

POLITICS REVISITED

WE have a letter of comment on the lead article for Nov. 7, "A Revolution in Power?", which is really an invitation to compose a Utopia for the twentieth century. We shall avoid the invitation on the two grounds of our own incompetence and the impossibility of the task, while welcoming the letter as devoted to questions that have probably suffered neglect in these pages. Our correspondent writes:

I would argue only slightly with your "Revolution in Power?", and that with your use of the word *politics*. You say, "Men may at last become tired of their feelings of powerlessness and look around for some means besides politics for changing the patterns of their lives."

Here you must be referring to the public activity of candidates for office, and the nonsense that Congressmen and Federal executives and sometimes Judges engage in. But politics, according to Aristotle, is the highest art, for it combines all other arts, and deals with the ordering of man's activity in society. In this sense the political activity of the society is what the listless helpless must deal with; it is the reordering of society toward which we must aim; and the Communities of Work are political instruments.

This distinction is important, because a group of ideas and information is brought to bear on reordering society if we do not seek to exclude "political" factors. Western Man has learned, apart from using violence to try to settle disputes between nations that the disputes between the members of a State can be settled, frequently justly, through machinery that permits considerable freedom. The English policeman, you remark, keeps order without resort to indiscriminate violence. That debate leads to action with consent, is the essence of the Western concept of civilization. The psychologists, I think, come to similar conclusions—Fromm is arguing for a social arrangement with the widest opportunity for the exercise of decision and the expression of consent.

You would be attracted by *An Essay in Politics* by Scott Buchanan. Here the corporate society is examined as to the degree of consent permitted to its members; the analogy between the political republic

and the economic republic is drawn. The analogy can be extended with interesting results to the "educational republic" or the "religious republic," to name a couple of other institutions of the day. The apathy of the citizens, says Josephson, springs from the feeling of powerlessness. The problem might be described as how to provide power for decision to the members of the mass society. This is what you are quoting Fromm about, and it is essentially a political problem.

For the members of a society to "consent" requires a common language; it is correct to describe the crisis in the South as a crisis in communication, just as one may think that the arguments carried on at the UN recently are as much arguments from the failure to describe the world in a common tongue as a failure to agree on objectives. This seems also to point to the political nature of the problem, for to have community there must be communication; and to have communication there must be a common set of terms and some common beliefs about the practices necessary to life together. It is important that community does *not* require a common belief about the justification for the practices—the variety of views of the nature of man and ultimate reality that can lead to agreement on the practice of fair trial, for instance, shows that what we do in our ordinary lives we can agree to do in common, without having to accept a particular doctrine or description of the truth.

According to the concluding paragraph above, politics, both ideally and practically, serves the community in two ways: (1) It provides for the general welfare, and (2) it secures the freedom, through certain common practices, justly administered, of the members of the community. Politics, as we Americans might put it, endeavors to define the optimum conditions for "life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness," and proceeds to establish those conditions and to maintain them.

Where, then, do the forces come from which express themselves in politics? And what is the nature of man, that we may define "the general welfare" and make provision for the "liberty" that is appropriate to him?

These are the questions which complicate the definition of politics. One may say, with the lexicographers, that politics is "the science and art of government." But this is a definition without content. A writer in the *Encyclopædia of the Social Sciences* sets the problem clearly:

Political science, without a theory of the State either expressly or implicitly assumed, is basically unthinkable. If political science aspires to scientific validity it must endeavor to employ the terms state, law, power, constitution, sovereignty, territory, people and the like as clear and unequivocal concepts. But just as a theory of the state is indispensable for political science, so political philosophy is a prerequisite of both. Without a philosophical organon which is capable, at least implicitly, of correlating the state with the larger context of the universe, there can be no real political science. Even that school which prides itself on being a purely empiric, antimetaphysical science of the practical is still unable to cut away from philosophical and metaphysical postulates. In so far as it devotes itself to certain inescapable and fundamental questions, it must deal—epistemological considerations apart—with such problems as whether man is predominantly good or bad, whether in his political behavior he acts according to reason or to instinct and whether there is a rational purpose in history and a progressive development of mankind. Those very forms of political science which seek with the greatest earnestness to free themselves from the trammels of philosophy are inevitably led back to the realm of metaphysics when they pose the question as to the real determination in political processes and answer it in naturalistic and materialistic terms. For political science is metaphysical not only when, in the Middle Ages, it introduces supernatural forces to explain political events; it is equally metaphysical when it introduces subhuman causes as the ultimate motivating forces of the political world and interprets political processes as pure epiphenomena. Strictly speaking, the scope of empiric political science is limited to examining a manifold of potentially determining forces. As soon as this manifold is abstracted away and one single determining force, whether ideal or material, is postulated as the whole determinant of all others, the realm of verifiable experience is left far behind.

