RESISTANCE

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Essays on the War

I. IN QUEST OF THE LESSER DISASTER

Never have brilliant minds probed more deeply the evils of a society than in present-day America. Precisely here is the tragedy of liberalism. Is there some anarchist criticism which we could not translate into the idiom of liberalism? Let the subject be economics, culture, community, industry, war. They see the evils, they take them for granted. Nearly perfect clarity!

Quite for granted! which means: in any crisis these sharp insights are . . . disregarded. (How could it be otherwise, when the evils are integral to the society these persons have chosen to defend?) The liberal intelligentsia **takes for granted.** "Ah yes of course." In short, their working image of man is identical with the way man lives now. We must be satisfied, they insist, that American man has developed a way of life less oppressive to the mass, more tolerant to the man of culture, than any other. (How long can it comfort them, that in Russia matters are worse?) To talk of something significantly better, as an aim for action, would be "not realistic." Bowed down with a sense of "responsibility for world leadership"—and is it surprising that when their mouths open to speak . . . they merely repeat their grave responsibility? For they have nothing to offer the world.

Or let us ask a different question. What is their Utopia? We hear talk of reform, partly sensible, partly naive: racial equality, a more liberal penal-legal system, fuller social security, honest government. But there's a false note. They are utterly contemptuous of the way of life of the "fortunate" members of society, with their mountain of TV sets and chrome cars and huckstered literature. How then do they build a politics around elevating the most down-trodden to this bourgeois proletarianism? Are they trying to conform to some obsolete image of politics? Are they appeasing a conscience disquieted by class egotism?

Logically enough—and this is the drift of contemporary thought—the Utopian, the unrealist, with his noble image of man, is an Aberrant to be dealt with scientifically. The child and adult should be "integrated in their group" (meaning "State"); that is, should conform.

Let us speak plainly: liberal thought is in a state of wretchedness when its only **real** concern is with its own right to survive. It is in a state of hypocrisy when it does not tell the multitude: you are fighting for **our** well-being, for you there is only a dull life and a quiet funeral.

There are few doctrines so vicious as that which pretends to impose on us the moral obligation to follow man into the depths of his degradation. Is this phrase too strong to describe the wrathful fire with which man is punishing man? Is not the rational animal man degraded when he kills for survival? Is it not degradation when men make war—not even for a **worthy** goal—but just to go on as we are?

If those who see the evil had **at least** the courage to renounce the politics and militarism! To say: if this is man's life, if this cruel dilemma is the essence of all politics, then away with politics! We will live, create, think, and act brotherly; the other is senseless. Instead they are the self-appointed strategists, the propagandists and counter-propagandists, the culture-warriors and syke-warriors, of the American State.

Friends! This society is oppressive, because it cripples our children, it condemns the majority of us to robotism and to a social idiocy, our communities do not exist, production is organized for profit and war, our society is ruled by profit, power and war. In this society man can be a well-fed, well-housed, well-informed caricature of man. But man has shown the nobility of which he is capable. At this black hour—to stake everything on a brute survival?—to follow the chariot of militarism in quest of the lesser disaster?

Friends! A little patience, a little dignity . . .

II. THE AMERICAN CENTURY

The British ruling classes, we must agree, are permeated by a spirit of love for their Empire. When Mr. Churchill said, during the last war, "I did not become the King's First Minister to preside over the liquidation of the British Empire," he made clear his conviction that the world outside the British Isles was good, the source of all the wealth and power of Britain, a thing to be guarded with loving care.

This does not imply a spirit of benevolence toward subject peoples. In the home country, centuries of class struggle, civil war and rebellions are encrusted in elaborate traditions of rights and liberties; with respect to persons of darker skin, commonly called savages, such restraints on the rulers do not exist. The colonial imperialist pays bounties on savages, or enslaves them, or destroys families, religions, nations, cultures; sometimes with the carpenter's indifference to the sawdust which falls to the floor, sometimes with the unshatterable will of one who domesticates a wild dog. Yet this same imperialist, just as he goes to endless pains to acquire the art of statecraft and diplomacy, will surrender a part of his empire rather than see it torn to pieces.

Of the Russian rulers we can say: these people are devoured by envy of the accumulated wealth and industry of the West. They desire to incorporate this wealth, and like the hunter who wants to eat his game, they don't want to fill it full of shot. With the savage rationalism of a parvenu ruling class, they think nothing of enslaving their own people; their characteristic solutions are very direct (liquidation). Here a new empire assimilates the wealth of its dying neighbors, at once murdered and self-murdered.

We cannot say such things of America. This country experienced its time of greed in the last century, when a continent was eaten up—and woe to him who lay in the path of our pioneers and our robber barons! The capitalist free-booters did not neglect the wealth of Latin America; and even now many are pleased to regard the Pacific as an American lake, or to look to the British example. But the wealth to be extracted from the outer world cannot compare with the wealth produced by our technicians and workers. To certain interests, and of course to the army, Arabian oil is a serious affair; to the high-placed classes whose opinions become public opinion and whose subjective perceptions become national policy, neither this oil nor any other aspect of the outer world is **necessary**. (A Hoover doctrine of withdrawal could not be entertained even as an hypothesis by the British or Russian ruling classes.)

Worse still, the trans-oceanic world has come to seem a grievous source of trouble. That world embroils us in its wars; its aggressors menace us; always we must go to work and save it from suicide, pouring our wealth into the steel of war and the coffers of bought allies. In brief, the colors of that world out there are worse than dull, they are very ugly.

(Again and again and again, the knight rides out and slays the dragon. It is really getting tiresome, especially since he doesn't like foreigners anyway.)

The attitude toward the outer world increasingly implicit in the position of America is hostility. As is known, the material equivalent of hostility is destruction.

II

Now we are in a position to unravel the mystery of American foreign policy.

First of all, the lesser mysteries:

Why did Roosevelt insist on the unconditional surrender of Germany, against Churchill's advice, and, it is now argued, with the consequence of prolonging the war? Why did Roosevelt insist on bombing France? Why did Truman authorize the atomic bombing of Japan when that nation, its sea and air power destroyed, was at the point of surrender? Why is America determined to impress orientals with its power to destroy? Why the devastation of Korea by air power? Why American reliance on bombing as a method of warfare? Why, in short, do "military considerations," maximum destruction, the victory of annihilation, so frequently take precedence over political considerations, which reckon with consequences?

The answer would seem to be twofold: (1) that American policy does not aim at the exploitation of the foreign nations; therefore the loss of their wealth is no loss to America. And (2) that American policy is founded on the conviction, seldom made explicit, that there is no final solution to the "aggressor problem" except the cessation of existence on the part of these countries.

But also the greater mystery which has, unlike the preceding, the appearance of realism rather than error: How does the American government **know** that Russia is bent on war and world-rule?

(We are not concerned here with whether the American conception happens to be correct. In fact, it is nonsense to speak of either State as "intrinsically" this or that: States exist only in interaction with each other; this interaction commits them to a war, and unless there are vast alterations in at least one of these societies, this war will proceed to its self-determined end. So the partisan imputations of aggressorship, or self-imputations of peace-lovingness, are just verbiage. "Wars are made by men." But we see that their actions tend to be fixed by the situation they are in; in seeking the causes of a war, therefore, we must look to the relationships of power which presently dominate men. There remain to be explained, in each case, the reasons why presumptively reasonable men commit themselves to unreasonable actions; in short, how do the "leaders" of America know that Russia is "aggressive"?)

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The "leaders" of America have not tested the possibility of peaceful relations with Russia and China. The overt behavior of these States — the Russian penetration of Europe and gestures toward the Indian Ocean, the Chinese attempt to annex South Korea— are, on their face, consistent with the behavior of **all** States whose war victories have broken down the barriers to expansion to "natural" continental frontiers. (This does not, of course, "justify" Russia's actions; plainly, where Russian or Red Chinese rule has brought a change in the quality of living, it has been for the worse. Yet American statesmen are not distressed, merely propagandistically embarrassed, by the depredations of Rhee or Franco.) Yet the bombs had hardly ceased falling on Japan, when American statesmen began to interpret every Russian action as a step to world-conquest. The current armistice negotiations in Korea, where the American and Chinese delegations must bear equal responsibility for an endless haggling over matters which 15 minutes of earnest negotiation could settle, should make clear the opinion of American statesmen about the future of world peace.

This, too, is understandable in terms of the American conviction of the war-like menacing nature of the outer world.

III

The immediate formidable task confronting the American State is to crush the Russian State. Even now, however, there are warnings from our officials that Russia may not be the last "aggressor." For the labor of endlessly preventing the rise of States "unfriendly" to the U.S.A., the word formidable is not adequate. We may disregard illusions of "world federation" as possessing no history, no psychology, and no analysis of the State.[1] Historically, such methods as the Balance of Power have shown efficacy only in preparing a certain outcome of war, not in preserving peace; while the alternative of reducing all the continents but one to the condition of the African nations would seem difficult to "implement" when the nations to be Africanized would include China, India, Southeast Asia and—whether Communist or Czarist—Russia; and when America would be increasingly confronted, in the "friendly" States, with oppressed people discovering that the friendship of America was with their oppressors.

[1]Schemes to rationalize international relations, without disturbing existing social structures, always invite such questions as: Would it not be an unduly circuitous method of precipitating war, to endow the United Nations with a supra-national army, to be used against the Aggressor in order to require it to participate in this supra-national army originally devised to restrain the Aggressor and thereby preserve the peace?

What did it avail Rome to scour Carthage from the face of the map? Always other barbarians were just beyond the gates. The Roman legions could destroy their enemy here, extort tribute there, secure this frontier and that, but there was no remission in the permanent war, the barbarians in their infinity were ultimately unvanquishable. Are we to imagine from the obsequious behavior of Japanese citizens in the presence of the conqueror that they nourish no dreams of vengeance for Hiroshima?

In the last analysis, the only recourse of the rulers of America would be to create deserts, vaster and vaster, where Aggressor Nations once stood. Such, indeed, are the potentialities of the atomic bomb. . . .

IV

We have spoken of the attitude implicit in the position of the American State. Let us be specific. It is the attitude of those who react to envy with fear and hostility, and to threat with pure violence; of those who flee from themselves in wild pursuit of the evil outside (**there** is the murderer, let us destroy him); of those compelled neither by reason, nor emotion, nor fragile custom, to regard the Others as human beings. So far as they identify themselves with the ruling groups, with the American State, this is likewise the spirit of the population, and if we wish to encourage in them another spirit, **this** is what we must tell them.

The other spirit is the spirit of compassion: it is hard to live; in the evil that exists we are all involved; the way is not destruction but understanding and sympathy. Its material equivalent is not toleration of evil, nor submission to it, nor a raging destruction of great symbolic evil. Its realization is in man's abandonment of the infinite monotony of societies of rulers and ruled, for the infinite variety of his nature.

The former, may we say, is the way of the State.

Evenly they lived in tents under the cliff's edge
opening the flaps to see the stars, their eyes were
clear
their waking dream complexioned by the sea
and by the unstayable morning mild with powdery
sand.
This was their world: the movement of shadows
and hands that told stories, a calmer breath than
ours.
Precisely unto these — the quiet, the removed,
the proud
the great doom has fallen. Their clouds explode
with hate.
The naive the passive the stoical experience the
curse;
they are not exempt. — As though an ancient
torch
blackened, self-lit were cast in a Euclidean arc
to fuse and waste the ashes of the world.
In their agonies the heros strike and cleave
so vast their terror that it falls like rain
superfluously and fire has touched the serf,
the fisherman drawing in his net, the weaver in
the sun,
the supernumeraries of death.

