

SYMPATHY FOR MISS TRILLING

By ALAN MAX

THIS SPACE is devoted today to an expression of sympathy for the anguish experienced by Miss Diana Trilling in the pages of the current New Leader.



Miss Trilling, who labels herself an "anti-Communist liberal" but who in my book of labels, belongs to the right-wing of the right-wing of Social Democracy, has been brought to a state of high indignation and frustration by the new American Forum for Socialist Education.

The title of Miss Trilling's article in the New Leader is "McCarthy, the Liberals and a New Communist-non-Communist Forum." But this does not begin to tell the suffering which the article itself discloses.

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MISS TRILLING feels that the American Forum is a catastrophe and an evidence of the failure of her own crusade of recent years. "Majority liberal opinion in this country," she declares, "bears a direct and major responsibility for this newest infiltration."

Miss Trilling does not explain exactly how one "infil-

trates" a discussion forum, but she does explain in considerable detail how the majority of liberals have betrayed her and those who think like her.

American liberals, according to Miss Trilling, are a pretty hopeless lot. They revealed this with their "overestimation" of the danger of McCarthy. And to make matters worse, they were not content with rejecting McCarthy and his methods of "hunting down Communists," but they "virtually rejected the proposition that there ever had been or could be Communists in America, or a Communist danger."

The late Senator McCarthy used to make the same complaint about the liberals, for in later years he was an unhappy person too.

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THE FORMATION of the American Forum, it seems, was just about the last straw for Miss Trilling. Ironically, it followed on the collapse of the organization to which Miss Trilling had devoted her energies: the American Committee for Cultural Freedom. The closing down of the Committee, says Miss Trilling, is "perhaps the most striking demonstration of the defeat of those few of us who have all along supposed, and continue to suppose, that freedom of culture in this country still has much to fear from the incur-

sions of Communist totalitarianism."

Miss Trilling tells us about the "conflict in this last decade" between those like herself whom she calls "anti-Communist liberals" and those she calls "anti-anti-Communists"—a term which was used by the late lamented McCarthy himself as he castigated the liberal community when it finally rose up against him.

Miss Trilling discloses that the collapse of the American Committee for Cultural Freedom resulted from the fact that "there were many more anti-anti-Communists in the American Committee than there were simple old-fashioned anti-Communists." (I suspect that the majority viewed themselves in different terms—as anti-Communists who wanted to defeat McCarthyism; and they probably looked upon Miss Trilling and her colleagues not as "old-fashioned anti-Communists," but as obsessed people who would make it impossible to fight against McCarthyism.)

MISS TRILLING is pained by the fact that liberals are following with interest the discussions and differences in Communist ranks. She suggests that these discussions, differences and even the unfortunate—in my view—departures from Communist ranks were all carefully rehearsed.

"There are those of us who are crude enough to doubt whether there have in truth been as many alienations as are now advertised," she writes. "It is just possible, of course, that some of these withdrawals were conveniently arranged, or even pre-arranged before Khrushchev's speech, in order to distribute Communist agents in places where they would otherwise not be welcomed and ensnare a new generation of fellow-travelers."

You can see that Miss Trilling has it bad and evidently could use a good long rest with plenty of fresh air and nutritious food.

BUT WAIT—for we have not yet reached the end of Miss Trilling's bitterness. "What is most remarkable and disheartening" about the formation of the American Forum, she tells us as her cup runneth over, is that it "could take place in the spring of 1957, just six short months after Hungary." She adds that the socialists and liberals in the American Forum now propose to sit down and hold public discussions with "the same Communist Party" which is "in control" in Hungary.

But the Hungarian events themselves undermined the MacCarran Internal Security Act theory that various Commu-

nists' Parties throughout the world are the "same party." The varying reactions among Communist Parties to the Hungarian events demonstrated this. In this country, the Communist Party did not hesitate to place a major responsibility upon the Hungarian Party and on the first Soviet intervention, although there were differences on other aspects. Actually, the questioning, re-assessments, differences of views on Hungary among American Communists—along with the undoubted process of democratization, however uneven, following the 20th Congress—have thawed out the positions of some anti-Communists, socialists and liberals. Some healthy re-assessing seems to be beginning in some of those quarters too.

Worst of all, the public discussions and debates among Communists and non-Communists, which fill Miss Trilling with dread, have been going on publicly for the past year and with no undermining of American democracy. Quite the contrary.

But all this is wormwood and gall for poor Miss Trilling—so much so that I find it embarrassing to write about. Frankly, I would never have bared her grief publicly had she not done it first in the pages of the New Leader.