

# THE PALIMPSEST

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## BRUCE BLIVEN

When Bruce Bliven graduated from Emmetsburg High School and entered Stanford University, a bright new world opened before him. An omniverous reader, a keen observer, an analytical thinker, his natural bent was toward journalism. He worked his way through college as a correspondent for the *San Francisco Bulletin*, spending his summers as a cub reporter on the *Bulletin* staff.

Upon graduating from Stanford in 1911, he wrote advertising in Los Angeles for two years. From 1914 to 1916 he was director of the Department of Journalism at the University of Southern California.

Moving to New York City, Bliven became assistant managing editor of *Printer's Ink* from 1916 to 1918. He followed this with four exciting years as chief editorial writer and later managing editor on the *New York Globe*. With such rich experiences, he was invited to become Managing Editor of *The New Republic* in 1923. He became



Editor-in-Chief in 1930 and held this position with distinction until his retirement in 1953.

The appointment of Bliven to *The New Republic* was no accident. He had already, as chief editorial writer for the *New York Globe*, revealed in 1920 the sadistic treatment of American soldiers in a military prison outside Paris which led to the trial, conviction, and incarceration of the American commander in Leavenworth Prison. In that same year, 1920, a bad housing shortage had developed in New York City. Bliven's suggestion of a "limited remission of taxes" on new apartment buildings, led to the construction of hundreds of such structures in the suburbs of New York City. This did much to alleviate the problem.

As editor of *The New Republic*, Bliven had an exceptional opportunity to get behind the scenes in national and international affairs. He interviewed Roosevelt, Churchill, and Gandhi; he worked as a journalist in Hitler's Germany, Stalin's Russia, and Mussolini's Italy. His exposé of the terrible Machado regime in Cuba made him *persona non grata* in the Pearl of the Antilles.

In a symposium on American civilization, George Soule wrote: "Bruce Bliven knows his United States from side to side and from top to bottom. . . . There are few who can observe more closely what goes on in America, interpret it more accurately, or write about it more cogently."

An ardent liberal, Bliven himself declared in



1968: "For thirty years on *The New Republic*, I was attacked for my policies by both the Far Right and the Far Left—which made me feel I must be on a correct course. I saw at first hand the attempt of American Communists to capture the mass media in the 1930's and 1940's and I am telling the story in my autobiography."

Bruce Bliven served as New York correspondent of the *Manchester Guardian* from 1925 to 1947. He has taught part-time at New York University, Columbia, and Stanford. As a free lance writer, his articles have appeared in the *Reader's Digest*, *Harper's*, *Atlantic Monthly*, *Ladies Home Journal*, *Saturday Evening Post*, *Redbook*, *McCall's*, *New York Times Magazine*, *American Heritage*, and many others. Among his books, are *The Men Who Make the Future* (1942), *Preview for Tomorrow* (1953), and *The World Changers* (1966). The present issue of *The Palimpsest* incorporates much of the first chapter of an autobiography entitled *Five Million Words Later*, on which Bliven is presently engaged.

WILLIAM J. PETERSEN