What sort of politics do we in America have? We have a politics which was originally born from awareness of the realities contained in this

paragraph. Our politics *does not say* what are the forces which determine political processes and it does not endeavor to relate the American political system to the "universe." Our politics says, in effect, that since we do not know these things, let us keep ourselves from any sort of commitment on such questions. Our politics apologizes for itself. It swears to keep itself at a minimum. It declares that its power is *borrowed* from human individuals, who contract together to delegate their authority of decision in certain areas of life. They can always take that authority back again and give it to someone else, either at election time, or by the process of referendum and recall, or through impeachment. The government our politics provides is not a government with awesome sovereignty; it is an improvised affair, conceived almost as a necessary evil. It is designedly the most unideological of governments.

It is inevitable, however, since man is a philosophizing being, that all sorts of philosophical notions are continually being injected into our politics. Whether or not our politics is the best possible politics, it is certainly a difficult politics, for complete neutrality on philosophical questions is practically impossible for human beings—and complete philosophical neutrality is what the First Amendment to the Constitution demands. We—some of us, at any rate—are continually trying to make our Constitution take sides on philosophical questions. A minor success in this direction was recently engineered by Christian lobbyists, adding the phrase of submission, "under God," to the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag. There is apparently an incurable tendency to tinker with the charter of American freedom and to make the Constitution support some particular version of human nature and of the relation of the American State to some Larger Destiny. The simple proposition that human beings have within them the resources, the need, and the right, to work out their own higher philosophical beliefs is not sufficient to satisfy a large number of Americans.

This, then, is the covert nature of American politics. The pure "objectivity" of a philosophically neutral political system is beyond the grasp of many American citizens, so that various philosophical or metaphysical doctrines are continually being introduced to provide the emotional energy of political campaigns. The political objective of the Welfare State, after all, results from an ideological conception of human good, just as the old *Laissez faire* theory of a free-for-all competitive struggle is another and alternative theory with a different philosophic origin. Both doctrines represent theories of the nature of man. Socialism, Communism, and Fascism stem from still other interpretations of human nature and of the character of political forces. In fact, it may be doubted whether a truly non-metaphysical politics is possible at all, since human beings seem to insist upon founding their political convictions upon philosophical ideas, whether primitive and undeveloped, or carefully matured.

Actually, the American political theory is not *really* "neutral," itself, since the idea of the importance of individual freedom and the retention of power by the individual is itself a claim of the competence of the individual to be free and to design his own political community, in company with others with whom he can agree.

Perhaps we ought to define the American system of politics as a system of unstable equilibrium. Perfect equilibrium, for this system, would mean the perfect preservation of philosophical neutrality. But since we are men, men with beliefs about ourselves, and with theories of the good dependent upon those beliefs, we continually commit our politics in one or another direction, in the name of the general welfare, as interpreted by our beliefs. This makes the instability of our politics, but it also marks our "progress," should we happen to achieve it.

Proof that this is the way American politics operates lies in the demonology of the competing parties. Opposition to Mr. Roosevelt's New Deal,

whatever might have been its "objective" qualities, was in many cases founded on practically religious emotion. The liberal's contempt for the selfish "reactionary" sprang from a similar feeling of moral indignation. He felt that the paternalistic employer who wanted everything his own way, with no regard for the welfare of his workers, was defying the Moral Law.

Politics does not *have* to be that way, of course, but it very often is, and it is difficult to imagine politics that is free of such ideological intensity except in a community made up of maturer people than we have with us today.

The implication we are reaching for is now clear: Maturity is more important than politics, since we shall not have intelligent politics without maturity—more maturity, that is, than we have at present.

This conclusion leads us into direct contradiction with Aristotle's dictum, as rendered by our correspondent: "Politics, according to Aristotle, is the highest art, for it combines all the other arts, and deals with the ordering of man's activity in society." What shall we do about this?

There is not much to do about it except quarrel with Aristotle, a project we take on with considerable interest.

First of all, Aristotle was a renegade Platonist. This is an unkind way of saying that Aristotle suffered ambivalence in deciding between Plato's unqualified idealism and what seemed to Aristotle a more "practical" course. As Werner Jaeger shows in his *Aristotle* (Oxford University Press, 1934), the founder of the Peripatetic School wavered between Platonic dreams of the good society and the desire to give counsel on how to cope with an existing and even corrupt social order. Aristotle longed to "isolate" social or political problems from philosophical problems. Eventually, he did separate them. In the *Magna Moralia*, Aristotle accuses Plato of confusing the treatment of Virtue with that of Ideal Good. "This," he says, "was wrong, because

inappropriate. The subject of moral virtue should have been excluded from the discussion of Being and Truth; for the two subjects have nothing in common." How do you like that!