—HOWARD GRIFFIN

III. THE MILITARY SUBORDINATION

I

A war, of course, signifies armies; armies require generals; generals are furnished with the commodities and human materiel of war in generous quantities; national policies are modified, and at times dictated, by military considerations interpreted, and at times invented, by military men; and so forth. Now, as anyone familiar with our history knows, it is not correct that this state of affairs leads automatically to the domination of political life by the military men. We know, furthermore, that the presidency of one general (U.S. Grant) signified nothing but the facade for the most brazen capitalist looting of which our historians tell. If certain conditions exist, the military remains subordinate, a subservient executor of the will of the propertied classes. The presence or absence of these conditions determines whether a war is, as the axiom states, "the continuation of politics by other means" — that is, the violent enforcement of capitalist economic interests and State interests as interpreted chiefly by capitalist groups; — or whether, under a military hegemony, military criteria tend to become the leit-motiv of war-policy and of the post-war nation, if there is one.[1]

If the eminent propertied and political classes are to preserve the docile cooperation of the military, (1) these classes must command the loyalties of the underlying population (possess prestige-power); (2) they must not have lost their willingness to rule and their skill in ruling; (3) there must be no inclination in one sector of these classes to ally itself with the military against the rest; (4) the traditions and ideology of the army must not have become magniloquent. When these conditions are met, the administrators of the State have available numerous technical devices for subordinating the military: continually to realine the military command on the basis of loyalty to the government; to deprive the military of prestige with the population; even, under special conditions, to reduce the separatist tendencies of the military by encouraging its infiltration by sons of the wealthy classes. When the basic conditions for military subordinaton are not met, these technical devices are so many empty rituals.

To what extent the conditions of the military subordination may be said still to exist, to what extent we have in prospect an absolute military dominion— or, what is practically equivalent, such an upsurge of military power as can be stemmed only by a greater violence — it is the aim of this essay to explore.

II

Let us glance at the old American capitalism (before 1929). The history of the nation was being written by a ruling class — the term is exact — comprising the great barons of industry and finance. The lawless realm of capitalist production, fictitiously presided over by a government handpicked by the oligarchs and infinitely pliable to their will, was continually remade by the self-interest, strategy, prejudice and error of the capitalist group, who determined the outcome of a strike, the fate of competition in an industry, the use or suppression of industrial inventions, in short, the economic life of America. As new generations of the great 19th century families began to find more excitement in prospects of leisure and fabulous consumption than in visions of acquisition, as successive depressions eliminated the less fit for survival, and as technological advance progressively tightened the integration of the economy, power tended more and more to centralize: a process symbolized in Wall Street, the House of Morgan, the holding company, and the speculative stock-market.

Property alone, wealth alone, do not yield this kind of power. For the casual remarks of a Morgan to acquire the color of law and truth, congressmen, judges, editors, educators, clergymen and U.S. Presidents had to believe that the gold-instinct of the capitalists served the interests of all the non-laboring classes. To the extent that people prefer to acknowledge the divinity of a power against which they feel helpless, even the working classes, through the offices of editors, clergymen and politicians, absorbed an attenuated version of the religion of beneficent capitalism. When the crash divested the middle classes of their ephemeral wealth, when the paralysis of industry and the collapse of finance ruined even the smallest towns, the prestige-power of Wall Street vanished. The position of big business was comparable to that of a monarch whose disasters oblige him to grant a constitution: the constitution is scandalously favorable to him, he imagines that he concedes nothing; yet, so consequential is the fixing of limits to power, so fatal is it to the will of the ruler, that he must tear up this constitution at the first opportunity if monarchy is not to become a ritualistic, however profitable, institution.

The aim of the New Deal was nothing more than recovery, that is, to bestir investment, employment, production and distribution by reviving capitalist expectations of pecuniary gain.[2] But the gross fact that the social order had to be remade to compensate for the absence of an active ruling class meant that definite customs and rules had to be established everywhere, and where no other institution was available,

[1]"As interpreted chiefly by capitalist groups" is not to be understood as meaning "interpreted in economic terms." The "war-like animus", though it can never quite overcome their early, ingrained predilections, infects the profit-minded groups.

[2]This is not intended to disparage the reforming-liberal-idealist persons who gathered to the early New Deal, and undoubtedly set much of its tone, especially of its public pronouncements and above all of its reputation. It is intended to indicate that their scope of action was rather narrowly fixed by Congress, the courts, and the resistance of the corporations.

a government agency was created. And the second gross fact was that the middle classes, embittered by their ruin, insisted on a systematic attack on the stock-market, the banking system and the holding companies, erstwhile instruments of the absolute power. The day-by-day improvisations of the New Deal, in short, froze the status quo. The status quo it froze was preponderantly, absurdly, beneficial to the most propertied classes; but the act of freezing deprived those classes of power to ravage the economy, or to follow the tendency, normal in great power, to use the conquered position to extend its power further.[3]

Relations between "capital" and "labor" were invaded by the same spirit. To the industrialists, the growing labor movement constituted a monstrous challenge to their prerogatives; to the workers it represented the conquest of vital demands; from the vantage-point of government, the new era in Labor Relations signified the end of conflict, the granting to Labor of a very definite, and very circumscribed, status and bill of rights, and the waiver by the unions of demands for a **significant** re-apportioning of income and wealth. The present rigid pattern of standardized negotiations between union officials and management confirms the last as the more significant view, whatever the headlines of the day may seem to say.

The revision of American society initiated by the 1929 crash, completed during the New Deal and solidified by the second world war may be summarized: in place of the rule of the capitalist markets by an Oligarchy, in place of struggle between workers and capitalists, we have an economy run by custom, institution and tradition. The narrow range within which the outcome of particular conflicts of interest may fall is known beforehand. Economic action continues to be stimulated by expectation of pecuniary reward, it is not ritualistic. Socially and legally, if not personally and financially, one is free to choose the role he likes. How one may comport himself in this role, however, is practically determined by the privilege and influence acknowledged to each role and interest-group—quantities not to be expanded by ordinary means.

In business circles, it is "comme il faut" to find the symbol of the era in the particular bureaucracy whose unbounded greed has recently exposed to publicity its pervasive corruption. In so far as war has occasioned gigantic governmental activity, and in so far as creation of government agencies has been a convenient means of stabilizing many sectors of the economy, this particular analysis refers to a substantial truth. It is much more significant, however, that the Sewell Averys, the Henry Fords, the Tom Girdlers and the J. P. Morgans—the empire-builders—have been replaced by men with the mentality of executors of estates. We can observe a parallel process in the labor movement, where John Lewis' determination to impose his will on events has cost him numerous opportunities to be the powerless titular head of labor.

III

(1) In tracing the consequences of these changes in American society, we may begin with the sentiments and allegiance of the population—that is, of those outside the leisure class and the executive-managerial class. These sentiments are a notoriously vague quantity, and especially refractory to generalizing. We do see, however:

(a) The sense of loyalty toward the economically-privileged—the sense of following sage leadership—has never recovered from the 1929 disillusionment. Gradually the reputation of the discredited class has been rehabilitated, its deeds have come to be re-interpreted (called "setting the record straight," now a very active industry) as creative and even heroic acts, and the successors re-ascend the empty thrones and reclaim the places of dignity. But all this amounts, in hard reality, only to license to speak loudly in behalf of interests not really in need of defense. It is just as well that they do not press their demands, sometimes meant sincerely enough, for a restoration of the "old days," because this would not be allowed.

During the depression, and decreasingly during the war, the government and President Roosevelt in particular commanded a prestige reminiscent of the old Wall Street power. (The class composition of this following was of course different.) Workers, farmers, "minorities," and many of the once modestly affluent victims of 1929, looked upon Roosevelt, whom they credited for their rise to respected status and rescue from poverty, with gratitude and worship. Awareness of the modification of this attitude is, of course, most acute among the present Democratic politicians. Surely it is not necessary to catalogue the current folk-lore of the bureaucracy, or what the citizenry thinks of the "administration's so-called foreign policy." In short, most people approve of the status quo, but no persons, group or class inspire a respect —or what is perhaps more than equivalent, awe—such as would allow us to speak of real leadership.[4]

This "frees" large sections of the population to aline themselves with military cliques — those persons not tarred with the discredit of economic or governmental rule, those selfless heroes.

(b) The unionization of industrial workers has led to a strict union loyalty, at any rate among the pre-war union members (those not recruited coercively during the war). That these unions are bureaucratic and centralized is equivalent to saying that a sense of workers' solidarity — which is not the same thing as

[3]To be more specific: (1) the principle of private ownership of industry and "reasonable profits" was maintained; (2) opportunities for financial manipulation by "insiders," which once threatened to challenge return on investment as a source of wealth, were greatly restricted; (3) trustification was held to approximately the 1929 level; (4) the rights of potential victims of the capitalist groups — workers, farmers, "innocent" shareholders, etc. — were protected by government. The influence of the profit-motive remains pervasive — nothing can prevent the stronger industrial alliances from suppressing socially beneficial inventions of doubtful corporate advantage. But effective management, having first passed from investors motivated by expectation of profits from production to financiers motivated by expectation of profits from exploiting the corporation, now typically resides in high-salaried managers, usually without important investment, who follow with little imagination or leeway the inherited procedures evolved as most favorable to the welfare of the corporation and its investors.

[4]For example, the Republican Party, in its bid for control of the federal government, cannot rely on the vote-getting power of its principles. What it profits from is the spectre of federal corruption and similar grievances. (Therefore it cannot do without some form of McCarthyism.)

union loyalty — never developed beyond its rudimentary stages, in fact did not nearly hold the 1936-37 level. The social and economic environment engenders a limited vision; what the workers hoped to achieve through the CIO, they did achieve, and the supervening war nullified any tendency to formulate more ambitious goals; and the new organizations took over from the pre-existing unions (especially the mine workers') their highly-evolved bureaucratic structure. As the result, CIO-organized labor has been utterly restricted to the vision of its officials; which means that the movement compounds the limitations of the workers and the limitations of the officials.

Of the leadership, we may observe that it lacks both the job-trust instincts of the traditional AFL, and the independence and forcefulness of Hillman, Gompers, Lewis and a few others of their generations. The present officials regard themselves as some new variety of liberal statesmen; they are committed to a liberal-labor ideology, to the perfecting of democratic capitalism, and to the liberal professional politicians. But the conditions of industry, war and unionism have instilled an even paler ideology among the majority of the members; while industrial peace and formalized bargaining have brought to the high offices men of the bureaucratic stamp, who simply tag behind the more liberal national politicians, and evidence no ability for initiative.

Hence, in so far as the labor officials control their membership — and they certainly do, in the negative sense that independent workers' initiatives are practically impossible — the labor movement exists, politically, only as a mainstay of the "liberal" Democratic Party.

(2) The second result which flows from the social changes concerns the leadership-position of the old ruling class. We have spoken of the lack of popular devotion toward the economically-privileged groups. We may emphasize another aspect of this process: when the power of the dominant class becomes institutionalized, when the power on which its eminence is based is too long unused, it ultimately finds, in a crisis, that it cannot command the loyalties of judges, police and armies as it once could. No one had thought to challenge the position of the class, but the habit of obedience is lost; what was at first a quasi-abdication of active rule ultimately turns into a loss of power. And the change is not in the "subjects" and servants alone: for the willful, power-lustful men who earned for their class its right to despoil the nation disappear as an economic type. Such men will enter kinds of activities where they may exercise personal, and not just institutionalized, power; or if they enter business, it is at the margins where predation is still possible.

