



The
Purpose
of
Ameri-
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Politics

HANS J.
MORGEN-
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To Hansel Arendt
in appreciation of his help

Prof. Wagerstein

THE PURPOSE
OF
AMERICAN POLITICS

BY
HANS J. MORGENTHAU



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5. *The American Revolution*

In a sense, then, it can be said that the revolution which gave birth to the United States is the only true revolution in history, because it is the only one in which men as creatures of history rationally chose to become its creators, to start history afresh by ridding themselves of its burdens and heeding its lessons, to give their nation a novel purpose.

The English revolutions of the seventeenth century, like the French revolution of 1789, were attempts at restoring an ancient order of things, an ancient "constitution," which the powers-that-be were despoiling. The American revolution was an attempt not at restoring an ancient order that was supposed to have existed previously, but at creating a new order of things the like of which had never been seen before. The American revolution was radical in the literal sense of going to the roots and pulling them out. It was radical in the sense in which Marx imagined the proletarian revolution to be radical, drawing a line under all previous history and starting the historic process *de novo*.

If this understanding of the way in which the purpose of America was formed is correct, then the real American revolution did occur not in 1776 but began in 1620. It was the decision, taken in England, to establish beyond the sea a new society conforming to certain principles and the fact of its establishment in accordance with these principles which constitute the real American revolution. The nature of that revolution was social rather than political. The Puritans who went to America set out to create a new society, while the Puritans who remained in England endeavored to transform the old one. The latter used political revolution and civil war to achieve their end; that is,

people came in search of equality in freedom, and they either stayed where they had first settled because they found it there or moved westward until they did find it. "What attachment," asks Crèvecoeur, "can a poor European emigrant have for a country where he had nothing? The knowledge of the language, the love of a few kindred as poor as himself, were the only cords that tied him: his country is now that which gives him land, bread, protection, and consequence: *Ubi panis ibi patria*, is the motto of all emigrants."¹ If freedom and equality can no longer be found in America, there is no reason for America to exist. "When it comes to this [the Know-Nothings getting control]," Abraham Lincoln, most American of Americans, could write to Joshua Speed on August 24, 1855, "I should prefer emigrating to some country where they make no pretence of loving liberty—to Russia, for instance, where despotism can be taken pure, and without the base alloy of hypocrisy."²

America has not known, as have other nations, the phenomenon of the temporary émigré, the voluntary exile who does not like a phase of his country's history, who waits it out abroad, who may try to stimulate the process of change from his exile, and who returns when the phase has passed. America had no Jacobites, no émigrés like the French aristocrats who during the revolution waited in Coblenz for the restoration of the Bourbons, or like the anti-fascists who worked for the downfall of fascism and returned after its demise. America has only expatriates, people who cut themselves loose once and for all, who leave never to return. The American exile does not leave a household temporarily unpleasant and wait abroad for the

¹ St. John de Crèvecoeur: *Letters from an American Farmer* (New York: E. P. Dutton and Co.; 1912), p. 43.

² *Collected Works of Abraham Lincoln*, ed. Roy P. Basler (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press; 1959), II, 323.

disturbance to pass. Rather he leaves a beloved by whom he has been betrayed; there can be no turning back.

The United States was founded upon loyalty not to a monarch or a piece of territory, but to a purpose. We pledge allegiance to a flag that is the symbol of certain principles: "liberty and justice for all." Loyalty that attaches to a man or a territory may not be affected by the violation of principles perpetrated by that man or within that territory. A nation which was built upon a common loyalty to a certain purpose, whose citizens have come together voluntarily to share in the achievement of that purpose, which owes its very existence to a revolt against arbitrary impediments to the achievement of that purpose—such a nation stands or falls, as a nation, with its loyalty to that purpose.

The man who chooses the United States as his nation concludes, as it were, a silent compact with himself, his fellow citizens, and his government to co-operate in the achievement of that purpose; of that compact the Constitution is the symbol and the American political system the living manifestation. This man will reconcile himself to the achievement falling short of the ideal, he will forgive sporadic violations of that purpose. What he cannot reconcile himself to and cannot forgive is the denial of the purpose itself in theory or practice. Such a denial denies his obligation to remain loyal to a government and a society that are no longer loyal to the common purpose. Thus, it is in the nature of things that the denial of the American purpose will alienate the people from America itself.

This was indeed the effect of the successive partial denials of the American purpose in the economic and political spheres, culminating in the economic crisis of the thirties. Alienation as reaction to that crisis took the forms of a general malaise about America, which was believed either to have reached "maturity"—that is, stagnation—or

. . . Your individuality is swallowed up in the individuality and purpose of a great organization.

It is true that, while most men are thus submerged in the corporation, a few, a very few, are exalted to a power which as individuals they could never have wielded. Through the great organizations of which they are the heads, a few are enabled to play a part unprecedented by anything in history in the control of the business operations of the country and in the determination of the happiness of great numbers of people.

Yesterday, and ever since history began, men were related to one another as individuals. To be sure there were the family, the Church, and the State, institutions which associated men in certain wide circles of relationship. But in the ordinary concerns of life, in the ordinary work, in the daily round, men dealt freely and directly with one another. To-day, the everyday relationships of men are largely with great impersonal concerns, with organizations, not with other individual men.

Now this is nothing short of a new social age, a new era of human relationships, a new stage-setting for the drama of life.⁵

Yet fifteen years later, in the heyday of Prohibition and prosperity, a foreigner took this picture of America with him:

A European returns from America with the memory, no doubt, of a thousand kindnesses received and a thousand friends made, but also, if he is honest, with the feeling, perhaps defined, perhaps undefined, that here is a Continent gone wrong.

⁵ Loc. cit., pp. 3-7.

