

LOUIS ADAMIC'S PERIODICALS*

J a n j a Ž i t n i k

As a founder and editor of periodicals, Louis Adamic was better known in the United States than in Yugoslavia. Apart from books, numerous brochures and pamphlets, he published as many as five hundred articles in many different papers, an impressive output for a writer, and for a person of such a wide range of interests. Naturally, his own periodicals and those he edited were published in America, only a few of his articles were translated and published in Yugoslav newspapers and magazines. Therefore a complete survey of his editorial work will be welcomed by his readers in Slovenia. Moreover, it will also be an interesting contribution to a comprehensive portrayal of the writer's literary activity in the latter part of his life.

When he embarked on a career as an editor with the periodical *Common Ground* in 1940, Adamic was no novice as far as editing is concerned. In the 1920s he had worked for some time as a journalist in California, and he had been a regular contributor, as a writer and journalist, to American newspapers and magazines for two decades until he signed the contract with *Common Ground*. This brought him in close contact with at least some editors of these magazines. There were known names among them like Julius Haldeman and Henry Louis Mencken, whom he so much admired that he became his chief formative influence in many respects. He gradually acquainted himself with the everyday problems of editorial work, from the selection of contributions to proof-reading techniques. He had encountered both in his literary work, material selection in particular, as most of his books are based on documentary sources.

During the last decade of his life, Adamic edited four different periodicals or bulletins: the quarterly *Common Ground* from 1940-42, the monthly *In Re: Two-Way Passage* from 1942

to 1943, when it was succeeded by *War and Post-War, The Bulletin of the United Committee of South-Slavic Americans* from 1943-44, and the paper *Today & Tomorrow*, which was launched in 1945. The title was changed to *T&T: Trends & Tides*, in the third number. His periodicals reflect almost all the political and literary topics he was engaged in at a given moment.

So far, of all the aforementioned periodicals only *Common Ground* has been studied in detail, along with Adamic's role as editor of the paper. It was the topic of two papers presented at the symposium on Louis Adamic held in Ljubljana in 1981. The authors were William C. Beyer from the Immigration History research Center of the University of Minnesota¹ and John L. Modic of Indiana University.² Because the subject was then extensively dealt with, it will not be discussed here at any great length. It should be pointed out, however, that *Common Ground* (along with its predecessor *The Interpreter*) was the first American literary journal which was totally devoted to ethnic and intercultural matters.³ The heading itself is indicative of the issues considered, namely, of how, on the common American soil, over sixty different nationalities could attain harmonious relationships with one another. The periodical was first published in 1940, that is, less than a year after its publisher, the Common Council for American Unity, had been founded. Adamic co-operated with its predecessor, Foreign Language Information Service, from 1934 on.

Adamic edited the journal only for one and a half years (i. e. from 1940 to 1942) and contributed eight articles in all. But he devoted a lot of his time and energy to the paper and to the institution that published it from 1934 to 1944 when he resigned his membership of the Advisory Editorial Board as well. Nonetheless he was still contributing occasional articles until 1948.⁴

When he announced the news of his resignation as editor-in-chief of *Common Ground* on an account of overwork in winter in 1942,⁵ the writer was in fact amidst a demanding publishing project. In late summer 1941 when he actually stopped working for the journal, he commenced writing his book *Two-Way Passage*.⁶ Because of the rather enthusiastic reception of this book he decided to publish his own monthly to further develop and substantiate the ideas dealt with in the book. The bulletin, *In Re: Two-Way Passage*, was the first periodical he

founded. Although it was of modest size (as most of the articles were contributed by the writer himself, individual numbers comprised merely four pages), the paper represented the start of his career as an independent publisher, which gradually developed into a significant part of his work.

