



Next month, in St. Louis, the 1964 Gold Medal of The American Institute of Architects will be awarded to Italy's Pier Luigi Nervi (seen here under the concrete dome of the Olympic Sports Palace he built in Rome four years ago). To help celebrate the award of the AIA's highest honor to this great engineer, FORUM asked another creative engineer, Mario Salvadori, Professor of Civil Engineering and Architecture at Columbia, to write this appreciation of Nervi's importance to our time.

PIER LUIGI NERVI

The architectural needs of our culture are characterized by dimension and number.

The technology of our time has supplied the bare ingredients for their satisfaction.

But a new kind of man was needed for the task.

A man unawed by purely esthetic tenets and unwilling to accept nature as unsurpassable, but so deeply respectful of esthetics and nature as to accept their challenge and transcend them both; steeped in engineering, but not stunted by the routine of the physical sciences; imbued with mathematics, but unmesmerized by the theoretical results of complicated calculations.

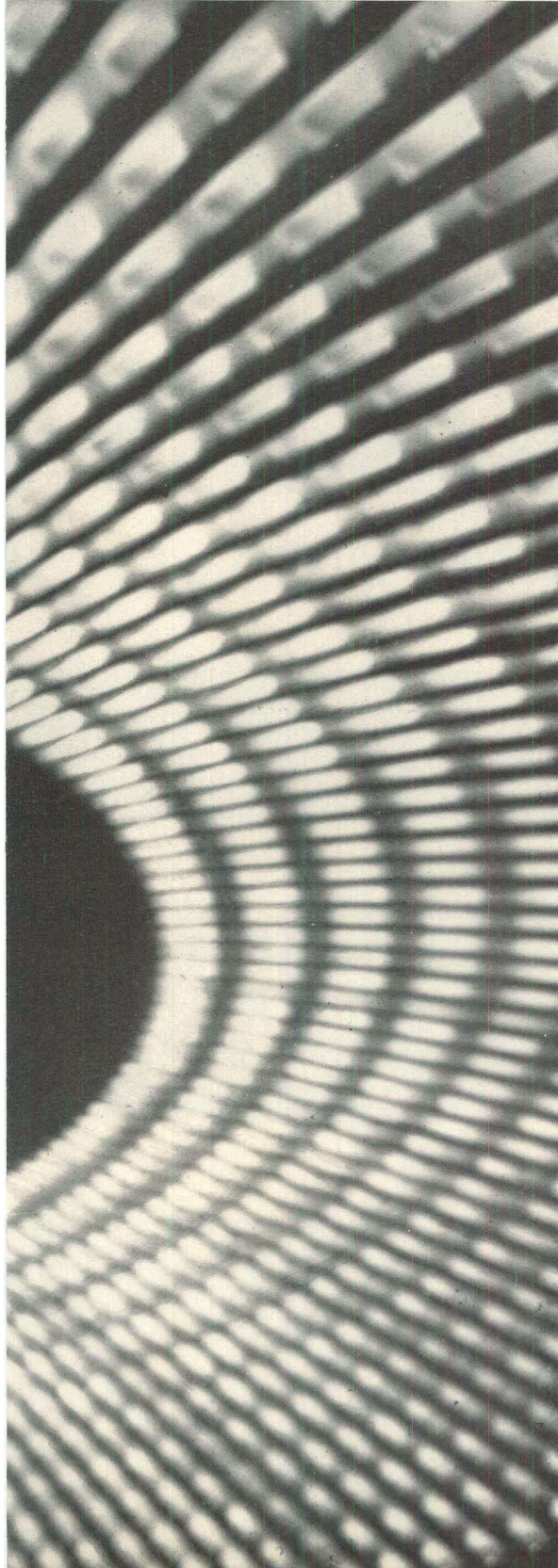
A man capable of persistently striving towards the best achievable realities.

But even such a man would not be up to the appalling task unless he were practical enough to take upon himself the actual realization of his dream and to avoid lowering his standards through physical compromise; unless, as a poet of our time and a financier, he were capable of assessing the subtle influence of different kinds of money on different kinds of architecture; unless he were a leader of men, joyously driving them to the limit of sacrifice for the sake of integrity.

But even then this man would not be truly representative of our age if he were not ready to give of his time to the spreading of the word, so as to create a phalanx where he was a lonely figure; if he were not willing to use the fine art of persuasion to kindle in others the fires burning in him.

And this man would not be a truly modern man if he did not choose the world as his province.

Creators and lovers of architecture all over the world agree that Nervi is such a man, but Pier Luigi would deny it. And this humility is the final stamp of his greatness.



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