A hundred and fifty years ago the fathers of the American Commonwealth set out to build a nation upon the two foundations of human liberty and human equality. It is impossible not to feel to-day that the American is free just where he should be equal, and equal just where he should be free. By the argument of liberty he defends a capitalism which has placed in the hands of wealth power, monstrous and irresponsible, and, by that of equality and a jumble of bunkum metaphysics about One Man One Vote and the State the Expression of the Citizen's Real Will, a series of insolent interferences with the ordinary activities of ordinary men, which, in any other country and in any other age, would have been condemned as impossible and inartistic, if they had been created, for the purpose of romance, by the imagination of a professional satirist. He has allowed a tenth-rate, sectarian, police-regulation to be imported into his Constitution. Whatever eccentricities the law has forgotten to prohibit, are prohibited by a public opinion, more tyrannous even than the law.⁶

7. *The Intervention of Government*

Society, left to its own devices in accordance with the American purpose, had through the interplay of its own autonomous forces given the lie to that purpose. American society, fashioned in the image of the American purpose of equal opportunity and freedom of competition with a minimum of political control, had ended by abrogating both equal opportunity and freedom of competition. What fatal flaw in the original conception of the Ameri-

⁶ Christopher Hollis: *The American Heresy* (London: Sheed and Ward; 1927), p. 7.

can purpose had brought about so paradoxical a result? It was found in the founders' confidence in society and mistrust of government. Society was expected, if left to develop according to its own inner laws, to perpetuate the equality with which it started. Government was dreaded as the political organization *par excellence*, the institutionalization of the domination of man by man—that is, of inequality and lack of freedom.

The falsity of that simple juxtaposition of government as the institutionalized denial of equality in freedom and society as equality's natural abode was experienced in the radical transformation that American society had undergone since the Civil War. That experience led the movements of social reform to a radical departure from the traditional conception of the proper relationship between government and society. Society had betrayed the American purpose by destroying equality and curtailing freedom. The evils of society were a part of the American experience; they could be seen in the dispossessed farmers trekking back east, in the misery of the workingman, in laboring women and children, in the degradation of poverty, in the shame of the cities. By contrast, the evil of government as the main threat to individual equality and freedom was on the American scene mainly speculative, a part of the American philosophic tradition from which derives the structure of American government. What the American experience showed to be wrong with government was not that it was strong enough to impair the individual's equality and freedom, but that it was weak enough to allow an oligarchy of wealth, the proved enemy of equality in freedom, to use government as an instrument of its own. It was the alliance between weak government and unchecked wealth which was responsible for the apparent failure of the American purpose.

This being so, the cure was as obvious as was the cause of the disease. All movements of social reform were agreed upon the need for a government strong enough to restore the American purpose of equality in freedom by limiting the political and economic power of wealth. The intervention of the government took five different directions relevant to the subject of our discussion: protection of the human resources of the nation in the form of social legislation; restoration and protection of the natural resources of the nation in the form of reclamation and conservation; regulation and control of concentrations of economic power; use of credit and taxation for social purposes; active participation in economic activity.

While these types of government intervention, especially the first and the last, were fully developed only in the last decade of the period under discussion—that is, by the New Deal—as intellectual and political desiderata they dominated the scene from the beginning of the period. In retrospect, the New Deal appears to have added to the techniques of social reform and to its quantitative realization rather than to its intellectual conception. That conception was consummated in Wilson's political thought, which brought forth with unexcelled lucidity the necessary relationship between the restoration of the American purpose and social reform. Wilson, in turn, was not so much the creator of new ideas and the inventor of new devices as the mouthpiece of popular aspirations and the codifier of legislative proposals that for decades had been debated and enacted throughout the country.

The great Federal reform legislation of Wilson and the two Roosevelts is in good measure the codification and elaboration of state laws, enacted particularly in the Middle West and West. The movements of social reform were truly grass-roots movements, especially in their agrarian

manifestations; they grew not primarily from humanitarian impulses or philosophic postulates but from the experience of the man in the street and, more especially, in the fields who had been deprived of what he considered to be the essence of America and was resolved to recover it. The reports of the moral fervor of these popular movements and the moral tone and arguments of their manifestos and of the speeches of leaders such as Bryan, the two Roosevelts, and Wilson make it clear that we are here in the presence of still another phase of that permanent American revolution which, like previous phases, sought to restore the American purpose of equality in freedom.

Yet this phase differed from all its predecessors in that it could escape the negation of equality and freedom in the form of political domination, but had to come to terms with it. Toward the close of the nineteenth century, Americans were for the first time unable to turn their backs on the problem of power and go into the wilderness which is supposed to know nothing of it. For the first time they were obliged to turn around and face it not in the narrow confines of constitutional arrangements or professional politics, but as a ubiquitous social fact. The nature of their response was, in view of the circumstances, a foregone conclusion. There was only one power that could hope to match the private power of wealth and to keep in check the private government of wealth, and that was the public power, the Federal government.

Yet by vesting in the Federal government powers that were supposed to be superior to the power of wealth and by charging it with functions that were supposed to be more comprehensive than those of any private organization, the United States abandoned one main tenet of the American political tradition and entangled itself in an intellectual and political dilemma. The American tradition assumes, and the American Constitution and the Ameri-

can political system are predicated upon the assumption, that the main enemy of individual equality and freedom is the public power, the government, which is the most conspicuous and potentially the strongest organization dedicated to the domination of man by man. Since it did not occur to the political philosophers of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries that society might generate concentrations of private power denying equality in freedom, all that appeared to be needed was to reduce the powers of the government to a minimum and guard against abuses of power through constitutional safeguards. The spontaneous emergence of concentrations of private power, as destructive of equality in freedom as the public power was expected to be, found the United States intellectually and politically unprepared. It brought the nation face to face with a dilemma which is inherent in all political situations and indeed in the human situation itself, but which was novel to the American experience.

America could expect to cope with the evil of private power only by unchaining what appeared to be the lesser evil of public power. Now, for the first time in the American experience, it became obvious that it was impossible to escape the evil of power altogether. America, like all other nations and, for that matter, like all men, had to choose between two evils, and inescapably it chose the evil of public power to restrain, control, compete with, and destroy the evil of private power.

How did the American purpose of equality in freedom emerge from this contest between public and private power? The outcome was of course obscured by the involvement of the United States in the Second World War, but even so it is clear that the American purpose emerged victorious as a moral force moving men to action, while its achievement remained impaired by an organized society whose stratification was determined by the possession

of wealth. The movements of social reform failed most spectacularly in their attack on concentrations of wealth *per se*. If economic bigness is a curse, we still live under it. The same holds true of the political influence of wealth. Reform legislation forced the concentrations of wealth to regroup themselves and refashion their legal arrangements; it did not touch the substance of their social and political power. However, it affected the exercise of that power in four significant respects: through regulation and control, through taxation, through government competition, especially in the fields of credit and utilities, and through labor legislation. These measures limited the freedom of action of the concentrations of wealth. Prevented from proceeding in the traditional ways, they had to develop new outlets for their social and political power. The social and political power of wealth was tamed and civilized, but not abolished. The government took charge of the rules of the game, revising, strengthening, and enforcing them; yet, as it were, the New York Yankees were still playing the rest of the league and winning.