The first issue of the monthly *In Re: Two-Way Passage* with the subtitle *A Bulletin Issued by Louis Adamic* appeared in January 1942, a month after the attack on Pearl Harbor, and coincided with the announcement of his resignation as editor-in-chief of *Common Ground*. In a mere four pages, he published as many as eight of his contributions, including a condensed note on the ideological basis of the bulletin. The issues he added concerned especially the new international position of America when it entered the war. In the introductory note Adamic directed the reader's attention as follows:

*"The purpose of this monthly bulletin, begun after Pearl Harbor, is to maintain contact with thousands of people who have written me in support of the ideas in my book Two-Way Passage, published by Harpers in mid-Oct. 1941."*⁷

The bulletin was issued under this title from January 1942 to September 1943, that is, for less than two years. At first it was a monthly, but towards the end of the first year Adamic started to publish double issues bimonthly to save time and money. Most numbers consisted chiefly of articles written by himself, there were, however, also extensive quotations from speeches, prefaces and articles by other authors, all concerning central topics of the bulletin.

In September 1943 the last number of the bulletin appeared under the original title. As early as the following month, Adamic converted the paper into *War and Post-War*. In that year he kept the content of the previous paper in agreement with his announcement that it was the same bulletin with only partly changed content. As the title suggests, it was a much more general paper, which means that the writer broadened the scope of the bulletin to include commentaries on the war and on American domestic affairs, but particularly on the development of international relations. All topics concerning American post-war foreign-aid to Europe, which link the new bulletin with its predecessor, were now included in the second part of the title, "Post-War".

The paper was published under the heading *War and Post-War* from 1943 to December 1944. Almost all numbers were double and issued bimonthly. From March 1944 on, his articles started to appear less frequently. In general he contributed only one article of medium length to an individual number and included more quotations or exclusive articles by other authors. This is perfectly understandable as in autumn 1943 he had started to edit *The Bulletin of the United Committee of South-Slavic Americans*, a publication of the committee whose president he was. The bulletin was not published at regular intervals: it started as a weekly in the main, continued first as a monthly, then as a bimonthly in the second and the third year to become a quarterly in the fourth (1946). Individual numbers comprised from 8 pages in the first year to 32 pages in the last.

Adamic edited the bulletin for only half a year, from its foundation to March 1944. On May 10, the bulletin published a note announcing that he had to resign as president of the United Committee and editor of the bulletin for health reasons as he had been overworking.⁸ Adamic contributed, as a rule, only one article per issue and continued to do so after his resignation.

It has already been noted that his own periodical was published under the title *War and Post-War* until December 1944. Just a month later, in January 1945, it was superseded by *Today & Tomorrow, A Paper of Information and Opinion*. Because the war was nearly over, both the title and content had to be changed to address issues of the post-war period. Like its predecessor, it was concerned with international affairs, which still made the inclusion of Yugoslav issues possible. It became *T & T* in the second number, and *T & T: Trends and Tides* in the third number (May-July 1945). The two spring numbers of the *T & T* in 1948, the so called "Resistance Numbers" seem to be of crucial importance because the articles were more aggressive and their titles forceful. Yet in fact this was not the case. The paper had been highly critical of American policy from 1946 on. Nonetheless, these two numbers received either a very positive or a very negative reception on the part of the readers who had until then just skimmed through the paper. An American reader by the name of L. J. Taylor from Connecticut, for example, wrote to Adamic saying that he used to like his first books but after the spring "Resistance Number" he was not going to buy his books any more. The reader was outraged that Adamic (and his contri-

butors) were complaining about the disregard of human rights in the United States, whereas in East European countries like Yugoslavia and Czechoslovakia this issue was plainly ignored. In conclusion, he indignantly advised the writer to leave the country and go back to where he came from.⁹

On the other hand, the more strongly opposed Adamic was to current American domestic and foreign policy, the more interested his old country became in him. More and more intellectuals in Slovenia and elsewhere in Yugoslavia wrote to him.¹⁰

The writer was anxious for his American contributors, who were all left wing and in the main members of the American Progressive Party, to be in contact with Yugoslav representatives in the United States, especially with Dr. Joža Vilfan. He even suggested that Shaemas O'Sheel, one of his regular contributors, be involved in editing publications under the auspices of the Yugoslav Information Office in New York.¹¹ Articles by O'Sheel published in *T & T* were more distinctly pro-Soviet than those by other contributors, therefore he was often violently attacked and highly criticized by some readers.¹² Yet each time he proved most adept at providing a witty answer.¹³

On January 10, 1949, Adamic informed subscribers to *T & T* that he would depart for Europe for a period of three to nine months, during which time he would discontinue publishing the paper.¹⁴