(3) In point of adaptability to crisis, laissez-faire capitalism may be likened to a sponge: in crisis, the weaker were simply squeezed out, that is, impoverished and disfranchised. (As, for example, the stockholders of over-capitalized corporations; or "surplus" labor.) When power, interests and privileges have the sanction of custom and law — when, that is, the protection of the government has been more or less formally extended to **all** groups — their sacrifice becomes almost impossible. At this stage, where the State has not yet the power to decree the necessary reorderings, the society is like a brittle plastic: major adjustments are not easily made, and entail violent consequences. So, for example, the powerful legitimized position of German labor was an incentive, and far from a negligible incentive, to certain capitalists to support the Hitler movement.

IV

These consequences of the recent social changes gain significance in the present military-international situation.

The logic of their view of national interest, the logic of the only way in which the high economic and political classes can interpret the existing system of warring States, has led them, step by step, day by day and war by war, to assume for the nation the labor of defending America and its natural allies against all possible present and future enemies, by indiscriminating submission to the logic of war and armed diplomacy. We speak of this as "the permanent war," not only because a war we are not likely to live to see the end of may reasonably be characterized as permanent, but also because defeat of Russia seems unlikely to put an end to the condition of war. The burden assumed, leaving ethical matters aside, can hardly be overestimated.

Not that permanent war is economically unfeasable: a nation possessing sufficient resources within

continued on page 17

Oak Ridge - Australia

Tell me why there is a boom down under
full employment, profits, capital
stateside money splattered on the mills;
radios, farm tractors pouring in
whereas in Tennessee a covert town
would like to free itself of frontier-power
suspicious of a jinx prosperity.
Imperial state-control
has calcified the bloodstream of this land
enclosing like the earliest prodromes
harmlessly the prostrate settlement.
From "socialized" obscure communities,
hectic with passwords, agents, fear,
the syndromes of the madness will extend
until they strike the shipping clerk
dispersed — at last — to realize his dream,
the weaver sitting near his web
of bark, each furthest unintending
ranchman, hill-hut farmer free of time —
barley his measure of a year —
and wake their seasons to the killing fire.

—HOWARD GRIFFIN

The Audience of the Kefauver Hearings

by Paul Goodman

The most interesting aspect of the Senate investigation of the bonds between crime and politics was the response of the television audience of the hearings. The findings of the committee were not newsy: that there is a great ramified underworld federated, so to speak, on a national scale and that it has intimate connections with legitimate municipal politics; these things were not newsy when Lincoln Steffens revealed them long ago. Nor again is there any novelty in the fact that the public is fascinated by stories of crime and criminals. But usually this fascination contains a factor of horror and revulsion, for the images disturb the repression of the spectator's own depraved wishes; thus, as with the recent broadcasts of the narcotics investigation, there is squeamishness and censorship, there is not a good open entertainment. The pleasure of the audience of the Kefauver hearings, however, was not creepy, even tho the content of the story contained murders. Rather it was heroi-comic, an empathy with the drama of persons better than average and also an occasion to discharge comic spite. Both antagonists, senators and witnesses, were respectable and enviable; now one side was caught on the hip; and it was clear that the other side was not invulnerable to being subpoenaed in a very similar way. This made for a good drama, rather than a cheap soap-opera or a lurid and censorable thriller. Likely, these hearings were in principle the highest dramatic entertainment possible in present American society, where tragedy seems to be unattainable.

American society works by an exacting and complicated civilian good behavior paying off in rewards that are rich but offer no strong excitement of lust, anger, or religion. In the nature of the case there would be, and is, a large population that will not or cannot inhibit itself as required; that gratifies itself more intensely and directly, and is also prey to rebelliousness, guilt, inferiority, and self-destructiveness. This is the criminal underworld. The well-behaved have lost touch with part of their energy, that expresses itself precisely in fascination with the criminals. The criminals, contrariwise, have cut themselves off from social reason, safety, and useful identifications with authority. But again in the nature of the case, there would be, and are, a few who, exceptional by talent, luck, and training, refuse to suffer the disadvantages of the division between the legitimate world and the underworld: they insist on bestriding both worlds. They are not snobbish or squeamish with the criminals and they also cut a figure among the respectable. By avoiding the isolation of living exclusively in either group, they have achieved more personal integration and actualized more of themselves. Among those who accept the moral structure of society, we must consider these the best type. They are the more heroic of the Americans.

Now depending on which side of their bestriding is emphasized, this more heroic group will appear either as the immune criminals, silent operators, powers behind the throne, etc., or as the municipal politicians, party-bosses, district-attorneys. Obviously it is in the close contact of local policing and local licensing that we find the dynamic persons who bestride both worlds. (Just as it is in the even closer contact of the family, school, and workshop that the division of the two worlds first occurs, and is confirmed.) It is locally, in drunkenness, drugs, sexuality, brawls, shakedowns, rackets, petty blackmail, and so forth that the well-behaved and the criminals commingle personally; they are presided over by those who, officially or not, police, license, and otherwise regularize the necessary traffic across the psychic and social boundary. Politicians of a more imposing front, figures of the state and nation, have either never had personal dealings at the boundary or have so compromised themselves in relations with the well-behaved that they have lost the vivifying touch and have become stuffed shirts.

The protagonists, the subpoenaed witnesses, of the Kefauver investigation, then, were these superior personalities with whom the members of the audience could identify as their more integrated selves: heroes not themselves degraded yet fearlessly in touch with the depraved. But now they, for all their strength — this was the drama — were brought to the bar and had to cringe before the more impersonal forces of paternal law. And piquancy was added by the continual hope, that sometimes nearly became the event, that the tables might be turned: at least some of the senators might be shown up in their own ambiguous pasts (according to Jekels the glory of comedy is just such a deflation of the father). The spite and contempt of the average man for the whole process of so-called justice was always just about to be satisfied. (Certainly some of the witnesses made the senators into comic figures, simply by having more of the juice of life.)

Finally, we have been speaking of three classes, the well-behaved, the criminals, and those who successfully bestride both worlds. There is of course a fourth class: those who have not suffered the dichotomy at all or have healed it; they do not accept the notions of good behavior or crime except as alternate symptoms of a disturbed common humanity. This group exists, it consists of the wise, the creative, the revolutionary, the compassionate, the physicians, and so forth. All these are in contact, without snobbishness or squeamishness, with the underworld and even with the respectable world. Yet they are not heroic, they do not successfully bestride the two worlds: indeed, most often, since they do not accept the moral institutions that dispose of the available resources, they are unlikely to succeed in either. Rather than the heroi-comic figures of the hearings, they are essentially figures of tragedy, for they act out the passion of deep humanity confronted by fatal circumstances. But the means they dispose of, and the sphere of their overt behavior, are so minute and unspectacular that, at least for the television audience, they cannot serve as dramatic representatives at all.

The stars of joy that in the squirming
marsh of khaki limbs and blood
blaze here and there like will o'wisps!
Here where an old-time need of blood
at last assuaged one falls asleep.
There, dying, from afar they see
the corpses and they think, "Not I!"
Some are reliving a childish glory
and some the moment after they forgot.
And one has dealt a timeless blow
or has been dealt (I hardly know).
What stars of joy blaze here and there!

—PAUL GOODMAN

A Liberal Lack of Imagination

by A. Geller

To anyone who has paid attention for some length of time to those magazines and their intellectual contributors who claim to bring matters of present concern to the "thorough scrutiny of mind and imagination", it is certainly obvious that they are kidding both themselves and us. These publications are "liberal", a term which by frequent admission has been confused with any and almost every social orientation (a notable exception being anarchism — which if it is ever mentioned is regarded as a charming anachronism, containing no relevance for present problems). They have set themselves the task of rescuing liberalism from error, from confusion, and hope to draw on its tradition for a way through the labyrinth of history.

It is claimed that the terrible crisis facing the intellectual today results from the failure of many to realize that confusing "liberal" with "left" is to end up on the "right"; one learns that the "liberal" stands neither on the "left" nor on the "right", but spins himself around so that for his own good reasons he is never quite certain where he stands. Though his activity is devious, alas, the liberal ends up in a lamentable way, committed to doctrines that lack both intelligence and good will — his **raison d 'etre.**

But having seen the arguments reiterated countless times, until not even the most trusting naif could fail to detect the various shades of pink which might show between the lines, one wonders of whom they are talking. The language is such that would persuade one to believe that the powerful and subtle infiltration of Stalinist ideology has permeated to the core of American intellectual life, so that if the State Department were not to read the latest copy of Partisan Review, Commentary or the New Leader — there would be the certain danger that America would capitulate to the Soviet Union.

Glancing at the authors most dedicated to the conflict, one discovers that invariably they were themselves once sympathetic to the Soviet Union. It is not difficult to see that they are talking about themselves — denigrating former loyalties and convictions — and though it is not necessary here for us to accept Marxism — closing their minds to an idea of history or to an image of society that sees broad revolutionary changes as desirable. The tone is one with which we have become over-familiar. Idealistic, stirred by the depression, moved by generous impulses, they turned to the Soviet Union, which was viewed as the new heaven on earth. The consequent discoveries of the facts of Soviet history and world politics disillusioned them, taught them the bitter truth — that even in the name of selflessness terrible things could be done for power.

It would be foolish to state that what is generally discussed in this kind of writing is without interest, or truth, or that the authors turn to the subjects with little intellectual power. Frequently the effort is both shrewd and intelligent; but it always fails to fully confront the consequences of implicit assumptions, never extending the original critical energy to any bold affirmation of goals. In this way intentions are not easily detected. It would seem that the will knows its engagement and avoids what is threatening.

In an article called "A Communist and His Ideals" by Diana Trilling, which appeared in last summer's issue of Partisan Review, one gets a sense of how the sophisticated "having been through it all but now we know better" voice sounds its tone. In the article Diana Trilling forms a disjunction between idealism and materialism; the former is self-denying, the latter self-affirming; one is the psychology of the Communist, while the self-affirmation is that of the Fascist. She proceeds to discuss the self-depreciation that characterized the Stalinist intellectual of the "thirties", and she states that what marked his loyalities was the sentiment that nothing about his self was worthwhile. Another class, another nation, another activity possessed value and worth. Finding virtue in a politics that involved symbols belonging to a system of identifications outside himself, the Stalinist would always insist that the Soviet Union was correct in all matters, more just than any other nation. Despite all evidence, this image was maintained and insisted upon. As description of an American Stalinist's psychology, this seems to make good sense, but the conclusions Diana Trilling infers from her analysis are not satisfying.

She does not, however, reject all idealism as unwholesome and end by urging a strict materialism. Rather, she quite correctly advocates "an idealism which would properly relate the requirements of the self to the requirements of others." This is certainly the idea that anarchism has long expressed as a tenet of its conviction, one which, indeed, has been its gravest concern — that is, the integrity of the self within the larger community. But what is of course crucial is that Diana Trilling is not suggesting an anarchist society as the goal of such an idealism. Throughout her presentation she refers to the nation as one of the given conditions of selfhood. Thus the more desirable idealism takes into acount "the welfare of our own nation as well as the community of nations." In part, this is suggestive of a world federalism, while from the tone elsewhere in the article, it is not incorrect to assume that by "nation" she includes all the elements of the State, and that the nation's "welfare" involves struggling in the death-whirl of power politics. As a program of action it is, to say the least, not radical.

Since power has become a term of large importance for the "little sour group of dissident intellectuals," as Diana Trilling refers to those who like herself are dedicated to the exposure of the "false liberalism", it would be worthwhile to examine their view of power. First, it is important to realize that the opinions this supposedly little group holds are the dominant ones in the culture today. Proof of this domination, is the fact that those who are most vocal in the expression of these ideas are regarded as sources of intellectual authority; they have the highest status in the academic world, and the journals of their opinion, though not the most widely circulated, are nevertheless influential in forming opinion for certain powerful institutions. I have in mind the labor unions and agencies of social welfare. In short, it is their ideas on literature, politics and sociology, which are today unquestioned.