These measures contributed to the restoration of the American purpose in that they blunted the sharp edges of economic inequality and improved the chances for successful competition. A more fundamental contribution was made by the measures of the Federal government (to which certain facets of labor legislation belong) which seek to preserve and develop the human and material resources of the nation. By discharging successfully this newly assumed responsibility, the government made use of the three elements of American society which in the main provide the reason why the purpose of America emerged victorious from its first great crisis: the natural interior frontier; the interior frontier as social artifact; the equality and libertarian dynamics of American society.

can purpose. America would remain faithful to its purpose in a negative way by not seeking any advantage, territorial or otherwise, for itself; and it would remain faithful to its purpose in a positive way by not only offering its own equality in freedom as a model to be emulated, but also spilling its blood and spending its treasure to make the world safe for democracy—that is, to enable the world to emulate America. In Wilson's thought and action the democratic crusade was thus a logical extension of the American purpose, adapted to the circumstances of the twentieth century.

Yet by thus avoiding one horn of the dilemma, the contamination of the American purpose with power politics, Wilson found himself hoisted on the other, the impotence of a universal formula of salvation, armed with nothing but its own inner rationality, to alter the conditions of man. For a fleeting historic moment, while all that was required was the pronouncement of the formula without action implementing it, the Wilson of the Fourteen Points was in fact accepted by the world as the apostle of the American purpose; for the world, unaware of the Wilsonian dilemma, expected American power to be at the service of the Wilsonian principles. Yet the world was bound to be disappointed in this expectation. In view of Wilson's choice, there could be no action in support of the American purpose. When Wilson had to protect concrete American interests in the Western Hemisphere, he had joined the power of America to its purpose. Confronted with the world that he had promised to free from the burden of power, he had nothing but words to support the purpose. As Lloyd George put it: "The Americans appeared to assume responsibility for the sole guardianship of the Ten Commandments and for the Sermon on the Mount; yet when it came to a practical question of assistance and responsibility, they absolutely refused to accept it."

tect the United States and the non-Communist world from foreign domination—the positive purpose itself seems to have been lost.

That seeming loss is real, but its reality is not encompassed in the world "failure." It is more complex than that. It is not that the United States, after its quick and adequate response to the threat of Russian power, either gave up the game or else tried to play it and lost. Rather the United States, unprepared for the issues of unprecedented complexity and magnitude which suddenly confronted it, found in its armory of political ideas and institutions nothing with which to meet them. To it has fallen the historic task of fashioning the instruments to which the great issues of the contemporary world will yield. It has not yet succeeded in doing this. It has been stunned by the disproportion between what is asked of it and what its tradition has prepared it for. It gropes and stumbles, but it has not given up. This is a crisis not of failure nor of doubt, but of perplexity.

The three great issues of the age with which America has as yet been unable to come to terms are Communism, atomic power, and a viable order for the non-Communist world. Why has America, which in 1947 found within itself the resources to cope so confidently with the threat of Russian power, thus far failed to master these issues? The threat of Russian power is different in magnitude but not in kind from the threats with which America dealt successfully at its western and southern frontiers in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries and in the two world wars in Europe. The redskins, it is true, threatened the United States more directly than did the Red Army. Yet the threat to the European balance of power, of which the Red Army is the instrument as were the German armies of the two world wars, is but a more insidious and more deadly threat

to American security than were the Indian forays, and it was so understood by America. After an initial period of intellectual doubt and vacillation in action, the United States reacted to the successive threats to the balance of power in Europe as it had reacted to the threats to its territorial integrity in America: by appropriate acts of self-defense. The threat of Russian power, then, fits into the American experience of external threats, and the answer to it could be found among the traditional weapons of American self-defense, adapted to the exigencies of a novel situation.

More particularly, the kind of answer required was traditional in two respects. The quality of the answer depended upon American decision alone, and the answer was consummated in one unequivocal action. The United States could take the place of Great Britain as the champion of Greece and Turkey or it could refrain from doing so. The implementation of the decision to take Britain's place through economic and military assistance followed with virtual inevitability from the decision itself. This was the kind of decision and these were the policies to which the United States was conditioned by the experience of its history. As the threat of Russian power was not in essence different from the threats America had faced throughout its history, so the decisions and policies designed to meet that threat did not differ essentially in their unilateral and unambiguous nature from the policies through which the United States had defended and promoted its interests in the past. In brief, the pragmatic bent of the American mind enabled America to make an adequate response to the threat of Russian military power; indeed, it rose magnificently to the challenge. It was inadequate to the other great challenges of the age, however, and foundered in the face of them.

B. *The Crisis of Perplexity*

1. *McCarthyism*

The issue that faces the United States from abroad was reduced by McCarthyism to simple terms reminiscent of the familiar military attack. What faces the United States, according to McCarthyism, is not a complex three-pronged challenge—military, political, ideological—which must be met by complex and different but co-ordinated responses and to which there is no simple clear-cut response promising total victory. There is but one threat against which the United States need defend itself: the threat of treason. It is a threat that issues from within, not from without, and it is localized within vaguely defined and, hence, easily identified groups of the population. Whenever an untractable issue needs to be traced to treason, a traitor is available upon whom the guilt can be pinned. The enormously complex, bewildering, and frequently unmanageable problems of foreign policy are thus transformed into the simple police function of detecting treason and ferreting out the traitor. What the nation needs most badly, according to this view, is not a State Department to conduct foreign policy and a Defense Department to provide military protection, but an FBI to discover treason and apprehend traitors.

The historic achievement of McCarthyism is the reduction—and utter falsification—of the great international issues, for which America had not been prepared by its historic experience and political tradition, to dimensions which easily fit into that experience and tradition. Here lies the most obvious attraction McCarthyism has had for

the American people: the momentous international tasks, risks, and liabilities of a world power were transformed into a single domestic issue. A nation that had become a world power in spite of itself turned back into itself, and by the very logic of McCarthyism and without the issue of isolationism ever being explicitly raised, isolationism triumphed.

