

# THE IVORY TOWER

WM. F. BUCKLEY, JR.

## *Has History Tenure?*

Mr. Robert H. Montgomery of Boston thinks Arthur Schlesinger Jr.'s obsessive partisanship has disqualified him as a historian. Mr. Schlesinger, says Mr. Montgomery, an alumnus of Harvard and an attorney, has put history at the disposal of ideology. Under the circumstances, he feels, Harvard's tenure appointment of Mr. Schlesinger is, so to speak, Reversible Error.

To illustrate his point, Mr. Montgomery cites Schlesinger's account, (in the first volume of his *Age of Roosevelt*) of the Sacco-Vanzetti case, which so indelibly marked the American psyche. Shortly after the book was published, the New Bedford (Mass.) *Standard-Times* charged Mr. Schlesinger with "deliberate distortion or, even worse, deliberate falsification."

The editorial, which Mr. Montgomery quoted in a letter of protest to President Pusey of Harvard, reproduced Schlesinger's breezy and tendentious treatment of the case ("... police picked up two Italians in an automobile filled with the innocent and febrile literature of anarchistic propaganda . . . These were the days of the red scare . . . they stood little chance as confessed radicals, aliens and draft-dodgers in a time of hysteria.") The editorial detailed the facts Mr. Schlesinger had got wrong in his jaunty chronicle; but more important than the facts twisted were the facts he had left out altogether, which turned out to be those that were most incriminating. When Sacco and Vanzetti were arrested for murder, said the editorial, "they were not carrying 'literature.' They were carrying guns. Sacco had a .32-caliber pistol containing nine bullets. He had 23 additional bullets in his pockets. The bullets were of such a rare type as to be unique; no duplicate could be found by prosecution or defense for ballistic test purposes. They matched the type of bullet found in the dead

guard's heart. Vanzetti was carrying a .38-caliber revolver, fully loaded. He had four 12-gauge shotgun shells in a pocket. This evidence, and positive identification, led to Vanzetti's being convicted of an earlier, unsuccessful Bridgewater payroll holdup, in which a 12-gauge shotgun had been used."

Rather a lot to leave out if the readers of Mr. Schlesinger, historian, are supposed to have some idea of the facts on the basis of which one decides whether Sacco and Vanzetti were executed because they were tried at "a time of hysteria," or because they had killed a man, and then exploited their anarchism to attract the sympathy (which they surely did in the seven ensuing years) of the intellectual class of six continents. Certainly Mr. Schlesinger did not intimate that there were two issues involved, one whether S-V were fairly tried, the other whether they were guilty of the crime. At any rate, if posthumous victories mean anything, Sacco and Vanzetti can take comfort in having joined the ranks of the world's most famous martyrs. "The momentum of the established order required the execution of Sacco and Vanzetti," Schlesinger quotes the publisher of the *Boston Herald*, "and never in your life or mine, has that momentum acquired such tremendous force."

Mr. Montgomery attempted to get from President Pusey, and from Harvard's Dean, Mr. McGeorge Bundy, satisfaction on the following point: If in fact Mr. Schlesinger writes not history, but a perversion of it that suits his purpose, is he entitled to a Harvard chair? "Mr. Schlesinger's political and social views and opinions are not in issue. The issue is whether a man who flagrantly and without repentance has again and again violated the rules and ethics of scholarship is qualified to be a professor of history and a teacher of youth."

That Mr. Schlesinger is unrepentant, Montgomery was in a position to prove. For although he had written to his publisher to correct a number of the inaccuracies in the original version, he had not inserted any reference to the central perversion: the omission of any mention of the artillery found on Sacco and Vanzetti at the moment they were apprehended. ("My book," Schlesinger had written Montgomery defensively, "is entitled *The Age of Roosevelt*, not *The Age of Sacco and Vanzetti*.")

Mr. Pusey conceded that Mr. Montgomery's specific charge on the treatment of the Sacco-Vanzetti case was "well documented," but added that there was no proof whatever that Schlesinger had done anything so "flagrant" as to provoke the Corporation to review his qualifications. If a professor's academic performance becomes slipshod, said Mr. Pusey, he will be punished, don't you worry: the fellow members of the faculty will lose their respect for him—"a potent form of discipline."

