re-educate those allies of petty-bourgeois background and takes this as a strengthening of distrust of intellectuals :

"Whatever indigenous distrust of intellectuals already existed in the American movement was thus reinforced by similar attitudes coming from the Soviet Union. And during the early 1930s the New Masses and the communist intellectuals continued the process of purging their ideological ranks of elements deemed untrustworthy because of their literary interests or their reluctance to follow the lead of the party. One implication of the Russian advice, one deduction from the premises of proletarian literature could eliminate this problem of intellectuals. Perhaps true proletarian

literature, a small minority of critics concluded, could be created only by workers."

(Aaron, 1977, p104/5).

This analysis, I feel, misrepresents the dualism of the Kharkov policy. There was a difference between policy at home in the Soviet Union and abroad : Gold in his article on the Conference noted that the approach recommended to the United States did not apply within the Soviet Union itself. Abroad fellow travellers were "still necessary allies" (Gold, 1931, p6) but in the Soviet Union they were no longer to be tolerated - all writers were to be merged into the All-Russian League of Proletarian Writers.

7. The tours of Harlan County were sponsored by the National Committee for the Defense of Political Prisoners (founded in June 1931 by intellectuals, writers and artists as an adjunct to the International Labor Defense, Wald 1987, p56/7). In 1933, the NCDPP dissolved when a dissident group (some of whom were associated with the Trotskyists) walked out in a row focused on two issues : their claim that the Party should organize a united front against fascism, and a call for the ILD to dissociate itself from racist remarks made by an attorney in the Scottsboro case. (Wald, 1987, p60).

8. See, for instance, the symposium on "How I came to Communism" contributed to by Frank, Fadiman, Hicks, Anderson, Wilson (NM, September 1932)

9. Once a "Literary Experimenter" (Aaron, 1977.)

10. However, in this piece Freeman included a report he had made to the JRCs in 1932 in which he expressed concern that the Party might be being too liberal to the fellow travellers. It was necessary to make sure they were educated into Marxism.

11. Eastman caustically commented in Artists in Uniform "I blush to record 'the whole series of serious defects' for which those trembling editors of the New Masses received such a dressing down as might flatten a worm into the mud, but would certainly produce a recoil in any creature possessing the rudimentary lime-deposits of a vertebrate organisation. It was received by them with shouts of joy, or to quote their own statement - for exaggeration is unnecessary - 'with enthusiastic approval'." (Eastman, 1934, p22).

12. e.g. Harry Carlisle and Kenneth Rexvoth from California.

13. Intellectuals were represented as one of the two classes that do the work : "the class of brain workers." (League, 1932, p3)

14. In November 1932 the 40th anniversary of his literary activities was celebrated in the Daily Worker and in December Rahv publicised a Gorky festival to be held that night asserting that proletarian literature was a reality and Gorky its inspiration. (Rahv, 1932B.)

NOTES TO APPENDIX THREE

1. The letters received from others are annotated in crayon (the archive notes that this was done by Trotsky or sometimes his secretaries) drawing attention to points to which he responds in his answers. The letter from Macdonald has the word "independent" underscored.
2. In November 1937 he told Farrell he awaited the first issue with "great interest" (Trotsky, 1976, p48.)
3. This letter was published in Fourth International in March-April 1950 and is contained in Leon Trotsky on Literature and Art ed. Paul N. Siegel.
4. Trotsky underlined several names in the PR letter : Karl Korsch, Boris Souvarine, Bertram Wolfe, August Thalheimer, Fenner Brockway.
5. In February, Rahv wrote, for the editorial board, expressing their sympathy over the death of Trotsky's son Sedov (Rahv, 1938E.) This, prior to Trotsky's receipt of Rahv's response to his criticisms was interpreted by Trotsky as meaning the editors had understood the letter not as a rejection, but an attempt to clarify the issues with a group of "gifted, sincere, and honest intellectuals." (Trotsky, 1938B)
6. "Trotsky of all the Marxian theorists is the only one to have written literary criticism, for Trotsky not only saw in literature a mirror of society but he was acutely conscious of those qualities which, taken together, make up the special vision, of a work of art." (Phillips, 1938, p15/16)
7. It was dated July 25th 1938 and translated by Macdonald and his wife. Trotsky's letter, containing the assertion that the revolution had found "her greatest interpreter" in Diego Rivera, had been written from Coyacan, Mexico where he had been staying with Rivera and Frieda Kahlo. Peter Selz, quotes a letter from Breton authorising him to reproduce the manifesto, as it appeared in PR :
"There is, however, cause to specify (as I have done several times since then for reprints in French) that although this manifesto appeared under the signatures of Diego Rivera and myself, Diego Rivera in fact took no part in its inception. This text, in its entirety, was drawn up by Leon Trotsky and me, and it was for tactical reasons that Trotsky wanted Rivera's signature substituted for his own. On page 40 of my work La Clé des Champs I have shown a facsimile page of the original manuscript in additional support of this rectification."
(Selz, 1968, p57/8)
8. Workers newly recruited to the Party need not be put on "probation" (Trotsky, 1976, p297) but intellectuals must have a period of at least 6-12 months probation, after which they should be given specific tasks. Intellectuals who had come from the Stalinists were to be regarded with particular caution.