On his return from Yugoslavia he resumed his work with the paper. In 1949, he issued only one number in which he wrote about Yugoslavia and about his impressions of the country. The "Yugoslav" number, too, elicited diverse responses. Those American communists and their supporters who read Adamic's articles on the Yugoslav-Soviet split and learnt of his attitude towards this dispute only from the journal *T & T* cancelled their subscription on account of their sympathetic attitude to the Soviet Union.¹⁵ In their view, Adamic's defence of Tito proved that he had abandoned the fight for socialism.¹⁶ Yet most of the American subscribers to the journal, who were as a rule left wing, too, supported Adamic's advocacy of the Yugoslav reaction against attacks launched by the Cominform. They admired his efforts to improve international relations and attain peace in the world.¹⁷

However, some held the view that Adamic, as a Yugoslav, could not adopt a critical attitude towards Yugoslav foreign poli-

cy and the Yugoslav system. Adamic rejected this point of view as sheer nonsense, as he had been capable, even in 1933, of expressing critical views on the Yugoslav political system because of which his book *The Native's Return* (1934) was banned in his homeland and people were imprisoned for merely possessing the book. So why should the system scare him now.¹⁸ The writer had been promulgating critical views on the ruling regimes in America and Yugoslavia for one and a half decades and taking constant risks that he would suffer fatal consequences because of his open public protest, therefore such misgivings seemed rather far-fetched to him.

Let us now consider how Adamic prepared the content of individual numbers of his paper. First, he would inform his more or less regular contributors of the general scope of topics for a given issue. These were most often based on the articles he had prepared for that particular number and usually concerned topical issues. In the next few months, he would examine a number of other papers and magazines while searching primarily for data that would support his own views and conclusions. Such articles were then included in the paper in the form of short quotations. When the contributors articles were submitted to him, he would prepare a comment on some of these articles or he would refer to them in a more extensive article that he would write later on.

In 1948, Adamic subscribed to over seventy American and foreign periodicals, the cost of which came to about \$ 600 a year. Almost all the titles can be found in one of his articles published in the *T & T* in 1948¹⁹, in which he presented his method of reviewing. In the sixth year of the *T & T*, that is, in the second spring number of 1950, the paper closed for two reasons. On the one hand, Adamic was in acute financial difficulties, and on the other hand, he was pressed for time because of his intense involvement in writing *The Eagle and the Roots*. It was unfortunate, however, that by that time he had received most of the one-year subscriptions for the 1950 volume, which should have comprised at least six numbers, as well as advance payments for his book. So he got deep into debt.

Adamic's paper did not have a wide audience, only a few thousand regular subscribers. But as a rule they were regular readers, loyal to him and supportive of his ideas and views. It was noted earlier that in 1948, i.e., from the two "Resistance

Numbers" on, the paper lost part of the readership, though it attracted some others. In 1949-50, however, more readers cancelled the subscription because Yugoslav issues dominated the content.

What were the main objectives Adamic pursued in his periodicals? In chronological order, the first was the fight against ethnic, religious and racial discrimination in America, as well as the fight against violence and injustice and later any kind of mainly on against political violence. During the war he supported the Yugoslav liberation movement and took the initiative for the American foreign-aid programme to post-war Europe, especially to the Yugoslav relief campaign, which was mainly carried out among Yugoslav immigrants, but also included old-stock Americans. Towards the end of the war he also got involved in efforts aimed at improving international relations and at establishing friendly co-operation between East and West. After the war he was mainly concerned with the Trieste issue and with the improvement of Yugoslav-American relations. During his last years, the following two main objectives seemed to prevail: first, the fight against the fear of communist infiltration, along with its causes and consequences in terms of American domestic affairs, and second, a determined resistance against war industry and the increasing Cold War tensions between East and West in international affairs.²⁰ Adamic was constantly engaged in efforts for a more lasting peace, i.e., for such international legislation that would prevent the possibility of any future war.²¹

Let us now turn to the method Adamic adopted preparing his articles for publication in his periodicals. From the very first bulletin on the writer employed a technique which he favoured until the end. Its essential feature is the inclusion of quotations and letters by his friends and other correspondents, which naturally enough support his claims and speculations. In the next eight years he did not essentially change his approach to collecting information and writing his articles. All the time he enthusiastically advocated - sometimes with reservation, sometimes without - certain arguments, which were either in the form of rough outline or drawn up in detail, based on a certain starting point that seemed to him of essential importance for the social strata concerned in the United States or for the people concerned in his homeland. His contributions are not only informative, didac-

tic and propagandist, but also represent, to a certain extent, studies on a given subject.