The complexities of the international issues were reduced to the manageable proportions of criminal cases that any competent and reliable detective ought to be able to solve. The availability of criminal cases, by virtue of the vague definition of treason and the equally vague identification of the traitor, was commensurate with the incidence of international problems unmanageable in their own terms. The ritual of detecting an act of treason and bringing the traitor to heel could be repeated indefinitely, and its performance engendered the illusion that the republic was now safer than it had been before and that, with all the issues reduced to the one issue of safety from treason, the international issues facing the nation were closer to solution. McCarthyism not only led the nation back to an implicit isolationism, but, by conjuring up the specter of ubiquitous treason, also gave the nation a sensation of danger—a concession, however counterfeit, to the actuality of danger emanating from abroad—yet of a controllable and controlled danger, thus conveying in the end the satisfaction of being saved in the midst of danger. The nation owed to McCarthyism a triple satisfaction: to return to isolation, to live dangerously, and to be safe in spite of danger.

It hardly needs to be noted that McCarthyism, as an interpretation of reality, was a preposterous fraud and that, as a policy, it was irrelevant at best and at worst a menace to the interests of the United States at home and abroad. Measured by the tasks it pretended to perform—enabling

the nation to meet with a sense of purpose and a chance for success the great issues of the contemporary world—McCarthyism was inadequate beyond words. Yet this fraudulent, stupid, and dangerous farce was from 1950 to 1954 the most powerful political influence in the United States. Strong and good men trembled before it. It made the Senate of the United States its captive. The mass media of communication and the administrators of our educational institutions accepted its standards. It drove thousands of innocent men out of public office and private employment and ruined many of them. It did not even spare so noble a figure as General Marshall; and nobody, not even General Eisenhower, dared to come to his defense. According to a Gallup poll of 1954, 50 per cent of the American people approved and 29 per cent disapproved of McCarthyism, with 21 per cent expressing no opinion!

What accounts for this national degradation—intellectual and moral—this obliviousness to the purpose of America, and its denial in action? It will not do to minimize McCarthyism as a temporary aberration that quickly came and quickly passed, as one of those fits of collective absent-mindedness which sometimes befall even the best of nations and for which nobody can really be held responsible; McCarthy was a bad man who managed to deceive the American people, and that is all there is to it. Explanations such as this resemble too much—to be plausible—the German explanation of Nazism as a kind of metaphysical disease or national catastrophe which was suffered by the German people but for which they cannot be held responsible. In truth, the American people were no more victimized by McCarthy than were the German people by Hitler; both followed their tempters with abandon. They were delighted to be seduced, they were proud to play however minor a part in the farce. The very refusal to look the facts in the face even in retrospect, to acknowledge the ignoble

McCarthyism

required an ever renewed supply of concentrated masses of immigrants (as the Nazi remedy required the existence of Jews), the McCarthyite remedy was self-generating and capable of infinite repetition; for as long as there were Americans, there was the likelihood, if not the actuality, of treason. As America was continuously threatened, so it could be continuously saved. McCarthyism, by its own inner logic, had to become a continuous popular purge of potentially unlimited proportions, insatiable in its search for victims, an ubiquitous Thermidor in perpetuity. This patent absurdity proved to be the undoing of McCarthyism, as it proved the undoing of Stalinism.

McCarthyism, both in its conception of the American task and in its *modus operandi*, was congenial to the American tradition. Yet while that tradition—a number of deviations notwithstanding—was subordinated to, and disciplined by, the American purpose of equality in freedom, McCarthyism was not only philosophically indifferent to that purpose, but also hostile to and destructive of it in actual performance. The American tradition enforces conformity for the sake of survival, and it seeks survival for the sake of the American purpose; it finds no meaning in the survival of America without that purpose. McCarthyism, on the other hand, sought survival as an end in itself. It did not care about what America stood for as long as it survived, and the means it chose to assure that survival were a corruption and, as such, the denial of the American purpose. McCarthyism was nihilistic in a dual sense. Its choice of means was destructive of the very values for the sake of which America had been created and by which it lived, and its misunderstanding of the threat to American survival and the inadequacy of the means chosen to meet the real threat actually put the survival of America in jeopardy.

It was this dual denial of the American purpose which put an end to McCarthyism as a political force. Yet it is

McCarthyism

was to be reckoned with, then the United States had to look for protection from that threat not to McCarthyism but to the armed forces. McCarthyism might appear good enough at hunting down the enemy from within; it had no protection to offer against the enemy from without. This was the proper province of the armed forces.

By accusing the Army of being incapable, because of treason in its midst, to perform that vital function which no other agency could perform, McCarthyism raised doubts about American security without supplying a remedy. To raise doubts and, while raising them, to put them to rest was the secret of McCarthyism's success. To raise them with regard to the Army and let it go at that was the ultimate source of its downfall. For if McCarthyism was right in this respect, America was without defense against a mortal danger. This was intolerable and could not be taken for the truth. On this point McCarthy could not be believed. McCarthy had established himself as the defender of America in the domestic sector; here was the source of his power. He could not, in the nature of things, establish himself as the defender of America in the military sector; yet by attacking the trustworthiness of the military without being able to substitute for them, he destroyed his own acceptability and credibility.

Thus, by an ironic twist of fate reminiscent of classic tragedy, the source of his power—fear—became the source of his impotence. His power stemmed from fear relieved; his impotence, from fear sustained. Had he been less unrestrainedly ambitious, he would have stopped at the limits of his weapon's power. As it was, the weapon with which he had slain the innocent at random and held a nation at bay slew in the end its wielder.

The end of McCarthyism was in its way as ignominious as its ascendancy. It disappeared as quickly as it had risen, and as thoroughly as it had swayed the nation in its hey-

day. In retrospect, one is tempted to dismiss it as an episode without antecedents and consequences, a nightmare that came and went, leaving a vague discomfort in the memory. This is indeed the popular interpretation of McCarthyism. It is a convenient and reassuring interpretation, and that is why it is popular. But, in the perspective of the American past, the interpretation is wrong; and, in the perspective of the American future, it is fraught with peril. McCarthyism is in truth an act—and an essential one—in the contemporary drama of America struggling to rediscover its purpose in a novel world, and that drama is part of a trilogy—the achievement of the American purpose and its crises—whose beginnings reach back into history to the Charter of James I. America reacted with splendid determination and appropriateness to the threat of Russian power; McCarthyism constitutes its utter and ignominious failure when it was faced with Russian power, Chinese power, and Communism in combination. That failure was both intellectual and moral.