NOTES TO APPENDIX FOUR

1. To become a popular position among radicals in the post-war era and maintained today in the journal New Politics.

2. Labor Action was originally the title of the organ of the American Workers Party and was fused with the CLA's Militant in 1934 to be the Workers Party's New Militant. In 1936, after the dissolution of the WP and the members' entry into the Socialist Party, it was revived as the magazine of the California branch of the SP under Cannon's editorship. In August 1937, the California branch was suspended, the New York Trotskyists expelled and a month later all Trotskyist members were expelled. The title then remained dormant for three years. (The SWP used Socialist Appeal which had been started in 1934 by the left of the SP and became the focus of the Trotskyist "Appeal Caucus" in the SP.)

3. These developed from an article written for the New International (Macdonald, 1984.) In Memoirs of a Revolutionist he explains that he was stimulated by the Nazi breakthrough in Europe in June 1940 to make a study of Nazi society and wrote a 30,000 word article about it being bureaucratic collectivism for NI. When the editors attacked it and would only publish 4,000 words, Macdonald responded in March 1941 with an 8,000 letter to his comrades rehearsing his grievances and making some "minimum demands" (Macdonald, 1963, p21) - being restored to the NI board, and having another 4,000 words of the article published. When they weren't met he resigned.

NOTES TO APPENDIX FIVE

1. The AAA was formed in 1937 as a oppositional gesture by the visual artists comparable to PR's relaunch in its rejection of both the Popular Front's Stalinism and Americanism (Guilbaut, 1983, Chap 1.)

2. Flax ("Fiction Wars of Art") has suggested that art objects cannot "tell us how they should be talked about" (Flax, 1984, p2), that art stands in a subordinated rather than reciprocal relation to an art criticism which organizes the reception of art. A work of art may possess "an irreducible core of elements that both limit and entail the kinds of things that can be said about it", but, despite the fact that this presumably cannot change, the interpretation and evaluation of it does. This Flax suggests, can only be attributed to a change in the critical discourse, which he contends (borrowing from evolutionary biology) is pre-adaptive. That is, a "critical language has first to be in place before a beholder can use it to respond to a change in the artistic environment". The language is not, and he argues cannot except on rare occasions, be a reflexive response to changes in art, but rather, when faced with a new form, the viewer/bricoleur runs through his/her stock of available critical tools.

Once a critical language has been "attached" to an art work however, a dialectical chain of "reciprocal influences" (p14) shaping both art and criticism is created. Occasionally a new "discursive practice" (p13) may be initiated such as that originating with the debate between Diderot and Goethe. Goethe's essay on the Laocoon (1798) constitutes, he suggests, the "first fully articulated statement of 'modernist' or 'formalist' or 'esthetic' art criticism..." (p8); an approach developed and refined by, among others, Greenberg.

3. Macdonald had made his point about the Russian masses' conditioning by asking why peasants should prefer Repin to Picasso since Picasso's abstract technique was at least as relevant to their folk art as Repin's realism and concluded that it was because they were conditioned to do so. Greenberg went on to argue that in Repin's battle scene the peasant would recognise his life and, thus finding no discontinuity between art and life and having to make no effort, would be attracted. Peter Wollen points out that this painting was in fact "imaginary" (p 41, Komar and Melamid) referring us to the postscript Greenberg added in 1972 to the essay as reprinted in Art and Culture that to his dismay he later learned that Repin never painted a battle scene and that he had attributed someone else's painting to him thus revealing his ignorance of nineteenth century Russian art. This would not however seem to make the picture "imaginary".

4. Not all cinema historians agreed with Macdonald's sweeping condemnations. Ian Christie has recently argued that the films of the thirties were both more innovative and more independent of the State than Macdonald suggested. (Taylor and Christie, 1988, p9.)

5. He distinguished between subject matter and "content" - which all art has - and elaborated on the point in an "Art Chronicle" of 1948 (Greenberg, 1948) in response to a criticism of abstract art by Geoffrey Grigson in Horizon. Being without "subject matter" he said, was not the same thing as being without an "end". All art has "content" - means are content.