But what is really essential in discussing the matter is to realize that for the clear-eyed liberal, always exclaiming his perfect relation to reality, power is somehow regarded as anti-social. A quality of character, it involves a pride, independence and isolation, which make for a stricturing of class and activity within a society. The egos are hardened, one against the other, and where contact occurs, though little seems to be desired, one can expect envy, arrogance, and malice — the worse. Undoubtedly this is an excellent description of what does prevail in the present society, but to adduce this from an inexorable psychology only re-enforces the present institutions and can hardly justify the advocacy of any change — unless that change be to re-enforce exactly what is repressive. As anarchists, we maintain that there is another, less cynical way of regarding power within the person. It is desirable in the individual, for it involves a right way of regarding the self, and where it exists mutual aid flourishes; one turns with one's fellows confident of resolving the common problems; one instructs the brothers who have less knowledge, rejoicing that what has been communicated will be assimilated as new strength. In our view we see power not solely in jealous and hostile acts, for such behavior prompts the notion that in the deep levels of character there are anxious feelings about the self. Rather, we regard power as that energy which guides the flow of fraternal feelings and, at the same time, maintains the individual style.

To consider further examples of the new liberals' techniques of persuasion is to become aware of a curious habit of presentation. Organized by a method that involves no self-questioning, the writing finally reflects an irony towards the subject, which certainly ought to shock its author, as well as the already convinced audience. Irving Kristol's article " 'Civil Liberties' 1952 — A Study in Confusion" in the March issue of Commentary is a good illustration of the style described. Having a somewhat misleading title, the article is hardly interested in civil liberties per se; one might even conclude that the author is annoyed by them, irritated that anyone should regard these principles as solid facts, should really think them important.

Kristol's purpose apparently is to swing his axe so heavily that all the branches covering embarrassed, timid, and confused Communists will be stripped, enabling every good American to recognize the objects of his hatred. As the author fiercely claims, whatever has been invoked from a once prided tradition which placed high value on liberty "has failed significantly to make an impression on the dominant American mood" — which is unreasonably anti-Communist. The confusion, Kristol would have us understand, derives from the insistence of certain liberals who hold stupid and dangerous loyalties, that one must defend Communism to defend liberalism. For even though McCarthy, who Kristol really doesn't approve of — but seems to like — may lump all things together one can still, indeed one must, publicly oppose Communism. Though the Barths, Commagers, Chaffees, etc. claim that one must have a regard for the civil liberties of those accused as Communits — Kristol insists that their protests are unacceptable because those gentlemen are still sentimental about the Left and don't know a Commie when they see one.

One sentence of Kristol's included in the above argument conveys a sense of his passion that is frightening. Mentioning the fact that the liberals in urging a defense of the Communists have met with little sympathy — which hardly alarms Kristol — he comments: "For there is one thing that the American people know about Senator McCarthy: he like them is unequivocally anti-Communist."

After reflecting on the implications of this sentence in it particular context, one must take it to mean that the anti-Communism of the public is a reasonable one, or to put it another way, how wise the public, what good instincts, not to be led astray by corrupted intellectuals. Now it is significant that while Kristol regards the mindlessness of his liberals as dangerous and unreal, he seems in no way to be anxious over certain hazards rising in the winds of a general public attitude that is "unequivocally anti-Communist." One can only see in such silence a disposition to preserve, even more, to encourage an atmosphere of acquiescense to the necessary and inevitable war. Needless to add, Kristol regards the situation with this fatality, or rather with this willfulness.

As Kristol continues to compound the guilt of his subjects, a guilt which we must mention is a genuine failure on the part of these people to fully recognize the nature and the dynamics of Stalinism, he attempts to show that the dismissal of teachers in the universities and the loyalty oath required of the University of California faculty was incorrectly regarded as being close to totalitarian methods. Although Kristol is reassured by the fact that no more than a handful of Reds were dismissed and even fewer teachers were mistakenly fired, the practice and its tendency are repugnant. It is now general knowledge that the conservatism of both students and faculty on the campuses prevails in all areas of thought, and one might remark that it is necessary to dismiss but one member of a faculty to intimidate all. Moreover, in a letter included in the following issue of Commentary, Kristol stated that a university is perfectly justified in establishing a policy of refusing to hire Communists, and this must certainly involve vaster numbers than have so far been dismissed. But I imagine that it would be unwise to suggest that widespread dismissal of teachers might be interpreted as a purge, because for one, this is just how the Communists describe the situation, and for another, to be unable to distinguish between this practice and totalitarian methods reveals "a lapse in one's sense of proportions." As for the California oath, it is clear that Kristol regards the several dozen members of the university who refused to sign as

mistaken eccentrics. After all, more than a thousand did sign. It seems that Kristol is inferring that such large numbers of mature educators are incapable of passivity, indifference and submissiveness. What further disturbs Kristol in this matter, which according to him aroused "undue hysteria", was that since these dissidents weren't Communists the oath wasn't even directed at them. Unfortunately for Kristol, conditions are creating just those situations that can on occasion arouse indignation. And in the fact that nowhere does Kristol praise the courage and boldness displayed by those few who refused to sign the oath despite so much pressure lies his shame and the insidiousness of his intention. For the disposition of Kristol's thought should now be apparent, and it may be stated in the following way: that as long as one has a sophisticated intellectual's understanding of the true nature of Stalinism, there is virtually no violation of civil liberties in vigorously opposing and prosecuting Communists, with the further qualifying condition, that one keeps a sense of proportion. But it is axiomatic of freedom that it exists for everyone, and further, if one is to regard freedom as something more than an abstraction, the possibility for ideas to be concretized in acts must be present as well. When dissident opinion is repressed by government, it is certain that no meaningful action is likely. Nor does one say that freedom should be the condition for some, but not for Communists or Fascists. Were we, as anarchists, to accept the view which declares that civil liberties are to be denied to those who in principle are opposed to them, we would be advocating the very authoritarian institutions we have long struggled against, institutions which, it is worth adding, would be readily turned aganst us, were our voices louder, our numbers more large.

As Kristol's argument extends the logic of liberal principles, he develops a section in which the sentiment is so bald, one concludes that smugness and meanness are the primary qualities of his character. Discussing the testimony of the Hollywood people before Congress, Kristol admonishes them for their lack of candor, for claiming that open testimony would mean the loss of high-paying jobs. Kristol recognizes that these people are not the heroic figures of older, dissident traditions, who boldly insisted on their opinions. But does one destroy all who are not heroes? From background and career and from the reluctant testimony, one can judge about these people the nature of their relationship to Stalinism — the confusion of their own persons, the guilt and self-hatred. That such people are little benefitted, and for the most part cruelly persecuted by the government, as well as by public opinion, ought to be obvious. For Kristol to literally demand the surrender of their jobs is to make himself vicious and unnecessarily vindictive. And one wonders whether Kristol really believes that from the comfort and security of his editorial position, which could scarcely be described as a low paying job, echoing such ideas as he does, that he is in any way defending the freedom of spirit from the tyranny of mob, or that by projecting his opinions, he is in any way distilling William James' apocalyptic remark, which he quotes, that "the prevalent fear of poverty among our educated classes is the worst moral disease from which our civilization suffers." With this quotation Kristol provides his own ironic commentary.

There are other portions in the article which illustrate Kristol's inability to see where his own notions possess the very faults he is attacking. At one point, he claims that Owen Lattimore's activities in the State Department and his career as a teacher reflect a rigid adherence to the official party line. Therefore, he concludes it is foolish to maintain that Lattimore has been attacked for holding his own ideas on subjects; having followed the Communist program for so long, Lattimore has demonstrated that he did not do his own thinking. Elsewhere, Kristol asserts that a Communist is devoted to an idea which may make any demands upon him. Thus permitting Communists the same rights as others is to "concede them the privilege of conspiracy, a concession no government has made or will ever make." There is probably a certain truth in the psychology Kristol imputes to Lattimore, while there is no reason to question his understanding of government. From this, however, one may conclude of the author, that since he accepts the principle of government autonomy, and also, approves of all sanctions it finds expedient (for this is the work of his article), he himself is doing no thinking, but merely stating his agreement with an idea. In this light the shame of the liberal is revealed, how by silencing his critical voice, he has surrendered an integral part of his self.

Yet no consideration of the liberal thought being discussed would be complete without examining the way in which this thought regards the war. However, it is only seldom that the magazines mentioned above include an article which discusses the present hot-cold war, or the possibility of total war, and the general consequences for society involved in these events.

One good explanation for this silence is that for the liberal confronted by what is implicit in his logic the situation is much too frightening to be looked at often. However, the July 1951 issue of Commentary contained as its lead article Robert Langbaum's " 'Limited War' As A Means To Peace". What appears as a rhetorical paradox in the title emerges through the presentation as a mixture of simplistic thought and confusion before what is actually a terrible dilemma. At the time of writing, General MacArthur had recently been relieved of his command. Interpreting this event as the symbol of a definite American policy, Langbaum contends that by dismissing the worthy general the U. S. expressed its desire to avert a third world war. In this way Korea is viewed as "aggression to discourage further aggression", and the policy, called "containment", is rationalized by the notion that a bigger, tougher West with a more effective UN will discourage Russia from further expansion. At the very least, this requires the continuing of arms manufacturing, further development of the Abomb, and more intensive research into the perfecting of the Hbomb. What vital industries have resulted from the exercise of sweet reason!

Briefly citing certain assumptions of the "neutralist" position, which while it is dominant among European intellectuals, is regarded here as one more indication of that continent's decadence, Langbaum refers to the crucial error of such thinking. This is, to

continued on page 19

Books in Review

The Dullness of Perfection

JOURNEY THROUGH UTOPIA, *by Marie Louise Berneri. London; Routledge & Kegan Paul*

Perhaps what is so depressing and oppressive and boring about the literary utopias of the past is that so many of their fond fantasies make up the nightmare of the present world scene. Utopia is here — not perhaps Sir Thomas More's ecclesiastical Utopia (the Catholic Church is still not that powerful), but the landscape is fairly dotted with the arid uniformity of its architecture, and everywhere you see Big Brother bringing 1984 closer. Already there are enough features of Plato's Republic in Soviet Russia and enough of Bellamy's backward look in the United States to convince the discriminatng reader that the rule of philosophers (Platonist or Marxist) or the rule of technology (Capitalist or Socialist) doesn't resemble a human paradise.

The cause for these reflections is Marie Louise Berneri's "Journey Through Utopia." Her book, written just before her death at the age of thirty one, is an honest but not very absorbing analysis of the banality of most literary utopias. I wish this memorial to a devoted and perceptive anarchist had more distinction, more fire, than it does. But the style is the subject: one feels a utopian ennui weighing on her spirit.

Even so, "Journey Through Utopia" suffers from too many paths too well traveled on (by Lewis Mumford for one) and yet a narrowness of field, too much the European mode of utopia — not enough the United States, real seedbed for 19th Century utopias (see Parrington Jr.'s book). And what of the utopian strains in Melville, Hawthorne, Rimbaud or Kafka. Also, some of the boredom of Western Man could have been relieved by a reference or two to the casual anti-utopias of Lao-Tse and Chuang Tzu.

Still the book has its original side. For the first time full justice is done to Gerrard Winstanley, libertarian philosopher of the Digger's Movement. It's also good to have the chunks from Gabriel de Foigny's "Terra Incognita Australis," the entertaining utopia of a complete rationalist who does away with many human problems by postulating a land peopled by hermaphrodites who have no need of sexual relationships (or for defecation, an important point to Foigny, though it seems rather obscure).

