

David S. Collier: Man and Editor (1923-1983)

*If in the morning I hear of the right way,
and in the evening die, I can be happy.*

—Confucius

DR. DAVID S. COLLIER, the editor of *Modern Age: A Quarterly Review*, died on November 19, 1983, after a short illness, in Pompano Beach, Florida, where he resided. His untimely and unexpected death at the age of sixty came as a grievous shock to the friends and colleagues who have admired his dedication to the conservative movement in which he played a pioneering and distinguished role. He earned a doctorate in political science at Northwestern University, where he was a pupil of Kenneth Colegrove and William M. McGovern. With the latter he co-authored a much praised book, *Radicals and Conservatives* (1958), of which one reviewer wrote: "Seldom in the history of political philosophy has a *credo* been introduced with a more balanced and complete analysis of ideologies." Though he held visiting professorships at the American University of Beirut and at Tokyo University, he did not formally pursue an academic career, but rather devoted most of his life to producing and editing *Modern Age*, a "conservative quarterly" of thought and opinion, which he founded in 1957 with Russell Kirk, a man of letters, and Henry Regnery, a "dissident publisher." During a long and active association, he served in

various editorial capacities; in 1970 he became the editor. "The editorial (and publishing) function," he repeatedly said, "is no less essential than the ideas which flow from the tip of the writer's pen."

For those who knew and worked with him, he exemplified high quality of character and intellect that induce respect and loyalty. He was a man of generous and enthusiastic nature, always kind and sensitive in personal relations. Well-read, discriminating, and catholic in his tastes, he disclosed unflinching courtesy and tact in his responses, but this facet of his personality as man and editor should not be interpreted as mere diplomacy. On the contrary, in his search for conservative principles of order and belief, he was firm, incisive, candid, and toughly honest. These qualities dignified his personality as a man and also defined his achievement as an editor. Indeed, for one who had not been trained professionally as an editor, he demonstrated instinctive proficiency—and leadership. He had no pretensions, shunned arrogances, and rejected all poses, as he fulfilled his editorial function with conviction and with simplicity. In keeping with these civilizing virtues, it is interesting to recall here, he wrote all his letters in an in-

imitable and arresting script, his pithy comments revealing insight, vision, and wisdom.

David S. Collier will be remembered for his humaneness, his warmth and buoyancy, his strong allegiances to friends and causes and ideas, to those conservative values and verities that he demarcated and defended as an editor. He will also be remembered for his constant efforts to maintain critical excellence in *Modern Age*, which, under his editorship, gained national reputation and influence. He not only secured famous contributors but also encouraged—"recruited" was his word—young and aspiring writers. (He had an intuitive knack for quickly perceiving good writing in concert with good ideas.) These rich abilities made him a gifted editor and a helper; his contributors, in effect, became his collaborators and even his catechumens. Combining a conservative disposition with humanistic concern, he exacted precisely

those affirmative results that each issue of *Modern Age* amply confirms. He thus stamped his own character of mind on the pages of *Modern Age*, even as he helped to forge a principled conservatism that the journal conveyed with deftness and consistency. He more than satisfied the criteria that T.S. Eliot stipulates as being paradigms of an effective and successful editor: "To be a good editor requires a certain humility and tolerance as well as a positive personality: for the editor himself must give his journal its coherence and its purpose, while allowing the greatest possible freedom, within the limits of sanity and good taste, to his chosen contributors."

The Intercollegiate Studies Institute, the publisher of *Modern Age*, the associate editors, and the editorial advisors honor the memory of David S. Collier and pray for the eternal repose of his soul.

—G. A. P.