Aristotle was indeed the great divider-upper. Introducing his own work, he says:

But we are now dealing with the Social Science and faculty; and this does not investigate the Ideal Good, but what is good for us men. For no science predicates goodness of its end; and Social Science is no exception to the rule. Ideal Good is therefore not the subject of its discourse. (*Magna Moralia*, I, i.)

Here is cast, for the first time, the shadow of "scientific" objectivity and indifference to the good.

Aristotle, as Jaeger points out, builds up his politics with criticism of Plato. Plato's work is impractical, he says. Plato's ideal state takes no account of foreign affairs. Aristotle is disturbed by Plato's proposal that towns not be fortified. "The state must not merely meet the foe bravely in case of invasion, as Plato demands, but also prevent all other powers from desiring to attack it." Finally, in Aristotle's Utopia, as Jaeger says, "The necessities of foreign politics force the state into the struggle of conflicting national interests, and are liable to give it a direction different from that dictated by its ethical end." But before going on, we should have before us Jaeger's analysis of Plato's politics, as disclosed by the *Republic* and other works:

From the standpoint of the history of the mind the decisive problem in Plato's politics lies in that strict unconditional subordination of the individual to the state by which he "restored" the genuine old Greek life. In the fourth century this life had long been disrupted by the preponderance of commercial forces and interests in the state and in the political parties, and by the intellectual individualism that became general during the period. Presumably every person saw clearly that the state could not be healed unless this individualism could be overcome, at least in its crudest form as the unbounded selfishness of each person; but it was hard to get rid of when the state was inspired by the same spirit—had, in fact, made it the principle of its actions. The predatory politics of the end of the fifth century had gradually

brought the citizens around to new ways of thinking, and now the state fell a victim to the egotistic idea, impressively pictured by Thucydides, that had made itself into a principle. The old state with its laws had represented to its citizens the totality of all "customary" standards. To live according to the laws was the highest unwritten law in ancient Greece, as Plato for one last time sadly represents it in his *Crito*. That dialogue shows the tragic conflict of the fourth century sharpened into conscious absurdity; the state is now such that according to its laws the justest and purest in the Greek nation must drink the hemlock. The death of Socrates is a *reductio ad absurdum* of the whole state, not merely of the contemporary officeholders. In the *Gorgias* Plato measures the Periclean state and its weaker successors by the standard of the radical moral law, and arrives at an unconditional condemnation of the historical state. When he goes on in the *Republic* to sacrifice the life of the individual completely to the state, with a one-sided strictness intolerable to the natural feelings of his century, his justification lies in the changed spirit of his new state. The sun that shines in it is the Idea of the Good, which illuminates its darkest corners. Thus the subordination of all individuals to it, the reconversion of emancipated persons into true "citizens," is after all only another way of expressing the historical fact that morality had finally separated itself from politics and from the laws or customs of the historical state, and that henceforth the independent conscience of the individual is the supreme court even for public questions. There had been conflicts of this sort before; what is new is the proclamation of permanent conflict. Plato's demand that philosophers shall be kings, which he maintained unabated right to the end, means that the state is to be rendered ethical through and through. It shows that the persons who stood highest in the intellectual scale had already abandoned the actual ship of state, for a state like Plato's could not have come alive in his own time, and perhaps not at any time.

The problem of politics, according to Plato, is, then, *to change the spirit of the State*. The viewpoint so often presented in these pages is that the problem of politics *cannot be solved by political means*. By political, here, we mean, the techniques of social organization and of government of the social order.

The real problem of politics is the problem of maturity—or, as Plato put it, of making philosophers out of kings. And in our own time

the democratic epoch, when every man is a ruler or king—every man must learn to be a philosopher, if the problem of politics is to be solved.

Aristotle, like more contemporary political thinkers, wanted politics to be a separate discipline with principles of its own. His later works, after he made himself independent of Plato, exhibit the tensions which his longing to be "practical" introduces. He gave up Plato's radical consistency and devotion to the Ideal of the Good in order to discuss what seemed to him practical means of participation in politics. But Aristotle's ideal state, as Jaeger says, "is not to be ruled by Platonic kings." In fact, there is no place made in Aristotle's ideal state for the philosopher:

Here for the first time the antinomy between state and individual becomes a scientific problem, though as yet only in a very restricted sense, since it is only the philosophical ego, . . . that may have interests higher than the state's to represent. For the ordinary citizen who is simply the product of the reigning political principles there is no such problem in the ancient world. His membership in the state exhausts his nature.

Let us indeed aim at the reordering of society, but in terms of attitudes of mind toward human life that will make our political problems relatively simple affairs. If it is said that "you can't change human nature," we shall have to reply that human nature is the only thing that *can* be changed; certainly all history and every great book instruct us in the fact that political problems do not change very much so long as human nature remains the same.

Politics, then, is not the highest art, but a most subordinate one, entirely dependent upon the quality of culture that prevails in a society.