What emerges in general from Berneri's study are these suggestive points:

Scarcely any of the utopian writers are young. For the most part utopias are the inventions of the old, and it's not surprising that the old often dominate the utopias, and the faults usually associated with senility also dominate: crankiness, rigidity and garrulity. Especially the last. Even in one of the few congenial utopias, William Morris's "News from Nowhere," on re-reading parts I found the Old Man (a dead ringer for Morris) insufferably talky and rather dimwitted.

Contrary to what Marxists and Babbits believe, most utopians, like most assassins, aren't anarchists or libertarians. The anarchists or near-anarchists in Berneri's book are a handful. Overwhelmingly the utopians are thorough authoritarians, complete worshippers of power. In Companella's utopia, for example, the women of the "City of the Sun" can be condemned to death for using make-up or wearing high heels.

Typical of the best the Authoritarian utopians can offer is Plato's "Republic." Plato's society is an authoritarian model:

"Let us consider what will be the manner of life of men so equipped. Will they not spend their time in the production of corn and wine and clothing and shoes? And they will build themselves houses; in summer they will generally work without their coats and shoes, but in winter they will be well clothed and shod. For food they will make meal from their barley and flour from their wheat, and kneading and baking them they will heap their noble scones and loaves on reeds or fresh leaves, and lying on couches of bryony and myrtle boughs will feast with their children, drink wine after their repast, crown their heads with garlands, and sing hymns to the gods. So they will live with one another in happiness, not begetting children above their means, and guarding against the danger of poverty or war."

Here Glaucon interrupted and said: "Apparently you give your men dry bread to feast on."

"You are right," I said; "I forgot that they would have a relish with it. They will have salt and olives and cheese, and they will have boiled dishes with onions and such vegetables as one gets in the country. And I expect we must allow them a desert of figs, and peas and beans, and they will roast myrtle berries and acorns at the fire, and drink their wine in moderation. Leading so peaceful and healthy a life they will naturally attain to a good old age, and at death leave their children to live as they have done."

"Why," said Glaucon, "if you had been founding a city of pigs, this is just how you would fatten them."

Glaucon is too harsh on Plato's idyll — it is idyllic for Plato; on the other hand, Glaucon is not harsh enough — pigs have far more freedom than Plato's citizens.

In contrast, one is tempted to call the libertarian utopias of Rabelais, Diderot and Morris anti-utopias. Where Plato seems to say, "Do as I will," these happier lands have one article in their imaginary constitutions, it is the inscription over Rabelais's Abbey of Theleme: "Do What Thou Wilt." Here things are a lot less orderly and a little less perfect, for there are even occasional murders out of jealousy in Morris's imaginary England. Life has some air to breathe here, freedom is still possible in utopia.

Actually it is this lack of freedom, and therefore of tension and tragedy, which make so many utopias so perfectly dull, so dull in their perfection. As that indefatigble utopian, H. G. Wells, pointed out: "In almost every Utopia — except perhaps, Morris's "News from Nowhere" — one sees handsome but characterless buildings, symmetricial and perfect cultivations, and a multitude of people, healthy, happy, beautifully dressed, but without any personal distinction whatever. Too often the prospect resembles the key to one of those large pictures of coronations, royal weddings, parliaments, conferences and gatherings in Victorian times, in which, instead of a face, each figure bears a neat oval with its index number legibly inscribed."

After taking a tour of the literary utopias, one is inclined to agree with what Lewis Mumford calls the "contempt" of Lord Macaulay when the self-righteous Englishman says: "An acre of Middlesex is better than a principality in Utopia." That, after all, is honest. It is the honesty which another anti-utopian, but a more daring one — Pierre-Joseph Proudhon — would have appreciated.

—Michael Grieg

THE NEW COMEDY

A Critique of "The Lonely Crowd"[1]

More and more I find that there is much to laugh about as this old world goes down. And this book of sociology is one of the brightest pieces of comedy, albeit unwitting comedy, I have read in a long time; it may even become the progenitor of a new literary genre. (Libertarians who after so long have accustomed themselves to not being heard will, I think, be shocked to learn, on reading this book, that they had been heard and now face a new adjustment—to parody.) But because this book is unwitting, because it does take itself seriously, because in its phenomenological detail it is such a grab-bag of goodies yet is in its theoretical framework and suggested social program so inadequate, because this social program has an ostensible libertarian goal—the growth of free men—yet is so mistaken concerning its nature and mis-directed toward its achievement—**The Lonely Crowd** must be judged seriously and even harshly.

Riesman's major effort in **The Lonely Crowd** is to assimilate and organize into a portrait the variety of observations that have been made of the emerging American character; it is this work's chief excellence. To begin with, Riesman makes some preliminary definitions of "character" that have extremely important consequences for the body of his work, accounting in good part for the oddly abstract quality of his detailed portraiture and for the gauche-ness of his social program.

"Let us begin by defining character structure as the more or less permanent, socially and historically conditioned organization of an individual's drives and satisfactions. The term as thus defined is less inclusive than 'personality,' the word which in current usage denotes the total self, with its inherited temperament and talents, its biological as well as psychological components, its evanescent as well as more or less permanent attributes. My reason for selecting from this complex the abstraction called 'character' is that in this book I propose to deal with those components of personality that also play the principal role in the maintenance of social forms—those that are **learned** in the lifelong process of socialization.

"As soon as we begin to speak of character as related to social forms we make, in effect, a still further selection from the matrix of personality. For we begin to isolate for inspection those components of character that are shared among significant social groups. And to speak of character in these terms is to speak of character as 'social character.' " (pg. 4)

"Since this study assumes that character is socially conditioned, it also takes for granted that there is some observable relation between a particular society and the kind of social character it produces. What is the best way to define this relation? Since the social function of character is to insure or permit conformity, it appears that the various types of social character can be defined most appropriately in terms of the modes of conformity that are developed in them. Finally, any prevalent mode of conformity may itself be used as an index to characterize a whole society." (pg. 6)

(I shall argue later in regard to this series of abstractions that, unless they are reversed, they can only form the basis for a description of "human servitude" but not of "human freedom.")

Having defined his subject matter and covariants, Riesman distinguishes the three conformity types he is to discuss, "tradition-direction," "inner-direction," and "other-direction." These types are to be distinguished by the character and content of the models guiding their conformity, by the manner in which these are established as the individual's authorities, and finally by the kind of behavior each type favors.

So, the **tradition-directed man** (Riesman's model is the man of the Middle Ages) in a culture with little social mobility and determined role and status, has as his exemplars the extended family; since the family was large and his sexual and work training began young, the child's parents were distant as parents but close as adults. Tradition as concretized in priest and noble, in etiquette, was the man's guide. The models of popular culture were transmitted, in old wives' tales and minstrelsy, directly and personally and so were part of the normal social mesh; they might be uncanny in content but not in form.

The **inner-directed man**, say the man of the 19th century, must, to live in a society expanding upon the ruins of the older traditions, be capable of self-guidance. This guiding mechanism is, roughly speaking, the superego. As a consequence, the inner-directed man is ambitious and goal-directed and able to pursue his goal whatever the drift of public-opinion and events. The primary model of his superego is his father; the culture-heroes are a second reinforcing influence, in part because of the morality they represent, in part because they are encountered in the solitude of novel reading and so speak with the same kind of private voice with which conscience speaks.

The **other-directed man**, our modern American, has for his authorities not his parents but the peer-group of his contemporaries. Such an authority favors emulation in its imitative rather than competitive aspect. Adding to this, the models of popular culture (in the **mass media**) are received by the child in an actual or fantasied group. Superman is not so much identified with as partaken of.

The picture Riesman draws of this other-directed culture, as yet limited to the American upper class but destined, he feels, to become the American and perhaps the Western culture, is, within its limits, quite good. It is chiefly valuable for its analysis as anxious compliance of the current emphasis on "teamwork," group-adjustment, and tolerance in education, politics, work, and play. Unfortunately, I can only sketch briefly what Riesman illustrates in such great detail and must omit much that is excellent.

The antecedent inner-directed culture was a scarcity culture, production-oriented, dominated by fiercely competitive, self-guided and self-reliant entrepreneurs, clear about their class- and self-interests and capable of manipulating the state with relative ease; their concern was the "hardness of the material," work relations were impersonal, the division between work and play sharp; the literature offered models of perseverance and ambition.

[1] By David Riesman, Yale University Press

What is distinctive about the other-directed culture are the new technological-economic and authority forms that shape it. According to Riesman, it is a surplus culture which is consumption and leisure-oriented and the prevalent authority is now the peer-group. Since the accumulation of capital goods is no longer a pressing necessity and there is, in fact, a superabundance of commodities, work, the job at hand, does not have its former interest; because the other-directed man is sensitized to the demands and opinions of the 'others' as to nothing else, "the hardness of the material" is replaced by the "softness of the personnel" as the primary focus of work relations. This is expressed in a variety of ways: the paraphernalia of the placement psychologists, questionnaires and cordiality: the growth of factory ball-teams and social groups of all sorts; the personal attention paid by employers to their employees in the form of "inspection trips" whose sole purpose is to allow him to greet as many of them as possible; work, in general, becomes "overpersonalized." As a concommitant, work and play tend to fuse; most important business is done on the golf-links or at the luncheon table, and there is no place left into which the man might escape. Riesman aptly characterizes this change as going "from morality to morale." Indeed, so strong is this desire for maintaining morale that, as Riesman recounts this striking and, in its way, charming incident, the residents of one Chicago housing project could only criticize the project's management for its inadequate public relations.

The actual work-goals tend to become remote and vague for the other-directed man and the maintenance of group morale is substituted for them. "Tolerance" becomes the major other-directed value. As consumers, they must accept the continual revision of taste necessitated by the rapid changes in the commodities offered; as peer-groupers, they must allow for the changing opinions of the others. So tolerance. Riesman sees quite correctly that the consequence of such an emphasis of tolerance is apathy; for commitment and passion are one another's condition. Moreover, the ramification and specialization of entertainment makes a competence adequate for its judgment impossible; appropriately enough, the entertainer is judged by the other-directed on his "sincerity." (Unfortunately, Riesman misses how this tendency is fostered and used by the state for its own purposes. For a treatment of this, see D. Wieck's **"Tolerance"** in the Aug.-Sept. 1949 **Resistance**.)

It is not surprising, therefore, that "show people" should replace the grand entrepreneurs of the 19th century as the American culture-heroes. With their easy gregariousness, mutual and antagonistic admiration ("Man, you're great—you're the greatest—but don't **you** say so. You can only be **real** great, man, when you say that I'm great."), their vast anxious hopped-up tolerance and affection, their verbality, their avid consumption, their very **publicity**—they are perfect figures of the peer-grouper. Also, they are goal-less, concerned only with that anxious unqualified translation of un-need to satiety which is "consumption."

These same tendencies have made for the other-directed's new political style. The power of the state is no longer controlled by a single class but rather by a collection of veto-groups—the farm blocs, labor unions, military cliques, etc. The would-be manipulator of the state power can no longer tell what he should do to effect his ends or even what these ends clearly are. The ramification of the American bureaucracy together with the increased specialization of knowledge and skill have led to the individual's feeling of impotence before it; additionally, he has no special competence, as did the inner-directed entrepreneur or craftsman, by which to judge its performance. As a consequence, he becomes apathetic to politics; and can only contact it by taking it as an object of consumption. The political process is outside him, a kind of spectacle, glamorous but not finally interesting. The other-directed's apathy, according to Riesman, takes two forms. He is either indifferent or an "inside-dopester" who cares only for the gossip of the wings and will not help the actors through their roles; in either case he is apathetic and tolerant.