The intellectual failure is comprised in the complete misunderstanding of the actual nature of the threat and in the complete inappropriateness and the self-defeating results of the measures taken to meet it. The moral failure consists in the corruption of the American purpose, a corruption so thorough as to amount to its destruction. Called to the task of rediscovering the purpose of America in a novel world and of restoring it according to the tasks posed by that world, America responded with McCarthyism, a response irrelevant, self-defeating, and self-destructive. Called upon to renew the American revolution, to perceive again what it was living for, and to live accordingly, McCarthyite America could think of nothing better than to meet an imaginary threat to its survival with the inept and self-defeating weapons of an amateur police state,

destructive of its purpose. Far from trying to rise to the challenge and failing, it was not even aware of what the challenge was and acted as though the challenge did not exist.

If this analysis of McCarthyism and its relation to the American purpose is correct, then it becomes clear that the distance which separates McCarthyism from the period that follows it is less wide than it is commonly assumed to be. The active manifestations of McCarthyism have disappeared, the passive and negative attitude toward the American purpose remains. Today's tranquillity and yesterday's frenzy grew from the same soil: the inability to relate the novel issues of the contemporary world to a national purpose and to understand and cope with them in the light of that purpose. Fear and complacency, misdirected action and passivity are but different symptoms of the same disease: the crisis of perplexity of the American purpose.

When the nation feels itself acutely threatened, as in the case of war or the communization of a friendly nation, that inability may drive it into blind frenzy or purposeless action, and it will entrust its safety to a McCarthy. When the threat is subtle and indirect rather than drastic and unmistakable and neither intelligible nor manageable in terms of the traditional categories drawn from the American experience, the same inability tempts the nation into another kind of blindness—to wit, the refusal to take that threat seriously and act upon it, since it does not fit into the categories within which the nation is accustomed to think and act. It is in this fashion that America has failed to meet the great challenge from abroad which came to the fore after the challenge of Russian power had been successfully met: Communism, not as an ally of Russian power, but a competitor of America in the pursuits of peace.

Atomic Power

States to face this issue seriously, it would have to tackle the painful, hazardous, and difficult task of reconciling its traditions with its present needs, of separating within its traditions what is essential from what is ephemeral, of giving its purpose of equality in freedom a new meaning. America has thus far spared itself this task by not taking the challenge of Communist competition seriously enough. It has averted its gaze from that challenge because it has shrunk from the burden of reconsidering its purpose.

3. *Atomic Power*

Atomic power presents America with two issues that affect its purpose indirectly by posing the question of its very survival. Before the advent of the atomic age, America could take for granted its ability to survive a challenge from without and was anxious only about its ability to survive disintegration from within. Today atomic power threatens the survival of America in a dual way: by raising a fundamental issue of military strategy and by calling into question the viability of the very foundation of America as a nation: the sovereign nation state.

The utter irrationality of all-out violence as a means to the ends of foreign policy poses for the United States, as it does for all major powers, an awful dilemma. If resort to all-out violence is tantamount to suicide, how can a nation defend its interests in an anarchic world in which violence remains the last resort? Must it not then choose between two alternatives, both unacceptable because they put an end to its existence: death by suicide in an atomic holocaust and death by the slow strangulation of piecemeal surrender? The way out of this dilemma is the development of a military capability for all-out nuclear war, tactical atomic war, and conventional pre-atomic war. The ca-

pability for all-out nuclear war would be a mere instrument of deterrence which all nations would be ready to use in retaliation or in anticipation of an imminent all-out attack. The capability for limited war, atomic or conventional, might actually be used in support of the national interest, as the circumstances would require. The military establishment of the Soviet Union comes close to meeting the requirements of this triple military capability. That of the United States is far from meeting them.

The American concentration upon the nuclear deterrent and neglect of a capability for limited war is generally justified by financial considerations. Yet on a more profound level of analysis we encounter the pattern we have encountered before: a simple, clear-cut, and definitive response to an external threat is preferred to a complicated one whose results are uncertain. There is no need to dwell upon the incongruity of such responses to a threat that is nuclear in nature. A posture that was rational and eminently successful in the Western Hemisphere in the nineteenth century and in the two world wars has become an implausible anachronism in the second half of the twentieth century. The threat of "massive retaliation"—that is, of a nuclear response to a conventional threat—is obviously plausible only on the condition that the other state is not capable of counter-retaliation in kind.

The doctrine of "massive retaliation," when it was proclaimed in 1954, was an implausible bluff but not a serious declaration of policy, and it has never been acted upon. Yet it evoked that feeling of certainty, of definiteness, of security, which historic experience has taught the nation to expect from its military policies. This feeling could not be anything more than an illusion. But it was a comfortable illusion; it saved the nation intellectual effort and spared it personal sacrifices by reducing a complex and dangerous problem to a simple formula capable of

virtually automatic application. That formula covered up the nation's refusal to bring the traditional pattern of its thought and action into harmony with a military situation pregnant with extreme danger to national survival. Its seeming success has strengthened its persuasiveness: for it is true that this formula, however implausible on rational grounds, has made—at least thus far—our prospective enemies cautious because the possibility of irrational action, even with suicidal consequences and even on the part of the highest officials, can never be completely ruled out.

Yet while the policy of "massive retaliation" has had for the time being this beneficial result, it has paralyzed the foreign policy of the United States. Incapable of fighting a limited war of more than very small dimensions, the United States had to stop short of that dreadful alternative between nuclear suicide and retreat which its military policy was bound to open up at every turn. In order not to be forced to retreat it has had to refuse to advance, except when there was no military opposition, as in Lebanon in 1958, or inferior military opposition, as for the time being in China. But when the revolts in East Germany and Poland and the Hungarian revolution of 1956 opened up opportunities for an active foreign policy, the United States felt that it had to resign itself to a passivity that contributed to the stabilization of the Soviet empire.

Yet even if the United States were to devise a more adequate military strategy, atomic power would still pose a threat to its existence which no strategy operating from the nation as its base could do more than mitigate. For the existential threat atomic power poses to all nations of the world cannot be answered at all from within a state system whose basic unit is the nation state.