Political philosophy may indeed be a vehicle of cultural refinement and an educational force. There have been epochs of history when politics and educational forces have combined to produce great changes in civilization. The last half of the eighteenth century was such a period. The vision of a Thomas Paine was a metapolitical force that

did much to reorder all subsequent societies, and the same may be said of various of the eighteenth-century political philosophers. Their genius now blooms anew, in Asia, where the principles of the great revolutionary age of the West have found fertile soil.

But for the West, today, there is little or no inspiration in politics. At least, we find it necessary to try to discover deeper meanings than we now know in our traditional political conceptions.

Our correspondent mentions the French Communities of Work, calling them political instruments. This may be, but the striking thing about them, at the political level, is their utter simplicity. These Communities are distinguished by the extraordinary absence of what we commonly think of as "law." There is assent to principles—broad, general principles—but very little attention given to the means of coercion. In fact, in these communities, politics is reduced to primitive, and, we think, proper size. If politics, in our correspondent's sense, means the virtual abandonment of familiar political forms and formalities, then we are all for it. The Communities of Work seem to us, however, to resemble simple brotherhoods, families of men and women who are united by simple acknowledgement of common principles rather than by schemes of political organization. These "islands of brotherhood," it may be, are prophetic examples of the natural "politics" of the future.

REVIEW

CHRISTIAN JOURNALISM

THE urbane managing editor of the *Christian Century* has "editorial correspondence" from India in the issue of Nov. 14 which is some kind of a "high" in Christian journalism. We have long admired the *Century* for its excellent articles and its freedom from compromise. The writing of Theodore A. Gill, who has been on the *CC* staff for several years, adds a quality of non-sectarian impartiality that is seldom equalled in any paper we know of. While Mr. Gill may not appreciate it, we feel urged to say that his work lacks even a characteristic "Christian" flavor! He writes simply as a civilized man.

This letter, mailed in Calcutta, reports the impact of India on an intelligent, sensitive and observant American journalist. India has made another convert to her teeming humanity. Something is going on in India, and Mr. Gill feels it all about him. He, like Edmond Taylor, has become "richer by Asia," and we suspect that *Christian Century* readers will hereafter profit by the transaction. India needs a Walt Whitman of her own to chronicle the buzzing confusion and activity of the great subcontinent, but Mr. Gill will do for a start. He says:

This confusion of the ages and cultures is probably what fascinates most. From Beirut you come tearing in over the Arabian ocean on one of Air India's excellent skyliners, proceed expeditiously through the smartly staffed customs, speed toward town in a shiny new bus—and brake at a dozen crossings to let bullock-drawn, wooden-wheeled carts creak across the road. You meet Nobel prize-winning chemists and physicists—and read in the newspapers about efforts to augment regular medical service with a revival of something that sounds ominously like witch-doctoring.

Who wouldn't be bewitched? . . . There is poverty, dreadful poverty, but there is at least as much graciousness and intelligence and hope. There is dirt and the children play in it, but it is the most sun-kissed, irradiated dirt on earth. As a matter of fact, as far as fastidiousness goes, it is the Westerner who gives offense out here, in spite of all his ointments. I

wonder if the supercilious Americans who claim olfactory confirmation for their race prejudices know how unkempt they seem to millions of "people of color" beyond the Pacific who circle gently to keep upwind of a Westerner.

Mr. Gill is puzzled by the coolness of the U.S. Government toward India's "whole valiant effort that so obviously ought to have our instant encouragement." It makes no sense. The editor adds that "the stories hereabouts of Secretary Dulles' shouting browbeating of Nehru on his first official visit to New Delhi are as hair-raising as they are authenticated." There is no accounting for the provincialism and prejudice which color official American attitudes toward India. Mr. Gill asks:

Is it Nehru's socialism that holds us aloof? But what alternative is there? Have you seen India? Do you know what has to be done? Can you honestly ever imagine that just happening? The necessity for central planning and control in India is not in question—only who shall plan and what shall be the nature of the control. Informed nonsocialists should be grateful for the dominance in India of a leader and a party who are going about the planning business with the scruples and restraints of Nehru and the Congress party. Necessary land reform is lagging right now because the parliament is loath to confiscate for redistribution large holdings without compensation. At the time of Nasser's nationalization of the Suez canal, Nehru told a great crowd in Delhi, ". . . the way Egypt took hold of the Suez canal was not our way. We follow a different way." These are not the statements or the actions of the kind of socialism that rides roughshod over private sensibilities

Thinking about vast and turbulent India must begin by recognizing the necessity of some kind of planning, some kind of control. Irresponsible thinking may suggest that there is a *laissez faire* alternative. There is not. The only real alternative is in the diametrically opposite corner: totalitarianism. Free-enterprise Americans ought to be thanking all the forces of the universe that India is led by a man who believes in state controls but who is almost painfully scrupulous about the rights of private property. Yet officially America goes on talking as if Nehru were a nuisance. Don't be deceived: after him, the deluge. For very different reasons the American capitalist ought to be praying with the American

missionary who told me in dead seriousness, "Every night we all pray that Nehru will live forever!"