Riesman is well aware of the fact that this apathy is not unreasonable, that politics is quite dull because unfulfilling, that the single man or small group is powerless before the massed power of the state. I think he misses, though, that the ramification of the bureaucracy is nothing less than the usurpation of a social territory previously worked by the smaller and more spontaneous social groups. The state is now not relatively powerful but absolutely so.

II

Yet it seems to me that this portrait of other-direction is abstract, not in the sense that it is **typological** but simply because it is not a **whole** type. In abstracting "social character" from "character" and in considering the major function of social character its conforming function, Riesman has eliminated what moves and confirms a "type" — its drives and satisfactions. As a consequence he omits what is immediately the grossest and most important aspect of Western character structure — that it is **renunciatory**. (Put another way, the institutions are frustrating.)

It must be seen that Western character is grounded on unfulfillment, that the energies of the unfulfilled drives — sexual, creative, political — energize and maintain the internalized authority **whether the model for that authority is the father or the peer-group**, and that the satisfactions accruing from conforming to the authority — largely status and duty rewards — are secondary and serve to relax the grip of the authority and permit some unconformity and fulfillment. These satisfactions **justify** the character (and more generally the ego); sexual and creative fulfillment **confirm** the man.

Yet our cultural situation is such that while the demands of this superego are as intense as ever, they are vaguer and the institutions offer no clear way (how **could** they when the demands are vague) to satisfy them. In this condition, the character is unjustified but the man is less confirmed than ever. I take this situation to be the cause for the immense anxiety-attack now (for the last 150 years but especially **now**) being suffered by Western man. However, it must not be thought that this anxiety is generated **from** the lack of a sure knowledge of duty or station; such a great anxiety could only be proximate to a great energy, and that is the energy of the basic unfulfilled drives.

Unfortunately, this is just Riesman's mistake. Since he is looking at social character in its function of affecting conformity, he sees the anxiety characteristic of the other-directed man as caused by his need to respond to a variety of experiences none of which are clearly justifying. No small wonder then that he neglects the most striking symptom of American anxiety — the last war and the continuing crisis. I, for one, cannot imagine in what kind of frenetic state the Americans would now be — so great is their anxiety — were it not for the current war crisis. Similarly, Riesman neglects, in dealing with other-directed child training, the question of whether or not it is repressive and limits himself to the nature of the child's authorities. His is, in short, a characterology reduced to absurdity — all mode and no passion.

Indeed, so intent is Riesman on his characterological orientation that he writes of the autonomous, or free man, "The 'autonomous' are those who on the whole are **capable** (his emphasis) of conforming to the behavioral norms of their society — a capacity the anomics usually lack — but who are free to choose whether to conform or not. We are concerned here not with deviations in overt behavior but with conformity or non-conformity in character structure itself." This is mistaken because the free man is the man whose character structure least determines his behavior, the man who is continuously actualizing himself, whose character is most open to the world, is mirror-like as a pool. It is the other character types, behaviorally limited, which are best described in **potential**; they are not actualizing, are a "story untold." Furthermore, I do not see of what importance it is that a man need not conform to our society, if in fact he does. Its sole importance can only lie in a further potential context — the broad political one. This turning of the actual into the potential is typical of Riesman's ultimate social analysis, his program;

its effect must be to block the social revolution.

Riesman sees quite clearly that the chances for freedom ("autonomy") in our other-directed society are more limited and more difficult than they were in the previous inner-directed society. Since the men of that society were self-guided and each man was intent on his own goal, the possibilities for both privacy and direction were greater; and this blindness to everything but the work at hand allowed a greater variety of behavior. Moreover, the internalized authority and its external figure, Father, were clear-cut so that a man might put up a good hard fight against these with a reasonable chance of making a clean break. Our society, however, is so widely rationalized that it is like a tacky gum; it sticks at one point, you try to get it off and are soon entirely covered with the stuff—and it apparently has only the best intentions toward you. (So, for instance, the fate of most hobbies which begin as innovation and end in a package.) Thus Riesman writes, ". . . the diffuse and anonymous authority of the modern democracies is less favorable to autonomy than one might assume. One reason, perhaps the chief reason, is that the other-directed person is trained to respond not so much to overt authority as to subtle but nonetheless constricting interpersonal expectations." (pg. 296) (I might add here that to such a monstrously self-conscious ego only those acts with which it can in no way identify seem free. Freedom seems to lie in gratuity. It may be that American juvenile delinquency has just this cause.)

But, Riesman continues his argument, since the other-directed man is not production- but consumption- and leisure-oriented, he must find his freedom not in work and craftsmanship but in play and taste-exchanging. As a "competent" player he fulfills himself as a man of leisure, by his competent taste he fulfills himself as a consumer. And so Riesman's suggestions (they are only a "program" in their aggregate tendency) are directed toward removing the obstacles to competence in these activities. He writes, in this respect, of the limitation of his subject, "Indeed, throughout this discussion I can only indicate some of the barriers to autonomy which have received inadequate recognition; to go on from there to see what are some of the positive sources of autonomy in character is another, far more difficult, undertaking." (pg. 339). He sees as obstacles the inner-directed devaluation of play (this makes the play guilty), the overpersonalization of work (this diminishes the distance between work and play and makes the play less escapist), false privatization (which prevents the formation of peer-groups of true likes), the forced feeding of consumers by the mass media (this makes the play and taste-exchanging ungenuine). Riesman's remedies are as follows: work should as far as possible be automatized and depersonalized so that play can be given maximum time and attention; wider sociability should be encouraged and, finally, consumership must be freed and competence in it nurtured by allowing freer consumer choices, by "avocational counseling," and by the practice of "taste-exchanging." This last process, taste-exchanging, is subject to a variety of pressures, Riesman notes — it may become harried, guilty, worklike, forced — but promises ultimately a great freedom. So, on page three hundred and sixty-two David Riesman writes, "There is a point, however, where the process of straddling peer-groups and climbing taste-gradients may begin to be an exhilarating and liberating one, in which the golden bowl of leisure objects and their aura of critical vocabularies can at last be comfortably enjoyed." I simply cannot understand how any man seeking a knowledge of freedom should come to such a cynical show-biz-cocktail-party-Life-mag idea of it. Obviously, I have been wrong in using "autonomy" and freedom interchangeably.

Now as to this matter of taste and taste-exchanging.

It is a matter of amazement to me that a program for freedom should be reforming and not revolutionary. But Riesman — to return to my analysis of Western character as renunciatory — is not interested in removing renunciation but in fostering that special kind of conformity he calls "autonomy." In fact, he writes quite baldly to this effect, ". . . for the other-directed man a deficit of sociability is even more serious than an excess. The presence of the guiding and approving 'others' is a vital element in his whole system of conformity and self-justification. Depriving him of the sociability his character has come to crave will not make him autonomous, but only anomic . . ." (pg. 327). His aim is, in reality, to give only that small measure of freedom granted the man when he is justified in the eyes of his authorities.

What is so charming, so naive, so **gauche**, so American! in all this is that Riesman, given his goal, has chosen precisely the wrong method for achieving it. For, as Durkheim noted, the appetite of a character based on renunciation is infinite; since the needs immediately arising are not fulfilled, all satisfactions are partial and a new satisfaction looms behind each one as it is cast away. There is no place to rest. Such a will-o'-the-wisp can never contain and structure anxiety (much less ab-react it), as Riesman thinks, but can only aggravate it. While the flow of goods thus necessitated relieves some of the tensions of American industry (the paramount social sin has become for economists "under-consumption"), it has the reverse effect on the American populace. In this situation there cannot only not be any freedom but no "autonomy" either. (It may be, if things go right for the mythologists of the middle-class and sociologists of masks, that Riesman has coined in "autonomy" a word describing something new in social delusions. We shall have a universal middle-class acting without external authority in a perfectly conforming way — and secure in the fiction that, in character, they could choose to act otherwise! This is, in fact, the tendency of the American educational and state bureaucracy — it tells and gives everything but the truth. For truth is not solely a condition of knowledge or satiety but of power as well!)

Yet, more deeply, I wonder whether taste-exchanging can ever be a great way to live. (I do not doubt that it is a stultifying way.) A man's tastes can never be larger than he is; they are reflections of what he is at the moment and so are completely without tendency. (And changes in taste are reflections of a quite different process.) Since his tastes are no greater than the man there can be no common ground for argument and, more important, no commitment — for a man, except in the gravest crisis, does not commit himself to what he is (and a man is more than his tastes) but both to what he is and is not yet. And commitment is a necessary condition for growth. This is why **needs** and not **tastes** are the foundation of ethics and **action** and not **consumption** is its subject.

In only one case can a man's tastes be larger ("wider" is the word) than he is, or at least different from him — when they are not his. If this is so, taste-exchanging would be the oddest kind of life-activity — for the man would progress only by failing in a series of wrong commitments (success would be disastrous); he would, in effect, be continually thrown back on himself. Finding himself, however, would he not have to turn to his true interests and commit himself, morally, **there?** At its best, taste-exchanging must reduce itself to solipsism — for when it is competent and the man's tastes are genuinely his, there can be no "exchange" of tastes but simply iteration.

(Interestingly, there emerges from Riesman's apotheosis of the consumer the picture of a society whose only activity is self-decoration, that is, self-immortalization. As with show people whose only subject matter is show biz, these become the decorations of yet other decorations, for the life itself is contentless. The result is an alarming transience and mortality. Thus the arts flourish today in our middle-class society in every respect but their essential truth; in this last respect they survive only among the "alienated," who are at the fringes of society while society is at the fringes of life.)

However, I do not think that Riesman quite believes this himself. He writes, for instance, that ". . . some people may manage to be productive in their political roles who are anomic or adjusted in character; politics may be their most creative sphere." (pg. 370). The question here is why Riesman cannot describe political excellence in terms drawn from leisure-consumership but must characterize it as "productive" or "creative." That is, why isn't taste-exchanging a satisfying political mode and why shouldn't politics, like work, also be automatized? Now, it may be this usage is simply a manifestation of a cultural lag in which the author himself is still caught, or it may be an embarrassing holdover from Erich Fromm's work on which Riesman draws so heavily. I think it is neither of these. I think that this is a deeper realization of Riesman's because he is concerned with an activity he feels is vital or at least inescapable. He cannot be so easily cynical about it as he can about consumership which, I am sure, he knows is unvital and perhaps despises. (This may be why his suggested remedies take the form of fantasy — he cannot plan for what he hates.) So, Riesman's dismissal of plans to reintegrate work is quite facile, largely because he will not look past capitalism or state socialism. Together with his espousal of middle-class consumership, it constitutes a remarkable "glad-handing" of history — though, considering Riesman's (continually apologized for) depreciation of other-direction, the glad-hand is rather sickly. He is clearly barking up what he knows to be the wrong tree.

Herein is the comedy I spoke of earlier (though I do not deny there is much pathos also). It is a liberal's comedy, a comedy of reforms. Given conformity as the moral, as subject matter the distorted symptomatic expression of deeper needs, and as problem how these may find their appropriate satisfaction, the inevitable result is farce. For then, if a man has an hysterical limp you buy him an orthopedic shoe, if he's compulsive you supply him with an infinite task, if insatiable you place a cornucopia at his mouth. No bother if the hysteric's arm is suddenly paralyzed now that he doesn't limp or that the infinite counter finds time for nothing else or the eater no longer tastes his food — there are still plenty of remedies left in the storehouse and there's always another show. Is this not the character of Riesman's program and of all reform programs? (They are pathetic drama in that our reformer-hero does not pit himself against his true obstacle but tries a series of diversionary ameliorations since, though he is aware of the obstacle, he feels himself powerless to combat it; he knows everything but the truth. His program is bound to fail and he to become despondent and cynical.)