The most elementary function of the nation state is the defense of the life of its citizens and of their civilization. A political organization that is no longer able to defend

these values and even puts them in jeopardy must yield, either through peaceful transformation or violent destruction, to one capable of that defense. Thus, under the impact of the invention of gunpowder and of the first industrial revolution, the feudal order had to yield to the dynastic and the nation state. Under the technological conditions of the pre-atomic age, the stronger nation states could, as it were, erect walls behind which their citizens could live in security while the weaker states were protected by the operation of the balance of power, which added the resources of the strong to those of the weak; under normal conditions no nation state was able to make more than marginal inroads upon the life and civilization of its neighbors.

The feasibility of all-out atomic war has completely destroyed this protective function of the nation state. No nation state is capable of protecting its citizens and its civilization against an all-out atomic attack. Its safety rests solely in preventing such an attack from taking place. While in the pre-atomic age a nation state could count upon its physical ability to defend itself, in the atomic age it must rely upon its psychological ability to deter those who are physically able to destroy it. The prospective enemy must be induced to refrain from attacking.

This psychological mechanism of deterrence operates only if the prospective atomic aggressor is clearly identified beforehand—that is, if no more than two nations are capable of waging all-out war. Today the Soviet Union knows that if it should attack the United States with atomic weapons, the United States would destroy it, and vice versa; that certainty deters both. Yet the time is close at hand when other nations will have the weapons with which to wage all-out atomic war. Then nations will have lost even the preventive capacity of psychological deterrence, which they still possess today. For the United States,

if then attacked with atomic weapons, will no longer be able to identify the aggressor with certainty, and, hence, a prospective aggressor will not be deterred by the certainty of retaliation. When this historic moment comes—as it surely must if the present trend is not reversed—the nation state will connote not life and civilization but anarchy and universal destruction.

It is in the shadow of this grim reality and grimmer prospect that the United States must reflect and act not just upon its purpose as traditionally conceived but upon a novel purpose—compatible with and requisite to the preservation of the old—which will safeguard its existence and that of all humanity. How can atomic power be transferred to the control of supranational institutions that will prevent its use on behalf of a particular national interest without submerging the autonomous life of individual nations in a universal tyranny? Can safety and freedom be made to coexist in the atomic age? Must the United States give up its traditional purpose of equality in freedom in order to survive, or could even that surrender not assure its survival? It is to these momentous questions that history expects America to answer—and the answers are expected to be as creative, inventive, and daring as that given by the Founding Fathers in the creation of the United States. What kind of answer has America been able to give?

The answers it has given thus far are ambiguous in that they partake in a special degree of that perplexity which obscures the perception of the American purpose and stifles its achievement. The United States has twice dealt constructively with the problem of supranational control of atomic power: on the occasions of the Acheson-Baruch-Lilienthal proposals of 1946 and of the negotiations of 1958-60 for the cessation of atomic tests. Both attempts failed, and the evidence suggests that at least the first at-

three tasks which the conjunction of purpose and environment set before it? What kind of viable international order did it try to create as a precondition for its own survival? What kind of relationship did it try to establish with the new nations of Africa and Asia and with the unwilling objects of Communist domination? The answer to these questions is simple, and the very simplicity of the answer is the measure of America's failure. The United States conceived of these tasks primarily in military terms—that is, in terms of actual or potential alliances to defend the territorial *status quo*. By doing so, it identified its survival with its purpose. It came to think that what was necessary and sufficient to assure its survival was also sufficient to achieve its purpose. In the process it lost the vision of its purpose and contributed nothing to its military security and that very survival to which it had sacrificed its purpose.

The relationships within an alliance are determined by the interests and the power of its members. The interests that tie the United States to its European allies are more profound, more comprehensive, and more stable than the interests upon which alliances have traditionally been based. Far from concerning nothing more than a limited territorial advantage against a temporary enemy, these interests enclose the national identities of all its members within a common civilization threatened by an alien and oppressive social system. Thus, this alliance was not formed, as alliances typically are, through a process of haggling and horse-trading among suspicious temporary associates looking already for more advantageous associations elsewhere. Rather this alliance sprang naturally and almost inevitably from a common concern with a common heritage whose only chance of survival lay in common support. The members of the alliance had to choose between the alliance and the loss of their national identities and

cultural heritage; that is to say, they had no choice at all.

The cement that kept the alliance together was the paramount power of the United States. In the past there had been alliances in which power was unequally distributed and one ally was predominant; but rarely had there been such a concentration of paramount power in one ally, with all the other allies, even collectively, being in a subordinate position. And rarely had so paramount a power been at the same time commensurate with the all-persuasiveness of the concerns of the alliance. For the United States was paramount not only in the military and economic fields, but also in the intangible spheres of the values of Western civilization.

Had the institutions and operations of the alliance been commensurate with the comprehensiveness and intensity of the interests underlying it and had the influence exerted by the United States been commensurate with its power, the alliance would have fallen very little short of, if it had not amounted to, a confederation of states merging their most vital activities in the fields of foreign policy, defense, finance, and economics. Nothing of the kind evolved. For the United States, again faced with a conflict between the historic manifestations of its purpose and the demands of novel tasks, could not break out of the fetters with which those manifestations confined its freedom of thought and action. It proved incapable of playing the role it should have played as the paramount member of the Western alliance. Three inherited patterns of thought and action prevented it from adapting the traditional conception of its purpose to the new needs and opportunities: the limitation of the direct exercise of American power to the Western Hemisphere, the principle of equality in freedom, and the military approach to foreign policy.

The two previous occasions that carried American power beyond the limits of the Western Hemisphere were

of pursuing common ends with common measures through free and equal co-operation. In the degree that this co-operation would fall short of the ideal expectation, the purpose of the alliance as a co-operative effort on behalf of the common interests would be defeated.

Of these two alternatives, the United States chose the latter. It refused to bring its superior power to bear on the alliance on behalf of common interests that were naturally inchoate and were competing with divergent ones. Thus it forewent the creation of a common framework of permanent and organic co-operation among allies who would relinquish their equal status in return for the alliance's protection of their essential freedoms. When the United States left the Western Hemisphere, it carried with it its military and economic power, but not its creative imagination or its constructive will. Significantly enough, this imagination and will were applied—and rather abortively at that—in the one sphere which is closest to the American tradition in foreign affairs: that is, in the military sphere, and NATO is presently its rather forlorn and brittle monument.