It is Mr. Gill's considered judgment that "We should throw in with Nehru and with India with everything we have."

Another article in this same issue (Nov. 14) of the *Christian Century* deals with the virtues of secularism—or, at any rate, secular education. The writer is Frederick C. Neff, of Rutgers University, who undertakes to show that secularism is rooted in a profoundly moral attitude—respect for human differences. Loss of the secular spirit in American education would be, as he sees it, a great disaster.

Prof. Neff attributes the rise of secularism in education to the "unprecedented rise of science and technology." Science has rendered insecure the foundations of dogmatic faith and has brought a temper of mind which expects and seeks change. A further unsettling influence arises from the need of the peoples of the modern world to understand one another. No longer can we hide on private continents nourishing our select beliefs. We have now to learn to get along with peoples who have other beliefs, and this means learning to appreciate other beliefs as well as other peoples. Such a requirement leads directly to the view that the beliefs of others may be as good—may even be better, on occasion—than our own. This is the working spirit of secularism.

Resistance to secularism in education comes mostly from fear that fixed dogmas will be questioned, hallowed "truths" unseated from their place of authority. Conflict of this sort leads to crisis, the sort of crisis now so often spoken of in connection with educational problems. Prof. Neff writes:

If education is presently confused, it is because it reflects a turning point in the affairs of men, a crisis in moral codes and ways of human association that all civilized peoples are at the moment facing. When education ignores the changing world which it is supposed to be preparing young people to live in, then

it is guilty of being unrealistic and impractical. When it undertakes to foster a scientific outlook and a world view, it is accused of being "godless" and unpatriotic. And when it attempts to embrace both the cultural and the scientific, both the indigenously patriotic and the broadly international, it is blamed for its neutrality and for its failure to take a stand that will promote any point of view with conviction.

Secularism has become the mood of modern education for the reason that secularism raises the questions which the age demands be answered:

What evidence is there to substantiate the contention that the color of a person's skin determines his moral worth or his intelligence? How can there be but one "true" religion when the truth or falsity of any religion can be assessed only in terms of whatever authority it sets up as valid—and who is to decide which authority is "correct"? If democracy is basically a progressive and improvable way of life, how can it at the same time operate with principles that are claimed to be final and infallible, hence closed to public inspection, criticism and improvement? If we are seriously concerned with achieving international accord, how can we likewise maintain that all adjustments must be made by other nations and that we have none to make ourselves? If morality means unquestioning obedience, just who or what is it that we are to obey unquestioningly, and where do we relegate our historic right to the free exercise of intelligence and reason?

One wonders how the readers of the *Christian Century* will respond to this bold declaration of secularist principles. Meanwhile, all honor to a magazine which frequently outreaches itself with articles of this sort.

COMMENTARY

SOME PAINFUL COMPARISONS

IT must be faced that recent events in Hungary cast an ominous shadow on the optimistic accounts of affairs in Soviet Russia, as reported in this week's *Frontiers*. The grip of the past on the Soviet policy-makers has caused a mindless repetition of methods which, through the years, have disillusioned all but blind partisans with the country of "revolutionary socialism."

But even the descent of monolithic Soviet power on the Hungarian people does not make the judgments of the six Quakers and of Mr. Rubin false. It shows only that more progress remains to be made in "breaking away, relentlessly if unevenly, from the iron terror and total conformity that marked life in the U.S.S.R. in the last years of Stalin." And it is quite possible for this trend to be a fact within the borders of the Russian state at a time when the terror is being applied in other lands by the Soviet Government. "Colonial" powers are notorious for practicing double standards—one at home, another abroad.

Then there is the question of whether there is so great a difference between what the Russians have done in Hungary and what the British and the French have done in Egypt. After all, the British and the French belong to the "free" world and are supposed to represent the forces of righteousness. The bombing of Port Said came as a shocking surprise, and, from what reports we have seen, it had not even the dubious virtue of being effective as a terroristic measure. What it did accomplish was the ruthless slaughter of from two to three thousand Egyptian civilians.

An INS photographer who smuggled his negatives past the military censor called Port Said "the city of horror," adding,

In more than 15 years of photographing wars from Okinawa to Germany to Korea, I have never seen anything worse.

His pictures show mounds of mangled bodies, including women and children, lying in the streets.

Dazed people wandered about, searching for their dead, while doctors trying to salvage the mutilated bodies of the wounded had no fresh water to wash their hands while operating. For two days, the invading force kept the water shut off, so that there was no drinking water, while fires raged out of control, according to Olow Anderson, the INS photographer. (*Pasadena Independent-Star-News*, Nov. 11.)