Such seems to me to be the nature of contemporary sociology as well, as it continues to open its eyes wider and see more, yet continues to reform and not revolutionize what it sees. It is our New Comedy — a comedy of errors: suggesting the wrong remedy for the wrong disease — and because the old man simply won't die — imagining it works and that all is well. These doctors would be better advised to study out what it is in the old man that won't die and try to help it.

The End

A Final Note: This criticism of a work which is excellent in many ways may seem excessively severe. I have made it so strong because I believe this brand of liberalism is our truest obstacle. Not that this liberalism is the cause of what immediately threatens life itself in Western society and the world (though by endorsing the current institutions liberals wield a greater power than they realize, for they are in a large way our society's conscience); but because it contributes — more than any other source — to the growing debasement of feeling and language which constitutes the most effectual block to social revolution in America

They also offer an impressive example of the heartsickness and self-hatred which follow on avoidance and false compromise. As a last evidence of this let me cite from Riesman what seems to me to be a particularly self-destructive passage. It is from the conclusion of this book's last chapter, "Autonomy and Utopia." "If these people are not strait-jacketed before they get started — by the elaboration and forced feeding of a set of official doctrines — people may some day learn to buy not only packages of groceries or books but the "larger package" of a neighborhood, a society, a way of life."

— I. Feldman

For Evening Clowns

Besides its inescapability,
the roundness of a circus ring
will measure indiscretion's girth.
And one should sample clues like that,
asnuffing of one's token-piece.
'Yet what smells worse than death?' inquire
the brave.
But they don't even feel it.

The man who wore no cornered hat to jail
has melting of the carapace.
The clever keep their pockets high
and hands well down the careful depths.
This way, they never fret too much
which worldy lot they sacrifice or which
they save for little children.

Let's follow through the grove of restlessness
where sweetest envy's racquets green
do strum soft balls against the line
of falser friends, de Montherlants,
with pleas in shortened robes of peace.
They ask for fighting men and torture feasts
in circus plans of purple.

And should ringmasters wear red pants or tights?
Or shouldn't they leap tiny dogs
ablaze through bigger hoops than these?
Why not regild a calf and ride
white horses round this doltish ring?
The daughters with the coral toes provide
unpurposed clowns illusions.

The ergoism of ants' argot
but makes free speech a mouse poison.

—James Boyer May

REFLECTIONS OCCASIONED BY PUBLICATION OF THE MEMOIRS OF WHITTAKER CHAMBERS

There are anti-Communists, ex-Communists, who are not loathsome: they are men of dignity, they command our respect. From their talk we see that they were persuaded of the essential harmony of Soviet Communism with our best liberal and radical traditions. Since it is currently being represented by public figures obliged by self-interest to appease our guardians of patriotism, that all Communists are either dark conspirators or blind dupes in the habit of signing blank checks, it is worth recording that nearly every earnest liberal and radical, anarchists excepted, was sympathetic to Russia at one time or another. Indeed, in view of the Russian claims to have abolished exploitation, unemployment, racism and warmongering, and in view of the inability of anti-Communist radicals to get a hearing, we should not be surprised that only the politically most sophisticated leftists were unimpressed by the Russian chimera. But these anti-Communists of whom we are speaking, immediately they had access to more facts, recognized that the Russian claims were fraudulent, and that the essence of the Russian State was power and brutal dictatorship. In repudiating their error, however, they very specifically did not repudiate their vision of man's nobility and freedom: they had been misled into believing that Communist methods could have realized this vision, and that was all.

We are not, of course, constructing an abstract individual. This is the spirit of such ex-Communist writers as Gide, Richard Wright, Silone, Orwell.

The central characteristics of the other type of ex-Communist are: Guilt; repudiation of their own motives in being Communists, repudiation of the philosophy which led them to embrace Communism; and a monomaniacal anti-Communism which sees in the world only two principles, Communism and that which fights it.

(The majority of ex-Communists, of course, are found in neither category. The intention is to interpret this majority by means of the extremes.)

The guardians of our State-cult, in whose eyes American Communism is nothing more nor less than a conspiracy to betray this country to Russia, find nothing paradoxical here. Unfortunately, a man's purpose is not reliably deducible from the effects of his actions, and in truth usually accords quite badly with them. The inverted nationalist, the conspirator dedicated to the alien State, is far rarer than the patriot supposes; more commonly, the super-patriot does not outdo the Stalinist in his conviction, sincere but alas mistaken, of serving wisely the essential welfare of the nation. To be sure, this sincere conviction is rather superficial, and really one of a series of self-and-other-satisfying ways in which the individuals in question explain their lives, otherwise mysterious and rather disquieting. Yet if we go behind what is imputed to the man by his political enemies, and behind what he formally imputes to himself in the way of motives, we still look in vain for an intent appropriate to the present guilt: we find only the usual mixture of desires for power, love, revenge, security; and not organized in a characteristic pattern. (There is some sense to be made of them, but not relevant here.)

Yet this second kind of anti-Communist acts out a drama of guilt, repentance, confession and accusation; a drama formerly reputed, by our more literate folk, to be peculiar to Russia, mysterious and Asiatic Russia. The question obtrudes: Why do these people feel so obsessively guilty? When a man's reasons for guilt seem insufficient, must we not ask questions?

At this point a foray — a cautious foray — into the psychology of radicalism is in order. (The reader will bear in mind the sense in which we speak of Communists as radicals. There is nothing "radical" about the politicial activities of Communists; but persons do in fact join the Communist movement from radical convictions, even today.) Nothing is more deleterious than explanations of radicalism, by folk a good deal better versed in psychiatry than in politics, as an erroneous projection onto society of inner, infantile conflicts. (The radical, the neurotic, hates the government because he hates his father. Unhappily, this sort of scientific nonsense is entering the popular science-lore.) A man's ideology, a phenomenon almost unanalyzable, is an amalgam of early images of self and others; of the intellectual-dogmatic inheritance from one's parents; of one's social and economic position; of one's friends and teachers; of the dominant intellectual currents; of the state of one's emotions; of one's great critical experiences (if any); and perhaps not quite negligibly, of the free activity of the reasoning mind. Now, our clue is the perfect invisibility to our dissectors of radicals, not palpably prejudiced individuals, of such a perfectly obvious fact.

The reason is this. Let some event compel a radical to look "inside" himself, and, in a great number of instances, the first sight he beholds is a truly awful conflict about authority. (Cf. Dostoevsky; Bakunin's confession; etc. But this is a fairly new fact in America.) It requires some little patience, and it is well known how rare this virtue is, not to be overwhelmed by this fact, not to rush off and write a book. Let the investigator persist, and it turns out that childhood, the decisive evidence, seems to know nothing of future radicalism and conservatism. This should mean that the radical — and this must be true of radicals in other spheres than politics — has, by setting himself against authority, by presuming to know more than the elders, stirred the ancient common conflicts, so rarely resolved definitively; has revived in force the old Laws, "might is right," "punishment is proof of guilt," etc.

Even more: not only has the son presumed to challenge the father's ways, he has also presumed to challenge the god-given order of the world: he has had the temerity to judge it, reject it, try to re-make it; and for one whose grounds of personal worth are shaky, this is a hazardous enterprise.

In the best societies, nothing would be more highly prized than the son's journey into the not-yet-known, his invention of new ways; not by priority would the good in the old endure, but by dint of proved worth. (This life will not be thrust upon us, we shall have to earn it.) What we have known, in this authoritarian society, is a balancing of past and future, tradition and innovation, that has been the envy of tradition-bound countries. The pioneer, the inventor, the political radical, have borne almost with appearance of ease the guilt of rebellion, they launched their daring enterprises in confidence that in success they would be honored as they were, nearly ritualistically, impeded in their progress.

The young man earning his way into the world was, formerly, required to vanquish the elders. Now, however, the political rebel finds himself condemned, not just for rebellion, but for what the population regards as a kind of treason. He is not satisfied, it seems to them, just to do the old things in a different way, he appears to have no sympathy at all with the going order. In short the radical is **alienated** from the society: (1) The society is preoccupied with a war, in which its survival is believed to be at stake; not only is war one of the main grievances of the radical, but its regimented character allows him no compromise that does not utterly forfeit his independence; (2) the citizen and the State, in what they regard as their hour of crisis, are less tolerant than ever, and see a menace to the going order, and to their survival, in every unorthodox proposal; (3) the radical has fewer comrades, fewer possible illusions about his means of persuading the population, and the inertness of the institutions is increasingly impressive; (4) the drying-up of sources of inspiration in America, the general impression of aridity in American culture, has encouraged radicals to look elswhere for inspiration and ideas, and has contributed to the sense of alienation from America.

The guilty ex-Communists may be regarded as an extreme instance of the workings of these pressures against individuals little able to withstand them, and engaged in activities which could not possibly enable them to resolve the conflicts. It is taken for granted that some Communists, rather than finding in Communism a too plausible method of realizing a social ideology, were looking for nothing but means to implement a savagely destructive attitude toward the world — an attitude to which the American war-effort, and pursuit of Communists, now gives adequate vent; but the evidence is that this attitude is not typical, though embitterment is very likely to evoke it. To be brief, the ugly drama acted out by these ex-Communists is a sympton of how the social order, at this stage, is killing its own forces of renewal and vitality.

There is much room for speculation (1) how rapidly this same spirit will pervade the non-political realms; (2) how the indicated weakening of character will influence the tone of society (when the young man daes not even dream great deeds; for who can prove his worth by defending his father's work, and only out of fear of the father, at that?); and (3) whether the energies of youth must not ultimately burst creatively through such bonds.

—D. T. W.

The Military Subordination

continued from page 6

its boundaries exhausts its natural wealth, but it does not bankrupt itself; in fact, conversion from production of consumers goods to production for military order eases many of the normal tensions of the capitalist economy, and fattens dividends.[5] This is not the sore spot of the war society. The threat of a political and social crisis arises from the endless tensions which the population must endure in an endless war, in which victory is never in sight and national disasters are always possible.

We might construct the deeper psychological elements of this tension. We should then speak of pleasure-hunger, self-deprecation, psychosomatic tension, of addiction, fantasy, explosive actions, of patriotic identifications and loneliness. We will leave these matters aside, to insist on one piece of evidence which indicates sufficiently the tremendous forces generated under the pressure of permanent war: the popular manifestations when General MacArthur returned to America. Of course the administration always had the situation in hand; of course MacArthur, for all his ambitions and rigorously military thinking, is controlled by the calmer men whose alliance he needs. Nevertheless, MacArthur's return gave the public its unique opportunity to "vote" on the war in Korea. Specifically, this vote expressed disapproval of a war without even the theoretical possibility of victory; in general, it expressed the wish to reduce American foreign policy to one of the two endurable categories: war or peace.

[5]In passing, it may be noted that the limits set on the power of the eminent propertied classes to ravage the economy, the weakening of their plunder-instinct, their increased caution, the assumption by government of responsibility for economic stability, and the economic influence of government as consumer of armaments, have probably broken the cycle of capitalist depressions. Indeed, future historians may hold that the rise of working class parties had already brought England and Western Europe to such a point, before they were struck down by the disasters to international trade and finance which followed the Wall Street catastrophe. There remains, of course, the possibility of unforeseeable shocks and stupidity.

