

INERTIA

Inertia also means the inability to act. This inability might be the result of physical inability or it might be the result of an attitude of mind resulting from a deliberate refusal to act because of the physical and mental strain that such activity might entail. When the last named form of inertia is evident, then the person concerned is really facing a difficult time because this type of attitude is psychological and not easily cured.

The Russians have a word for it. They call it "Oblomovism." "Oblomov," a novel by Ivan Goncharov, was written about 1850. It is the story of a fine and sensitive character ruined by apathy and lack of willpower. In creating that character Goncharov immortalised the name *Oblomov* as standing for a type, just as the names of Pecksniff and Babbit have come to be used for other types.

In our daily lives *Oblomovism* is self-evident. Our refusal to face life, our refusal to do anything more than existence demands i.e. eat, drink, sleep and daily office or lecture work, has become so self-evident that we have taken it for granted as the natural thing to do while our cultural leaders who, a decade ago were mostly found in our universities and educational institutions, but are to-day difficult to localise because of their lack of real leadership and therefore standing within the vague sphere of cultural "activity," have been unable to contribute anything towards the cultural (however vague the term may be) advancement of our country. Their contribution to our culture have been so small, that they could not inspire even a materialist to understand the difference between a hospital and a monument. These cultural Oblomovs are the creators of our so-called "materialists" and have driven a few thinkers to warn us of the danger of a "Decline of the West." Most so-called "materialists" are disappointed idealists.

Materialism as a force is dynamic. It destroys so as to build on the old foundations something else, something that would contribute to our material well-being and leisure. The materialist has no regard for the past, except when he has political aspirations; *an old building is to him valueless and should be torn down*. He has a peculiar sense of power because he knows that the so-called "cultured" i.e. the historians (that body of men who each have collected a vast number of documents in a book without one single original thought of the writer in it—originality is not easily recognised, reproduction is praised) the poets (who believe they are inspired), novelists (in America a "best-seller" is the aim), critics (all those who believe that they "know" what is art and culture. Some want to serve it to the masses on a plate like a piece of steak) and all those who by their looks and attitude give the impression that they are,

all accepting that they are because they have not produced anything and in the still distant future “*intend*” doing it, knowing full well that it would never happen; yes, knows that these “*cultured*” men (and sometimes women) are the instruments through which he could reach the masses. If need be he would contribute something towards a “*chair*” at a university (*astrology and graphology* being possible subjects. The more students, the better the University, and please don't fail the first years or a special bursary would be awarded to a student to make a “*scientific*” study of the cause of failures and how it could be overcome), or he might make a special grant to an institution (orphanage, hospital, S.P.C.A., or anything else like an *association for the preservation of old buildings* or anything that is of “*historic*” value, an old stone under which a hero — who to-morrow might be a scape-goat, slept; a tree under which an *indaba* was held or under which some other idealist died. — A violent death being preferable). His grant would be solemnly noted, his photo “*splashed*” in a newspaper—opposition papers preferring a dead silence—his good deeds remembered under bold headlines—the bad ones are kept in reserve until after his death, and his son, they usually have a son, finds the post of lecturer, or some other post for which these days you need no other qualification than the assurance of your unoriginality, is assured. The father himself thereafter has a difficult time deciding between the chairmanship of a “*Kultuurbond*” usually combined with the possibility of becoming a Member of Parliament (culture, politics, Parliament), or at the worst a senator. If he is now opposed in any way, the word “*culture*” is enough to let the voters stream to his aid. If they do not vote for him, he resigns and threatens to—sometimes does—join the opposition. If they too reject him, he quietly returns to his business expanding it perhaps into an organisation that controls the nation's wealth (national honours shower on you then) or he can play bankrupt (a debtor's prison for him).

Deep within it all, in the very walls of a Hollard house, in the lines of Kruger's statue, in the old *Raad Zaal*, in the plans for the new Provincial building, in everything around us, and that includes the old, the new and that which is to come, there is to be found culture, civilisation and—*inertia*.

JAARVERSLAG :

GENOOTSKAP OUD-PRETORIA

Met genoeë lê ek die 1954 jaarverslag aan u vir goedkeuring voor.
In die loop van die jaar het die ledetal tot 130 uitgebrei. Hierdie