The only ameliorating fact that we can think of, in connection with this affair, is the freedom of the British press to express horror at what happened. Only in this way is the "freedom" of the Western democracy in evidence, as contrasted with the Russian press, which is no more than a sounding board for the Soviet leaders. In England, civilized voices may still be heard. When the British declared their intent to assault the Egyptian city in collaboration with French forces, the *Manchester Guardian* (Nov. 1) said editorially:

The Prime Minister sought to justify the ultimatum by saying that we must protect our shipping, our citizens, and "vital international rights." But what possible right have we to attack another country? . . . Protection of shipping—or for that matter of rights of transit through the Suez Canal—is no cause for making war, unless it is done with the authority of the United Nations. . . . The first right which we ought to be protecting, and the first duty which we ought to respect is the rule of law. Instead Britain and France are taking the law into their own hands. The British and the French Governments have acted in a rash and precipitate fashion. To much of the world they will appear to have seized upon the shallowest excuse to reoccupy the canal zone as they wanted to do weeks ago. The Prime Minister says that no other course is open to us. He is gravely mistaken. . . .

This, alas, is an era of "grave mistakes." The great question, of course, is how long it will take the Powers to realize that any sort of continuation of former policies is an invitation to chaos. The Western democracies will have to prove that their morality is superior to the competing authoritarian States, not alone in the freedom of criticism at

home, but in the policies pursued abroad. At present, the comparison is not impressive.

The same judgment, to a lesser degree, may be applied to the attitude of the United States toward India, as reflected in *Christian Century* comment quoted in this week's Review. Here, the grip of fears and the foolish expectation that we can oblige other countries to adopt American perspectives have led to follies that would try the patience of saints, and the Indian people, while admirable in many ways, are not yet all saints. When will we learn that all believers in freedom are our allies—and the only allies we have—even when their opinions differ from our own?

CHILDREN and Ourselves

Editor, Children . . . and Ourselves: I enclose several quotations from Pearl S. Buck's latest book, *My Several Worlds*, because I think there is much food for thought in what she has to say. The first paragraphs describe a method of rearing the very young which we would dread to put into practice. Yet the young children of my friends seem terribly undisciplined. I find myself dreading their visits. They invade your house and proceed to take it apart, clamoring all the time for attention. On the other hand, children who are corrected and disciplined from babyhood develop a spirit of rebelliousness and destructiveness, as if in protest to the unwanted discipline. Everyone loves well-behaved and mannerly children. What happens when total neglect of "discipline" produces "amazingly adult and sweet-tempered, and self-disciplined" children? Mrs. Buck points out that the old Chinese approach is considered modern in our civilization, yet it has been attacked on every hand as a failure. Why is this? Some comments on the following passages would be appreciated.

"For the honor of the family the young were taught how to behave, and though they were treated with the utmost leniency until they were seven or eight years old, after that they learned to respect the code of human relationships so dearly set forth by Confucius."

"Yes, Chinese children were alarmingly spoiled when they were small, my Western parents thought. No one stopped tantrums or wilfulness and a baby was picked up whenever he cried, and indeed he was carried by somebody or other most of the time. Babies ate what they pleased and when they pleased, and little children led a heavenly life. The Chinese believed that it was important to allow a child to cry his fill and vent all his tempers and humors while he was small, for if these were restrained and suppressed by force or fright, then anger entered into the blood and poisoned the heart, and would surely come forth later to make adult trouble. It was a knowledge as ancient as a thousand years, and yet something of the same philosophy is now considered the most modern in the Western world in which I live today."

"Right or wrong, these spoiled children emerged like butterflies from cocoons at about the age of seven or eight, amazingly adult and sweet-tempered and self-disciplined. They were able by then to hear

reason and to guide themselves in the accepted ways. Since they had not been disciplined too soon, when they reached the age of learning they progressed with great rapidity. The old Chinese, like the most modern of the Western schools of child psychology, believed that there is an age for learning each law of life and to teach a child too young was simply to wear out the teacher and frustrate the child."

"Our Americans are not harsh to their children so much as indifferent and withdrawn, or anxious and critical. The parent world is too far separated from the childhood world, there are too many absolutes conflicting one against the other, so that our children grow up uncertain of their own worth as human beings. I am amazed when sometimes an unperceptive foreigner tells me that Americans are proud. Bombastic sometimes, yes, and boastful, but this is because we are not proud, but secretly self-distrustful and doubtful of what we do and say and think. A man who knows his own worth does not boast, is not self-seeking, will not domineer or force his own opinion upon others, respects his fellow man because he respects first himself. When we Americans fail in these virtues it is because somewhere we have lost our faith in ourselves, and this happens, I believe, in early childhood."

