

kids' love of porcine metaphor) have "run violently down a steep place into the sea."

Reviewed by C. P. IVES

The Plural Pronoun

The Right to Say We, by Richard Zorza,
New York: Praeger Publishers, 1970.
214 pp. \$6.50, paper \$2.50.

THE NUMBER of books analyzing and explaining the student protest movement is proliferating at a rapid pace. Some are polemics in the cause of the protesters, others are attacks on them; still others make an attempt to be "objective," pointing out what are deemed to be valid criticisms expressed by the young rebels as well as the invalid tactics employed by them. Few books in any of these categories, however, can be called primary sources for an understanding of what is really happening on our campuses; but *The Right to Say We* does provide an important aid to what contemporary college students are thinking and doing, though this is not necessarily because it succeeds in presenting any particular "message" of its own.

Richard Zorza is a young Englishman and the son of Victor Zorza, an internationally known authority on the Soviet Union. He was a sophomore at Harvard during the student strike of April 1969, and in this book he reveals his generation's intense, almost mystical sense of unity and communion in its disenchantment both with the academic institutions in which its members find themselves and with the larger society into which they feel their lives have been "programmed." Young Mr. Zorza makes many statements which by any standard must be considered outrageous.

He tells us that he and the other *revoltés* "knew only too well that all the changes of recent years had come after the actions of extremists." The historical evidence that extremism soon begets an opposing extremism, that violence provokes counter-violence, that great social revolutions have led more often than not to reigns of terror, is something that he overlooks or chooses to ignore.

In describing the mass strike-meeting at Harvard the author mentions one student who had the audacity to announce that "he wanted to get back to his physics." Zorza goes on to relate that "this was met with astonishment—more sorrow than anger. To most it seemed incredible that anyone would react that way when so many were, for the first time, experiencing so much; when so many were trying so hard to improve the world, including physics." Just how the science of physics is improved by occupying the Harvard Yard, Mr. Zorza neglects to explain; but that many in the student movement have rejected the life of the mind, and are in fact distinctly anti-intellectual, is something that comes through repeatedly in his book. At one point, for example, he insists that the university "is only worth defending as an engine for change in society as a whole. The moment that it abandons that aim it becomes only a tool for the self-interest of its members. Then the case for preservation becomes much weaker. . . ." Here young Zorza is saying in effect that if the university does not promote social change—meaning, of course, the radical social change demanded by the New Left—then it has lost its reason for existence.

What troubles the reader is the seeming innocence with which such assertions are put forward and the assumption by the author that they are virtually self-evident. No one, apparently, has ever informed Mr. Zorza and others of his generation and opinion about what a university was meant to be. Woodrow Wilson's concept of a university—now seventy-two years in the past—seems to have disappeared.

A little world; but not perplexed, living with a singleness of purpose not found without; the home of sagacious men, debaters of the world's questions every day . . . and yet a place removed—calm science seated there, recluse, ascetic, like a nun, not knowing that the world passes, nor caring, if the truth but come in answer to her prayer.

For many the concern with truth has been replaced by an active and passionate involvement in the affairs of the day. Mr. Zorza and those for whom he speaks seem to believe that the university is responsible for everything and capable of all things. They expect the university to end the war in Vietnam, to eliminate racism, to eradicate poverty and to decontaminate the cities and the streams. They want, as Professor Henry Steele Commager has said, "the university to be contemporary—to deal with every issue as it arises, plunge into every controversy, offer courses in every problem, be involved in everything." Dr. Commager has contrasted the activists' attitude with the traditional idea of the academic community:

They are unable to understand . . . that the university is the one institution whose conspicuous duty it is not to be involved in everything, and above all not to be so involved in contemporary problems that it cannot deal with problems that are not merely contemporary. . . . The business of the university is to preserve the heritage of the past, to anticipate the problems of the future, and to train students able to solve the problems of the present.

To Richard Zorza the issues which precipitated the Harvard strike—the question of the ROTC on campus, the question of university expansion, the question of a student rôle in decision making—were not important in themselves. What *was* important was "the right to say 'we'; that right is more precious than all the others to this confronted generation. It is a right that

gives us an identity and allows us a dignity." Similarly, in discussing the mass-meetings he is less concerned with the validity or absurdity of the charges and demands than with the emotional atmosphere generated. "We will remember," he writes, "the thrill of those meetings, the sense of unity, the sense of commitment, the love of one's fellow man." He recalls that "for once in our lives we were all people, we were all relating, people in love and in hate, getting three hours sleep at night because we had to act. . . . More important than our ability to intellectualize together is our ability to respond to each other."

Rather than a rebellion against the dehumanization of the modern world, the student movement, as described by Richard Zorza, appears to be a lemming-like generational drive in unknown directions. Harvard was not the enemy because it was especially vicious, inhumane, or bigoted. It seemed to be the enemy only because, like the mountain "it was there"; and young persons with no real life purpose, no sense of identity, thought they had found both in collective passion and in the simple unity of their condition as students. What impressed this young Englishman was not the alleged "suffering" which produced the student strike, but the emotional catharsis which had little to do with the professed issues. He tells us that

there was the moment, at the beginning of the meeting, when I was just so overwhelmed by the humanity that was crowded into the stadium to decide its own fate that I almost broke down and cried. I had my head in my hands; it was so incredible, so total. And what was so wonderful was that everyone seemed to be feeling the same emotions.

Beneath the surface of what often appears to be, in Abbie Hoffman's phrase, "revolution for the hell of it," Richard Zorza has disclosed to us part of what it really is that haunts and agitates the young. He tells his contemporaries that "if we do

not win now, then this society is condemned to be turned over in all finality to the machines, the machines that will allow some life to continue, but will end in a lifeless society." The New Left has often been compared to the English Luddites, who at the time of the industrial revolution tried to wreck the machines in the hope of preserving their ancient handicrafts. The Yippies now urge us to "pull the plugs out of all the computers," and the rebellion that so many in the New Left seem to be initiating is not so much against Americanism or capitalism as against the whole of the technocentric modern world. Many not of the New Left share their concern, but these should warn the would-be revolutionists that nihilism and destruction will not save us from dehumanization but will drive us toward it at an even more rapid pace.

Mr. Zorza laments that some of his fellow rebels "will surrender and go to die in that special section of suburbia that its reserved for the strugglers who have surrendered." Others, perhaps, will continue to fight against bureaucracy, against inhumanity, against the false gods of materialism and "progress." But they will succeed only if they associate themselves with the best of the past. We stand, as T. S. Eliot said, "on the shoulders of giants." Richard Zorza and that part of the college generation for whom he speaks are guilty of what Elton Trueblood has called the "sin of contemporaneity," the view that the past has no relevance. Zorza's book is woefully uninformed, it is written emotionally, it is often irrational; yet it is these very qualities that give it importance. For to understand what the collegiate New Left is saying one must go to it directly, and discount or dismiss the often mistaken interpretations by oldsters and outsiders.

Reviewed by ALLAN C. BROWNFELD