6. Also the starting point for Guilbaut's exploration of How New York Stole the Idea of Modern Art.

7. Bell suggests that the traditional pattern of a small "coterie" of avant-garde artists working experimentally on the margins of society was disrupted in the Twentieth Century and the most obvious example is the success of the Abstract Expressionists. Initially rejected by the public, they soon came not just to be acclaimed, but to "set the taste for the public". Now "the artist makes the audience." (Bell, 1979, p39.)

8. The subject of one of Macdonald's articles ("The (American) People's Century", Macdonald, 1942) and apparently a remark made at Phillips' house in the fifties (Phillips, 1983, p240).

9. James D. Herbert argues that integral to the ascendancy of Abstract Expressionist art was a putting in place of a critical vocabulary which presented the artist as heroic individualist; as apolitical, as American - a replacement for these ex-leftists for the Proletarian subject as historical actor. (Herbert, 1984.)

For the PR editors/contributors however, while American sculpture and painting might be avant-garde they considered the post-war literature to be nihilistic, derivative and empty self-indulgence; representing action/experience for the sake of action/experience - post-modernist in fact. For themselves, they were not apolitical, they had lost faith in the proletarian as historical subject some time before and had put in his/her place as historical subject in the fifties a coterie of intellectuals linked to the ruling political oligarchy instead of (as in the early thirties) to the Party or (as in the forties), "homeless".

NOTES TO APPENDIX SIX

1. Which had replaced both New Masses and Mainstream in 1948.
2. Lasky was an ex-leftist and contributor to PR. Born in 1920 he was known as a Trotskyist sympathiser during his years at City College and the University of Michigan. As a graduate at Columbia in 1940 he was a supporter of the Workers Party, but moved away from its position under the influence of Hook. (Wald p277/8)
3. "The truth is that the operation of the Americans for Intellectual Freedom employed questionable tactics, such as intercepting mail and messages and issuing misleading statements in the name of the conference - tactics that upset all but the most hardened veterans of Communist and anti-Communist organizational fights. Even Sidney Hook, himself not a political virgin, was annoyed at the things done in his name when he became aware of them. Others, like myself, who usually did not know all that was going on, protested strongly but saw no way out of the situation other than to repudiate the entire activity or to recognize the unpalatable political reality that the ones who do the work control the organization." (Phillips, 1983, p149)
4. "In 1959 Partisan Review needed a compatible tax-exempt organization as a publisher. We talked with several organizations, including Freedom House, but they raised so many questions about our politics, implying we were too liberal, that it became evident that such an association would never work. Clearly some organizations dedicated to 'freedom' had their own inflexible line, and the term was often a strategic weapon against totalitarian regimes, mostly Communist ones. The American Committee also had its own political outlook, but it did have on its board people with cultural and literary sophistication who had a high regard for Partisan Review and for intellectual quality in general, despite their disagreements with some of its political contents. They also appeared to understand that a literary and cultural publication like Partisan Review had to be open to a variety of opinions - naturally within certain boundaries - and that an experimental approach was just as necessary to politics as to literature.

After some discussions with the leading members of the board, the American Committee became the publisher and legal owner of Partisan Review. It was clearly understood that the Committee was not to provide financial support, nor to have any control over editorial matters. The editorial autonomy granted the magazine, as I saw it, was partly a gesture of respect for the traditions and the importance of Partisan Review, partly a recognition that such editorial freedom was a common practice, rooted in the history of literary publications." (Phillips, 1983, p164/5) An article PR published in 1967 by Norman Birnbaum criticising the CCF caused dissension and the Committee wanted to sever the links. Phillips reports however that "instead of insisting that the magazine be detached from the Committee because of its suspect politics and cultural irresponsibility, they proposed to dissolve the Committee, on the grounds that it had outlived its usefulness - which was hard to

argue against because it was true. We needed time, however, to make other arrangements. The Committee could now afford to be gracious, and to give us a few months - longer if necessary - to settle our affairs." (Phillips, 1983, p168)

5. The Trillings in memoirs have been less cautious - both Diana and Lionel Trilling have said they believed the funding to have come from the CIA and that all the executive did so. (Bloom, 1986, p264)

6. "At best I was treated as an outsider, and Partisan Review as a competitor. From the beginning I was kept out of its councils and meetings - an exclusion I have often wondered about. The Congress was founded at a meeting in Berlin, in 1950, to which neither Rahv nor I was invited; nor were we aware of it until the formation of the Congress was announced. So far as I know, Sidney Hook, James Burnham, Mike Josselson, Arthur Koestler, Raymond Aron, Elliot Cohen, and Irving Brown, the representative of the American Federation of Labor in charge of anti-communist activity abroad, were at this founding meeting. Obviously, neither Rahv nor I was considered personally or politically reliable enough to participate in the formation of an organization which at some point acquired a secret connection to the CIA." (Phillips, 1983, p154)

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