The United States emerged from the Second World War as the most powerful nation on earth by chance, and it assumed the leadership of the coalition of free nations by virtue of necessity. In consequence, its will and mind were not equal to its power, responsibility, and opportunity. Had these attributes of America been the result of conscious choice and deliberate aspiration, America would have been intellectually and morally prepared when what it had chosen and aspired to came to pass. Since it was not so prepared, it approached the tasks incumbent upon the paramount power of the Western alliance with unbecoming humility and unwarranted self-restraint.

America continued to see itself and its relations with the world very much as it had, say, fifty years earlier: a

great nation that had accomplished great things in the material sphere and had achieved a unique political and social order, bringing happiness to itself and offering it to the world. It had achieved great things—military and political—outside the Western Hemisphere not by deliberate purpose but by force of circumstance. Had it not been for these circumstances, it would have been content to be left alone, and it would have left others alone. And only the intractability of the Soviet Union, so the United States thought, prevented the world from corresponding to this state of mind. America's image of itself and of its relations to the world, while taking account of the obvious facts of material power, superimposed the pattern of the past upon the contemporary world. As America has thus far been incapable of the Athenian pride in culture, so has it shunned the imperial attitude of Rome in political relations with the outside world. The political predominance required by its power was incompatible with its anti-imperialist tradition, which is the manifestation abroad of the principle of equality. Confronted with the choice between assuming the position of leadership commensurate with its power and treating its allies as equals, the United States chose the latter alternative. Accustomed to expand its rule into politically empty spaces but not to impose it, however gently and beneficially, upon existing political entities, it endeavored to establish within the Western alliance the same kind of consensus, by the same methods of rational persuasion and economic inducements, that had created, maintained, and developed the American commonwealth.

Yet the application of the equalitarian principle of the democratic consensus to the relations among allies resulted in disintegration and anarchy. For as the integrating effects of the domestic equalitarian consensus depend upon a pre-established sovereign central government, so

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inception to be the instrument of that kind of unity, in actual performance NATO has become less and less distinguishable from a traditional alliance, and a rather loosely knit and stagnating one at that.

The other consequence of the equalitarian approach to alliances has been most marked in the bilateral relations between the United States and its allies. Governments that govern only because the United States maintains them, such as that of Formosa, and governments that have no alternative to American association, such as that of Spain, have been able to play a winning game in which the United States holds all the trumps. The United States has not been disposed to play these trumps for two reasons. On the one hand, its commitment to the principle of equality prevented it from bringing its superior power to bear upon a weak ally on behalf of its interests. On the other hand, these interests were conceived in terms of what I have elsewhere suggested calling the collector's approach to alliances. That is to say, the United States has been primarily interested in the conclusion of alliances *per se*, regardless of the specific and concrete interests these alliances were supposed to serve. An alliance thus conceived is a standing invitation, readily accepted, for a weak ally to make the alliance serve its own specific interests. Thus, the United States has paid for the willingness of weak and even unviable nations to become its allies by underwriting the interests of these nations, regardless of whether their interests coincide with or run counter to its own.

This relationship, unhealthy even by the standards of traditional foreign policy, is a far cry from the new order through which the United States was expected to realize the common purpose of the nations of Western civilization in the atomic age. The factors that brought about this

of the political objective of keeping the uncommitted nations uncommitted, how is one to create in the mind of the recipient the positive relationship between the aid and its beneficial results, on the one hand, and the political philosophy, system, and objectives of the giver, on the other? As long as the recipient disapproves of the politics of the giver, despite the aid he has received, the political effects of the aid are lost. These effects are similarly lost as long as the recipient remains unconvinced that the aid is but a natural, if not inevitable, manifestation of the politics of the giver. Foreign aid, then, remains politically ineffective as long as the recipient says either: "Aid is good, but the politics of the giver is bad," or: "Aid is good, but the politics of the giver—good, bad, or indifferent—has nothing to do with it."

Questions such as these require for answers policies of extraordinary subtlety and intricacy. Policies based on a simple correlation between foreign aid and what the United States desires in the uncommitted nations do not suffice. That correlation is a projection of the domestic experience of America onto the international scene. Capital formation and investment and technological innovation created the wealth and prosperity of America, and, so it was assumed, the export of American capital and technology to the underdeveloped nations would bring forth similar results there. The similarity between this and the Wilsonian expectation is striking. Wilson wanted to bring the peace and order of America to the rest of the world by exporting America's democratic institutions. His contemporary heirs want to bring the wealth and prosperity of America to the rest of the world through the export of American capital and technology. Yet while the failure of the Wilsonian experiment was quickly and drastically revealed, the failure of foreign aid has been less obvious, albeit no less drastic.

However, even if the United States had developed a well-thought-out philosophy of foreign aid, its application in practice would have come up against the same equalitarian principle that has frustrated the alliance policy of the United States. Yet while the application of this principle to our alliance policy was rather unwarranted by the objective situation, foreign aid has confronted the United States with a real dilemma. For if you apply the equalitarian principle, expressed in the slogan "no strings attached," to foreign aid, you put yourself at the mercy of unenlightened or corrupt governments that might misuse foreign aid through incompetence or by design. If, on the other hand, you assume responsibility for the way your aid is used, you feed the nationalistic suspicion of "imperialist" motives. By choosing the former horn of the dilemma, the United States has given the recipient governments at least a potential leverage against itself, similar to that its allies enjoy. This leverage is increased by the competitive participation of the Soviet Union in foreign aid, which allows the recipient governments to play one superpower against the other. Yet while the Soviet Union uses foreign aid as an integral part of its political policy, the United States has been incapable of serving consistently either its own purpose or the purposes of the underdeveloped nations.