Each title of his paper indicates a new period, a new orientation, whether it be the central idea of *In Re: Two-Way Passage, War and Post-War, Today & Tomorrow* or *Trends & Tides*. Each title represents a new goal, to which Adamic was totally committed. Almost all of his objectives, however, concern to a great extent his old country. This interest of a Slovene emigrant of the first generation is evident in his plans for the American foreign-aid for the reconstruction of post-war Europe (in the first bulletin from January 1942 to December 1944), as well as in his contributions from 1945 onwards. In *Trends & Tides* Yugoslav issues are regularly discussed by several articles in each number. In 1946 the articles on Yugoslavia moved from the first pages of the paper to the middle, whereas in 1947-48 such articles, with a few exceptions, disappear from the paper. If they are included, they appear in the second part. Yet the concern for his homeland is again the central topic of *T & T* in 1949-50. The single issue of 1949 is totally devoted to Yugoslavia, whereas in both numbers of the following year half of the space is dedicated to these matters.

The above presentation of topics raises the question whether such a selection was the most efficient way of attracting American subscribers in the United States. It certainly was not, neither was this his intention. In brief editorials Adamic often pointed out that his paper was "an unprofitable publication" and so contributions to the *T & T* sustaining fund were welcome. The periodical was published in twice as many copies as could be sold. Half of the copies were mailed, free of charge, to many different, prominent institutions and influential personalities. His publishing logic was in stark contrast to any business logic. He claimed that those who subscribed to *T & T* did not really need it, as their consciousness had already been awakened.²² His ambition then, was by no means commercial; it was political, ideological and ethically educational, in a word, "enlightening", as it is often characterized by some researchers.

Adamic's main purpose was to popularize, in a most humane, acceptable and well-argued way, ideas that could, in his view, contribute most at a given moment to the fight against any kind of injustice, repression, and social, economic and political violence. History proves that he overlooked some essential facts,

whereas others he could not have foreseen. Some even take the view that Adamic himself exerted a kind of political violence against his readers, especially against American Slovenes in general, not to mention most serious accusations made by those against whom he brought forward some incriminating arguments or even evidence. Undoubtedly, he was much hated by his enemies. Nonetheless, according to those who are well acquainted with his whole work, Adamic deserves permanent recognition for his continuous searching and checking, for his relentless warnings against the dangerous concentration of power, and for his persistent efforts for peace, the elimination of the arms industry and the friendly co-operation of nations.

NOTES

- * This paper is an abstract of a comprising chapter from the author's dissertation titled "The Last Period of Adamic's Literary Work", University of Ljubljana, Faculty of Letters, 1991.
- 1 William C. Beyer, "Louis Adamic and Common Ground, 1940-1949", Louis Adamič - Symposium, Ljubljana, Univerza Edvarda Kardelja, 1981, pp. 223-239
 - 2 John L. Modic, "Louis Adamic and the Story of Common Ground", *Ibid.*, pp. 241-253
 - 3 *Ibid.*, p. 241
 - 4 *Ibid.*, pp. 243-245
 - 5 "Louis Adamic's notice of withdrawal as editor", *Common Ground*, II (winter 1942), p. 2
 - 6 L. Adamic, *Two-Way Passage*, New York and London, Harper, 1941
 - 7 In *Re: Two-Way Passage*, II (February-March 1943), p. 1
 - 8 *The Bulletin of the United Committee of South-Slavic Americans*, II (10 May 1944), p. 3
 - 9 Center of Scientific Research of the Slovene Academy of Sciences and Arts, The Institute for Slovene Emigration Research, Marija Vilfan Collection, folder 1, Leon James Taylor to Louis Adamic, 14 May 1948
 - 10 *Ibid.*, folder 2, Bogo Komelj to Louis Adamic, 29 November 1948
 - 11 *Ibid.*, Louis Adamic to dr. Joža Vilfan, 2 October 1948
 - 12 *Ibid.*, Helen Hamilton to Louis Adamic, 28 November 1948
 - 13 *Ibid.*, Shaemas O'Sheel to Helen Hamilton, 4 December 1948
 - 14 *Ibid.*, folder 3, A letter to T & T subscribers, 10 January 1949
 - 15 *Ibid.*, L. L. Lock to Louis Adamic, 13 November 1949
 - 16 *Ibid.*, Warren Batterson to Louis Adamic, 28 January 1950
 - 17 *Ibid.*, R. R. G. to Louis Adamic, 9 November 1949; *Ibid.*, folder 4, Hank Mayer to Louis Adamic, 30 January 1950
 - 18 *Ibid.*, folder 4, Louis Adamic to M. Shoaf, 5 April 1950
 - 19 L. Adamic, "How to Resist", *T & T*, IV (October-December 1948), p. 18