Potent, hell, Montgomery shot back. Who at Harvard thinks the less of Schlesinger for domesticating history to the service of the Liberal Establishment? Pusey himself would not bother, Montgomery predicted, to refer the complaint to Schlesinger's Department. Nor would he, Montgomery, take the trouble to pass the word, "knowing how futile it would be to expect that little mutual admiration society to do anything but screech about academic freedom and rude intrusion from the outside." If pressure is ever brought to bear on Mr. Schlesinger, it will be from the outside. But "while the slow process of bringing Schlesinger into disrepute goes on, his undergraduate students will continue to be taught falsehoods and his graduate students will by precept and example be taught dishonest methods of scholarship."

Dean Bundy dismissed Montgomery by stating that Lawrence Lowell, who was president of Harvard at the time of the trial and sided with the court against Sacco and Vanzetti, a) was Bundy's great-uncle, and b) would not himself, however much he disagreed with him, have taken disciplinary action against Schlesinger: "President Lowell would

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does not apply to the average Negro home. If it is not painted, it is at least freshly whitewashed. His house is no more dusty, his hogs no muddier, his overalls no more faded than any white man's. Yet Mr. Whalen implies that these are particular attributes of the Negro.

Mr. Whalen sets a lot of store by city life and speaks patronizingly of the hamlets and crossroads of Vir-

ginia where the "simple," through ignorance or fanaticism, believe in school segregation. . . .

You said in your introductory note that he is a graduate of a typical Northern College. He still remains typical of his section and also remains a victim of his preconceptions.

Manteo, Va.

KATE PATTESON

I have just read Richard Whalen's article. It was one of the most balanced and responsible treatments of conditions in the South that I have thus far seen. Mr. Whalen has achieved a remarkably objective perspective on these highly inflammatory issues. He is to be commended for his restraint and circumspection.

Mr. Whalen also shows a splendid knack of putting words together and coming out with some of the most entertaining prose-writing that I have seen in a long time. I hope that we can look forward to more of his work in NATIONAL REVIEW.

Richmond Hills, N. Y. MARY ANN FAHYS

### *The Artist and the South*

"The Quality of the South," by Andrew Lytle, in your issue of March 8, will probably receive little acclaim in the Liberal dominating circles of historical publication. Yet it is Mr. Lytle who has in this issue penned not only the great qualitative meaning of the South, but also its great arsenal of defense and of future preservation: the artist, "who will maintain the image of what makes the South a distinct and perhaps lasting way of life."

A land where man still glories in his heritage of noble and courageous renown, takes pride in his race and nationality, worships God and not science, venerates the historical tradition of his forefathers, rejoices in his cultural distinction, holds spirit over materialism, glories in the advancement of his homeland with deep patriotism, shows a fighting spirit to defend his beliefs, and most important, loves all that is dear to him with a great and passionate love, is a land worth fighting for. The South is such a land. A united South, a strong South, a cultural South, by the poet, writer, statesman and artist, a land to rise again. Dixie remembers and lives while other lands forget and die.

Oakland, Cal.

JOHN G. WHITE

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have found absurd the notion that a Harvard professor should be fired for what he did *not* write about the Sacco-Vanzetti Case." (Remember this one. If God's in his heaven, it will find a place in logic textbooks.)

And so the Administration of Harvard, by its own admission, has taken no action whatever. Perhaps McGeorge Bundy, dialing the number himself on his private line, called Schlesinger up. I can imagine a conversation about as follows: "Arthur? Mac Bundy?"

"Yeah, hi Mac."

"Okay. I've been going over all this Montgomery correspondence, and there's a trustee meeting coming up, and Montgomery sent them all copies. Tell me, Arthur, what about the goddam guns they found on Sacco and Vanzetti?"

"Oh—well, that's a complicated story, Mac, and I don't really have time to go into it."

Bundy to Montgomery (December 19, 1957): ". . . the evidence on guns and bullets . . . is more complex than your summary of it" (the rest of the letter was about Dean Bundy's great-uncle).

I happen to have a high regard for Arthur Schlesinger Jr. Let me hasten to amplify that statement before my friends slit my throat, and Schlesinger slits his. I admire the man who can do as many things as Schlesinger does, and do them so well. I admire a man of demonstrated scholarly talent who, out of a lively sense of engagement in the affairs of his country, contributes actively—in Schlesinger's case formatively—to the nation's political evolution. (The fact that Mr. Schlesinger is doing his best to make America uninhabitable is outside the point.) I go so far as to say that Schlesinger is too intelligent to treat Montgomery's criticism so frivolously. Something else weighs on him. He just can't bear to put it into his book, about the revolver and the corresponding bullets. I suspect it is because to do so would force Schlesinger himself to go back, and think through the case of Sacco and Vanzetti.

And all it means.

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