Such quotations make us wish that Mrs. Buck would edit this department in *MANAS* for a while. Her method of studying "cultures by contrast" provides striking insight on basic issues of education. *The Good Earth*, as we recall, gave an "ancient-world" view on children—grandparents and not parents were held, in Chinese culture, to be the best fitted for the upbringing of children. The actual parents, young and to a degree still willful, were not thought to be impartial enough to deal with children; the steadiness and tranquility of those past the age of egocentric ambition were regarded as safer and better influences for the young. Then, in Mrs. Buck's story of her own retarded little daughter—*The Child who Never Grew Up*—one sees that gloom and hopelessness are never justifiable, even when mental and psychic defects cannot be overcome. Mrs. Buck learned much of Helen Keller's sense of warm sympathy for affliction in giving love and ceaseless attention to a baby who could not respond in normal ways.

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The conclusion of another major political campaign suggests several considerations in respect to "child psychology"—not alone because much of the emotionalism of election time is inexcusably childish, but also because children are themselves often caught up in the net of irrational prejudice as they imitate the partisanship of their elders. We recall, from grammar school days, that any child who had the misfortune or fortune to possess parents belonging to a political minority was regarded as beyond the pale by the triumphant small fry who inherited the majority opinions. As with all factional religious divisions, the seeds of "maladjustment" were planted—and for no cause at all. History reveals that the majority, certainly, can be wrong about who and what is "good for the country," just as often as the minority, if not more often.

We should like to see each public school teacher regard a political campaign as a major challenge—a challenge to educate children away from that blind and irrational partisanship which makes a mockery of the professed ideal of a *living* democracy. Why not challenge partisanship at its source, illustrate the meaning of democracy by showing how political discussion may be Socratic? Much of value *can* be discerned in the platforms of political parties with which we do not agree—and it is often an effort toward impartiality which allows a vote to be intelligently cast.

On the subject of the childishness of most election psychology, we cannot resist the opportunity to reproduce some paragraphs contributed by John Steinbeck to the *Saturday Review* some months ago. Steinbeck depicts the irresponsible adolescence of high-pressure campaigning by showing how well television advertising and politicking fit together. Both the constant TV viewer and the rabid "party man" have left their minds somewhere far behind, and what Mr. Steinbeck refers to as the "glazed eye" of the TV habitué also is to be discerned on the visage of the ardent politician who doesn't want

to be "confused by facts." National Committees, recognizing the docility of a truly captive audience, dangle tempting candidates before viewers' eyes much as they would merchandise beer:

There is only one difficulty in all of this and don't think the National Committees are not aware of it. The captive audience has been conditioned to buy Squeakies—the body-building bran dust. Then suddenly the message changes and they are told to vote for Elmer Flangdangle for Senator.

Now the responses of the captive audience are slow and slightly confused, which is what the great advertising company wants them to be. There is a great danger that they will buy a Senator and vote for a cereal. It was no accident that a cleansing powder won three public offices last year and that the sovereign people of the State of South Tioga elected a two-tone convertible to the governorship. The danger does not stop here. If in our country there should be candidates capable of good natured chicanery, and if they should enter into partnership with advertising agencies, the possibilities are frightening. Could a captive TV audience resist a chocolate-coated candidate or one with sugar and cream in his hair? Why the electorate might even insist on tasting candidates before voting.

FRONTIERS

Recent Reports on Russia

THE day may yet arrive when the voicing of friendliness or sympathy for Russia will not be regarded as the equivalent of American disloyalty. If and when this happens, some of the credit will be due to the *Saturday Review* for featuring such stories as the report on their recent Russian visit by some prominent Quakers (*SR*, Sept. 8). "The Quakers Meet the Russians" is characterized by the *SR* editors as "one of the most searching and valuable documents on the nature and meaning of Communist power that has yet appeared." We agree.

The six Quakers who undertook this fact-finding mission arrived in the Soviet Union as ordinary tourists, wishing to avoid any suspicion of the "hoodwinking" to which special guests of a Soviet organization are said to be subjected. Such sponsorship, as the Quaker authors point out, insures purple carpet treatment, for the concept of status is deeply ingrained in Russia today. The authors of the report also make effective claim that they are in no sense blind to "the monolithic character" of Russian society, nor to the fact that the "Communist Party is in full control of machinery of government, the national economy and the social order." They are quite aware that "individual freedom as we know it in the democratic world does not today exist in Russia, and never has." But the familiar Quaker "affirmative note" is nonetheless strong—impressively so because of these realistic views:

Our visit dispelled none of these popular impressions of Soviet society, but it reinforced our conviction that they convey only a partial and very inadequate understanding of the Soviet Union. Taken alone they suggest a static situation: total control, rigid doctrine, inexorable violence. Yet almost our strongest impression of Soviet society was its fluid quality. The internal situation in Russia is anything but static; forces are at work that will certainly make the future very different from the past. To assume the contrary is to dehumanize the Russians and reduce the operation of society to a mechanical formula. This is a Marxist doctrine, and one which runs counter to both Christian belief and historical evidence. It fails to take into account the fact that

dictators are men and that they govern other men—in this case, 200,000,000 of them.