- 20 Adamić writes extensively on these problems in the unpublished chapter of his book *The Eagle and the Roots: "Game of Chess in an Earthquake"*, The Library of the Slovene Academy of Sciences and Arts, Manuscript Dept., Louis Adamić Collection, folder R 67/III-2, chapter 4.
- 21 One such article is: Howard Griffin, "The Non-Violent Individual, Or, Has the Conscientious Objector a Future?", *T & T*, VI (early spring 1950), pp. 26-27.
- 22 L. Adamić, "The Problem of Publishing *T & T*", *T & T*, III (October-December 1947), p. 24

POVZETEK

PUBLICISTIČNA DEJAVNOST LOUISA ADAMIČA

J a n j a Ž i t n i k

Kot publicist je bil Adamić mnogo bolj poznan v ZDA kot v tedanji Jugoslaviji. Poleg knjig, številnih brošur in pamfletov je objavil kar petsto člankov v najrazličnejših periodičnih publikacijah, kar je za pisatelja in človeka s tako širokim spektrom drugih dejavnosti zelo veliko. V zadnjem desetletju svojega življenja je bil urednik štirih različnih revij oziroma glasil: četrletnega glasila Common Ground od leta 1940, mesečnika In Re: Two-Way Passage od leta 1942 do 1943 oziroma War and Post-War od jeseni 1943, glasila The Bulletin of the United Committee of South-Slavic Americans od leta 1943 ter lista Today & Tomorrow, ki je začel izhajati leta 1945 in se je v tretji številki preimenoval v Trends & Tides s kratico T & T. Kateri so glavni cilji, ki izstopajo iz Adamičevih biltenov? Kronološko gledano je na prvem mestu boj proti etnični, verski in rasni diskriminaciji v ZDA, vzporedno z njim pa vseskozi tudi boj proti vsakršnim krivicam in nasilju v ameriški družbi, zlasti proti socialnim krivicam in pozneje proti političnemu nasilju. Sredi vojne in po vojni se Adamičeva skrb deloma preusmeri v politično podporo jugoslovanskemu osvobodilnemu boju, v priprave na ameriško pomoč povojni Evropi ter še posebej na zbiranje materialne pomoči za staro domovino, največ med jugoslovanskimi izseljenci, pa tudi med anglosaškimi Američani. Že proti koncu vojne se tem ciljem pridruži Adamičevo prizadevanje za boljše mednarodne odnose in

za prijateljsko sodelovanje med Vzhodom in Zahodom. Po končani vojni je v ospredju njegova skrb za tržaško vprašanje in za izboljšanje jugoslovansko-ameriških odnosov. V zadnjih letih izstopata dva glavna cilja: na notranjepolitičnem področju boj proti makartizmu ter njegovim vzrokom in posledicam, na mednarodnem prizorišču pa odločen odpor proti vojni industriji in naraščajoči hladni vojni med Vzhodom in Zahodom. Adamič si je nenehno prizadeval za trajnejši mir oziroma za takšno mednarodno zakonodajo, ki bi preprečevala možnost vsake naslednje vojne.