

Notes from Abroad

It is late to begin, but something must be
said.

In a land of words that never penetrate
The alien hollows of my brain, some modest
Utterance is necessary to hinge
The world to being. Even if laughter has
No language, even if a woman saw
My hesitation and came toward me
On the street, her eyes appraising mine,
Some things must not be forgotten,
All the same. The shapes of words I know
Cry out for a living throat, a voice.
Silence is my final isolation—
The sound within my tomb. I'll not be dumb
Though all the scrambled syllables of Babel
Echo through the catacombs and rise
To deafen me with decibels of tongues.
I'll speak, and she will listen, though not a
line

Is indexed in her lexicon. For something
Must be said, though late, and I must not
Forget the shapes of words I know. The
hollows

Deepen: I must begin. The woman goes.

LARRY RUBIN

A Critique of Utopian Catholics

THOMAS MOLNAR

“We must have a hard mind and a tender heart. So many people who think they have a tender heart have only a soft mind.”
Jacques Maritain: *Lettre à Jean Cocteau*.

AS THE HISTORY of heresy—so well chronicled by the late Msgr. Ronald Knox—shows, utopian thinking has had a great and continuing impact on the Christian mind. Not that utopianism—enthusiasm for paradise on earth—is necessarily and in every case radical, and thus heretical; yet a certain mentality, universally manifest in men, Catholic or not, has always tempted some people to believe in attempting fundamental changes of the human condition and to conclude alliances with others of a similar persuasion.

What is more natural than for some Catholics, especially among the intelligentsia, to try to bring about radical transfor-

mations, first in their own Church—a *society* in its own right—then in their nation, then in the entire human race? The main line of this envisaged change is identical throughout the ages: a return to apostolic simplicity and loosening (democratizing) of ecclesiastical organization and hierarchy. Catholics of the “enthusiastic” type will consider these preconditions absolutely necessary for transforming society along truly Christian lines. The Church must be, they argue, in the vanguard of history, of progress, so as to be able to communicate with and influence those intellectual and material forces which shape history at any given time. If the Church itself, weighted