But it is precisely the choice of war and the choice of peace, ruled out by every consideration of strategy and power, which the American government cannot make, now or for a considerable time ahead. There is no need for extended discussion of the reasons: the problem of allies, the risks of war, military and prestigial investments in the border countries, etc. Barring those sudden, irreconcilable conflicts of crucial interests which lead to a war neither State desires, and barring seizure of political power by jingoist-military groups, the American government, regardless of party or person, cannot escape from the policy of Permanent War Short of War. Nor can the most diligent efforts of government to allay popular war fever cope with the violent antagonism between this policy and the indispensable sentiment of patriotism.

It would be interesting to spin out some of the possibilities: whether war can gradually become so matter-of-fact that the civic activities contributing to it, including a fixed term of hazardous overseas duty, will be lived as routine and meaningless, and therefore not tension-producing; how this apathy would influence the sentiment of patriotism and the cohesion of the whole body social, etc. We must let these speculations be, and limit ourselves to the plain fact that American society is now in the early, milder stages of the crisis of permanent war. This means, specifically: (1) at a time when the eminent economic groups are less competent than ever to restrain the military, there is no prospect for an end to the raison d'etre for the swollen military establishment; (2) popular sentiment tends more and more to converge with the natural predilections of the military, in opposition to the devious strategy of civilian government and the economic interests; (3) by reason of the social transformation of the past two decades, the American society may have lost considerable of its adaptability, which would mean that a relatively small crisis might entail violent readjustments.

V

The same pressures — the enduring war, and the weakening of the actual power of the eminent economic classes — produce, in addition to the danger-

ous expansion of military power, influences parallel to this power, and re-enforcing it.

(1) The police. Under cover of astute publicity, the FBI has achieved a power which may be without parallel in history. This may seem to be overstatement, in the light of habeus corpus, necessity for warrants, limitations on exercise of brutality, etc. Yet it is not exact to speak only of the **potentialities** of a police force which has (a) an unprecedented identification system, fingerprint-photograph records, etc.; (b) an enormous prestige — for integrity, cleverness, efficiency, loyalty; so that very few citizens and local police agencies deny it their unlimited cooperation; and which (c) ably exploits every new opportunity — the war, the red-hunt, the centralization of legal authority, the weakening of judicial liberalism — to extend its powers and spheres of activity. To what extent this police force has departed from its traditional preoccupation with self-aggrandizement, to meddle in the tempting domain of active reactionary politics, is not clear. What is clear is that, like the army, it is in principle hostile to liberty; that it is recruited from a group peculiarly devoid of outside loyalties; that it inspires terror even in the government of which it is presumably the guardian; that, in short, it is even now very unlikely that a political administration in the capital would dare cut its powers.

(2) The inquisition. There is probably no need to elaborate on the spread of the investigation-and-oath system, and how, apart from its intrinsic viciousness, it complements the growing police structure. The recent tendency of Congress to explore even the censorship of books may indicate some of the ramifications of a habit of mind which formerly pretended only to pass judgment on unorthodox political opinions.

(3) The Church. Whereas the growth of army, police and inquisition are everyday facts, plain enough without argument, the position of organized religion in this period is not at all clear. Perhaps there is a clue in the strong alliance formed between Washington and the Vatican. The occasion for this alliance, and for Truman's outrage to American Protestantism, is the political situation in Western Europe. In their resistance to government by the socialist parties, the ruling classes have found no better successors to their own discredited politicians (of the fascist parties and of the traditional big business parties) than the Catholic political parties; while Catholicism represents the only ideological position agreeable to the ruling classes and capable of inspiring large sections of the population to submission. Especially in Germany and Italy, the U. S. armies and government have confirmed this state of affairs.

While there are certainly no grounds, in view of the religious traditions of America and the present distribution of religious power, for predicting Catholic supremacy here, there may be grounds for concern lest similar tendencies project the American churches (including the Catholic) into positions of political power. Considering the present aggressiveness of all religions in America, considering the anti-atheist emphasis in much American propaganda, and considering the general decline of the rationalist spirit, this may be something more than a theoretical possibility.

VI

The intention here has been to show the social conditions which now threaten a vast enlargement of military power: (1) the permanent war and the popular sentiments it engenders; (2) the changed character of the society; (3) the general dispositions toward more authoritarian government.[6] Nothing counts but power; and the conditions for a major shift in power exist. It does not necessarily follow that it will shift to the military men. This can be prevented, as formerly in Germany and presently in Russia, by the emergence of a **political** power competent to enforce the military subordination. Lest anyone wish to draw consolation from such a possibility, we add that the first task of such a political power would be to forestall possible alliances between the masses and the military by suppressing popular liberties.[7]

Let us press the matter further, and consider proposals some might think consistent with such an analysis:

(1) "The solution of peace." Presumably, if a secure peace were established, the merely physical power of the military would abate, and hence its basis of political empire. This proposal is, however, at variance with serious analysis of the relations between Russia and America (see "War Is Not a Means to Peace," **Resistance,** October-November, 1950, Part II "War Is the Health of the State"; see also, this issue, "The American Century"). Without recapitulating this analysis, we may state this: so long as both nations are organized on the basis of centralized power, they threaten each other's existence, and some degree of war is inevitable.

(2) "If the waning of capitalist power opens the door to military power, then the capitalist power should be retained and restored." But when the conditions of the dominance of a class have passed, its power cannot be restored by an act of will. (History is replete with pseudo-restorations; historians always discover that the old forms had all changed character, meant quite different things.) To be specific, American workers, farmers and middle classes are not going to allow Big Business to recover its absolute dominion; not only would it be repugnant to their economic and prestigial interests, but their psychology of the old days is irrecoverable.

(3) "An informed and alive public opinion"—so that the masses will resist the military and not be seduced by it. But clearly this requires a subtlety such as intellectuals can manage, but not the population which has to make its daily peace with the machines of production, the war, the life without deep satisfactions, and whose intellectual diet is the Hearst-Howard-McCormick press and their radio-TV counterparts. Let the people of the mass realize their true situation, the nature of the lies they have eaten, and the implications of militarism — and then we shall have a great deal more than an informed public opinion.

In our opinion, the conditions pointed to in this article indicate the urgency of a reconstruction of society on anarchist principles, if the war is not to endure and come to the fruition of a militarized society.

—David Wieck

[6]No effort is made here to evaluate such short-term matters as the coming presidential election. Narrowly, the strong sentiment within the Republican Party for the nomination of Eisenhower may be traced to suspicion, on the part of die-hard enemies of Taft, that no one else could possibly take the nomination away from the Senator. In point of practical fact, and since a Republican victory seems fairly certain it is important, Taft's commitments to MacArthur and McCarthy may be more binding than he may think. At the present stage, the large theoretical and small practical differences between the political and economic forces represented by Taft, Eisenhower and the Democratic Party, together with the desires of the persons implicated in these forces to be kings and king-makers, appear still to overshadow new elements.

[7]This, of course, is one of the reasons why the Russian State is so oppressive. Otherwise, the various bases of potential power — military, police, economic, party — would engage in a factionalism, and demagogy, that could end only in civil war.

A Liberal Lack of Imagination

continued from page 10

such self-interest are involved is proved by the fact that America's allies differ in their economies. The binding principle among the nations of the west, insists Langbaum, is a fear of Russia and a desire for security. The actualizing of this desire is achieved by the creation of a world government, towards which the first step will have been taken, we are assured, by the success of the Korean venture. "For a government, after all, is a concentration of power in support of a principle of order: the rest is embellishment."

Although Langbaum is somewhat reluctant to consider economics as relevant to the matter, surely he recognizes how impoverished and how dependent upon America's aid Europe is, and further, how the tremendous production of America finds a ready place for its surplus in Europe. But what is of larger significance is the fact that this present prosperity occurs just because Europe is so bankrupt and so eager to receive whatever comes its way. The kind of security that obtains from UN activities, realizing that Russia is also a member of that organization and that pressures of force and national tensions mount daily, there is little need to discuss. As for Langbaum's oddly naive and cynical estimation of government, it is hardly calculated to arouse the energies against a distant enemy. And if this is really the general concern, then somewhere an error has been committed, for Russia as well as the nations of the West is interested in preserving a social order. But there is a peculiar foolishness in the demand which asks for commitment to a social view, so brazen in its intention as to claim that beyond the so-called order "the rest is embellishment".

When Langbaum views the prospect of the war, he realizes that any conflict involving atomic weapons would mean annihilation. However the only solution he can imagine, its example supposedly drawn from history, is a series of constant, partial wars — Korea one year, an episode in the Balkans the next, maybe some struggle in the Near East another, and so on for perhaps fifty years when "time by introducing new problems, may render obsolete the problems that now beset us." Aside from reflecting an infinitely placid disposition, this is a phantasy of present and future, made clearer when one examines the example of the past referred to.

After the horrible devastation of the Thirty Years' War, the wars of the Eighteenth century were waged less disastrously. Langbaum attributes this to the men of the Enlightenment who "made survival the primary consideration and compromise the rule for international relations." But this suggests that the men of the Enlightenment, and one thinks immediately of philosophers and social critics, were responsible for that century of unceasing wars when the tyranny of kings was divine. But to abstract history in this fashion serves Langbaum's purpose well. By reducing the complexity of events, ignoring both the abuses and dissatisfactions of the age, he provides himself with an appealing analogy. Yet how barren an image of our time we are asked to submit to, not unlike that of a totally manipulated society Orwell projected in "1984."

Not altogether lacking in contact with anarchist thought, Langbaum mentions an article by Comfort and Read which contained a statement of their position in respect to the present crisis. But as an answer to their advocacy of unilateral disarmament, Langbaum can only remark the naivete of such a proposal. The "neutralist position does not take sufficient facts into consideration", by which he means that people are unwilling to disarm, and this unwillingness is a refusal "to acquiesce indefinitely."

The obvious condescension and arrogance of these lines makes one impatient. Anything may be advocated in the name of decency, the logic of the rational mind, the spirit of good will, despite what by now should be an evident truth: just these qualities are destroyed by what is proposed as affirming them. The stubbornness of mind that views disarmament and the end of Abomb production as simplistic once again demonstrates what is central to the thought we have examined — a willful refusal to be alarmed by present conditions or imminence of war.

For the liberals the lines are firmly drawn, and the choice has already been made. But let them recognize what is absurd and hypocritical in their program. That is but a small step, for even to call something by its proper name today hardly guarantees a triumph over evil. We only do what we must, expressing our natural indignation over current events, still cherishing as we do, the image of the good society. And in criticizing and in affirming we preserve ourselves.

An Urgent Appeal to our Readers

The condition of "Resistance" is critical. This is the second issue since 1950. It is not a completely satisfactory issue. The way to resuming regular publication is not clear. Literally, continued publication is up to our readers.

(1) Contribution of articles has practically stopped.

(2) The editorial group has practically ceased to exist. Nearly all tasks connected with publication — correspondence, finance, literature-sale, editing, etc., etc., — have fallen to one person.

Now, from a decade of publishing "Why?" and "Resistance" it is clear that persons willing to take active part in anarchist activity are fewer than ever. Nevertheless, **interest** in anarchist ideas is large, and may be greater than ever.

If "Resistance" is to continue, some of our friends who tell us how glad they are to see R. appear will have to help.

(1) Articles. "Theoretical" articles; personal essays; book reviews; letters of discussion; personal experiences.

(2) Drawings — covers, illustrations, cartoons.

(3) Distribution — new subscribers, extra copies for friends.

(4) Money — the contributions which are R.'s only source of income.

(5) Criticism, suggestions.

To repeat, R. cannot continue without much greater support from and collaboration by its readers.

The practical problem of handling the editorial and administrative work remains serious. But if readers who want to see R. continue will help, then these problems will be much easier to solve.

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