Soviet society is itself a demonstration of the inadequacy of the Marxist formula. A whole nation has been taught to read. An increasing number are being taught to think, and, according to American scientists, to think very well. This massive educational program has been necessary to carry forward the national program of industrialization and to indoctrinate the people with Marxism. But education, once provided, is not subject to easy control. How long will men well trained in the scientific process accept without question Party pronouncements based only on "holy" dogma? How long will millions of Russians read Tolstoy and Turgenev and Dostoevski and Shakespeare and Dickens and Zola before some of the ideas of these literary statesmen produce serious cracks in the monolithic structure of Soviet society? It seems to us that mass education will present increasing problems to Russian leadership. It is already a new and dynamic force that must be reckoned with.

The tremendous educational achievements of the Russian government are apparently both the chief pride of the Russian people and the chief hope of those Westerners who look for an eventual basis for mutual understanding and friendliness between Russia and the West:

The average Soviet citizen has no information about the outside world except what has been filtered through the officially controlled Soviet channels of communication. He is deeply concerned about peace because he knows the cost of war. A member of our group once asked directions of two women on the outskirts of Moscow and was almost immediately drawn into a conversation about their great fear of war and desire for peace. When he told them the American people shared both their fear and that desire the two women looked genuinely surprised and relieved. Then one of them said thoughtfully, "Yes, that makes sense, I'm sure the American *people* don't want war—it's just the capitalists!" (In answer he told them he had heard the same thing about them in America: "The Russian *people* don't want war—just the Communists !")

Virtually everywhere we found immense pride in the achievements of their Government—a pride that is the greater because most Soviet citizens have no means of comparing these achievements with those of other countries. This pride is nowhere more apparent than in the realm of their educational

achievement. Indeed, the satisfaction felt by the Russian people in their new opportunity for education is one point where Government policy has won an endorsement that far exceeds passive acceptance. It has been necessary to educate the masses in order to carry out industrialization and to build support for Marxism, but there is no doubt that the people have genuinely benefited in the process.

Last, but not least, the authors of the report manage to mirror the Russian penchant for humor, including jibes at certain aspects of government administration. Public dissatisfaction with inadequate housing provisions, for instance, was revealed by a visit to the Moscow Circus. There huge merriment was occasioned by the clown who rushed to the center of the circus ring, shouting that he had just written a book:

"What about?" asked a second.
 "Boy meets girl," said the first.
 "Ah, a story!"
 "They fall in love."
 "A romance!"
 "They get married and find an apartment."
 "A fable!"

A paragraph of serious comment is worth quoting:

At the same time there are several reasons why men of good will should not despair of eventually breaking through this wall of misunderstanding and suspicion that Marxist-Leninist doctrine creates around its adherents. First of all, Communists could not avoid being human beings even if they wished to, and as human beings they are far too complex to be adequately explained by their own doctrines. Second, the very emphasis they put on the cult of science and on the dialectical nature of all phenomena may make it easier for them eventually to recognize the contradictions between their Marxist interpretations of reality and reality itself. Third, now that Marxism-Leninism has become the official religion of the Soviet state and now that one of the requirements for getting ahead in Soviet life is proper observance of its rites, it already shows evidence of producing counter-reactions.

The *Progressive* for September contains Morris Rubin's eye-witness report on Russia. As with the Quakers, no one can seriously pin the charge of "fellow traveler" on Rubin, for the record of his

editorial position is clearly established. Rubin summarizes:

The Soviet Union I saw is a nation where relaxation is mellowing regimentation, where patience and self-assurance are modifying the aggressiveness of a long-felt insecurity; where a new "collective leadership"—shrewd, confident, and ambitious—is releasing new energies and initiative by breaking away, relentlessly if unevenly, from the iron terror and total conformity that marked life in the U.S.S.R. in the last years of Stalin.

I thought I saw during my four weeks there the blurred outline of something that historians might one day look back at as the beginning of a peaceful revolution—a forward movement whose essential ingredients are:

A wider diffusion of power, with more authority for local soviets and the sixteen constituent republics.

New safeguards for individuals who find themselves in the clutches of the police.

A constantly improving standard of living.

A humanizing of personal relationships.

A relaxation of tensions on almost every level of life.

A vast extension of education, notably in science and technology.

A measure of tolerance, even encouragement, of criticism of public policies and officials—within the broad framework of the Party Line.

A modification of foreign policy that, for all its built-in contradictions, is now based on 1) the notion of the preventability, rather than the inevitability, of war with the West, and 2) the pursuit of "Socialism" abroad through parliamentary as well as through revolutionary methods.

The *SR Quaker* report and Morris Rubin's account of his Russian visit should be required reading in the schools and homes of the United States.