The insufficiency of America's endeavors to realize its purpose in its relations with the outside world has come to a head in the failure of its policies toward the satellites of the Soviet Union. The total and obvious character of that failure suggests, as we shall see, the nature of the remedy. The inspiration from which the policies toward the satellites are derived is within the tradition of the American purpose of expanding the area of freedom. As a particular manifestation of that purpose, these policies continue the anti-imperialistic tradition of America, yet with one sig-

nificant difference. The anti-imperialistic tradition of America has operated on two levels, the general one of revulsion against the normal practices of European power politics and the specific one of revulsion against a particular case of oppression of one nation by another. The political consequences of the first type were the abstention and isolationism of the Farewell Address. The second type had by and large no political consequences at all, but only led to an emotional commitment to what appeared to be the cause of freedom and national self-determination and humanitarian assistance to its suffering supporters. Thus, the American anti-imperialism of the nineteenth century supported the national movements of Europe against their monarchical enemies and opposed certain colonial ventures of European nations, and the American anti-imperialism of the early twentieth century took its stand against Imperial and Nazi Germany and against Tsarist and Soviet Russia.

The new anti-imperialism, aimed at the conquests of the Soviet Union, obviously partakes of these characteristics, but it possesses a quality that its predecessors lacked. It has become an integral and crucial part of the foreign policy of the United States. The traditional anti-imperialism of America was without a political objective, either by virtue of its very nature or else because the radius of an active American foreign policy was limited to the Western Hemisphere. The new anti-imperialism can no longer afford to condemn the suppression of liberty from afar and limit its tribute to freedom to charitable deeds. Committed to the containment of Communism—that is, to the preservation of national freedom threatened by Soviet imperialism throughout the world—the United States can reconcile itself to the loss of national freedom on the other side of the line of containment only if it ceases being anti-imperialistic altogether. If it wants to remain faithful to

its anti-imperialist tradition, it must embark upon positive political and military policies on behalf of not only the preservation but also the expansion of national freedom. Yet at this point, when it came to adapting the purpose of America to the opportunities and limitations of the contemporary world, the crisis of perplexity of the American purpose was most strikingly revealed.

The American purpose of expanding the area of freedom encountered in its new connection with the foreign policy of the United States a new opportunity and a new limitation. It did not come to terms with either. Of this failure, the policy of liberation and the explicit inaction on the occasion of the Hungarian revolution of 1956 have been the outward manifestations. The policy of liberation manifested unconcern with the limitations; inaction on the occasion of the Hungarian revolution demonstrated unawareness of the opportunities.

The policy of liberation must be seen both as a logical extension of the policy of containment and as the positive implementation of the American refusal to recognize the legitimacy of the European conquests of the Soviet Union. Both Stalin and his successors attempted to liquidate the Cold War by concluding with the United States an agreement dividing Europe, if not the world, into two spheres of influence and recognizing the European conquests of the Soviet Union as definite and legitimate. The United States has consistently refused to consider even the possibility of such an agreement. The United States could let it go at that, satisfied with containing Russian power within the limits reached in 1945, and that is essentially what it did up to the beginning of 1953. The impulse to go beyond this negative, static policy of containment and non-recognition and to give it a positive, dynamic implementation stems of course from the traditional purpose of America and the national preference for mobility. But

once America yielded to that impulse, it had to face the problem of what kind of positive policy it should pursue.

Consistent with its general conception of foreign policy, the United States conceived of liberation essentially in military terms—that is, as the evacuation of Eastern Europe by the Red Army. Such evacuation could be brought about only through military pressure carrying with it the risk of war. As the London *Economist* put it on August 30, 1952, when the policy of liberation was first proclaimed: “Unhappily ‘liberation’ applied to Eastern Europe—and Asia—means either the risk of war or it means nothing. . . . ‘Liberation’ entails no risk of war only when it means nothing.” Since, according to repeated official statements, liberation was to be achieved without resort to war, it could not, as conceived by American policy, be achieved.

Thus, what pretended to be a new dynamic policy in harmony with the purpose of America turned out to be no policy at all, nothing more than a verbal commitment that could not be implemented by action. However, that commitment was taken as a threat by the Soviet Union and as a promise by the satellites. As such, far from contributing anything to the liberation of the satellites, it served, on the one hand, as a pretext for the Soviet Union to maintain its military rule in Eastern Europe and, on the other, as an incentive for the satellites to entertain illusions about what the United States might do and to be disillusioned with American policy and reconciled to their fate when no action was forthcoming.

The unreality of this policy of liberation encountered the ultimate test in the Hungarian revolution of 1956. For here the United States was faced not with the impossible task of liberating without resort to war but with the opportunity to support a liberation already achieved. If it remained inactive under these most favorable circumstances, it would demonstrate that there was no such thing

as a policy of liberation but only verbal pronouncements designed to give the appearance that there was one. This is indeed what happened. The United States declared from the outset through its most authoritative spokesman, the President, that it would abstain from active interference. While it is a moot question as to how much the United States could have done, there can be no doubt—especially in view of the dissension within the Soviet government over the use of force, in the meantime revealed by Khrushchev—that it could have done more than nothing.

The United States failed utterly to relate the American purpose of extending the area of freedom to the political situations with regard to which it was called upon to act. Its words gave the appearance of novelty and daring to policies that were at best routine and at worst out of tune with what the times demanded. But its failure revealed both the nature and the innate strength of its purpose. In spite of what it said and did, the facts of its life, past and present, spoke louder than its purposeful words and deeds. The words and deeds had by and large been ineffectual and even counter-productive. Yet they were overshadowed and in rare moments obliterated by the universal awareness that equality in freedom still had a home in America. As the Hungarian revolution illuminated like a stroke of lightning the nature of man, showing the urge for freedom to be as elemental a human quality as the lust for power or the desire for wealth, so did the awareness of the freedom achieved within the American borders act as a corrective for words and deeds seemingly oblivious of the American purpose.

When the Vice President of the United States visited Poland in the spring of 1959 and when the President in the fall of that year visited India, the major uncommitted nation, they were greeted with a popular enthusiasm that was meant not for themselves but for the nation they

represented. They were greeted, as Woodrow Wilson and Franklin D. Roosevelt had been before them, as living symbols of what the nation was thought to stand for, and the enthusiasm that the nation evoked in the persons of its representatives was due, it is safe to assume, not to its wealth and power but to the purpose that sets it apart from all other nations and makes it a model for other nations to emulate. When these living symbols of America ventured abroad they carried with them, as it were, the American purpose of expanding the area of freedom. They came as symbols not only of what America has achieved at home, but also of what it was to achieve abroad.

Thus an ironic twist of historic development made the outside world appear to understand the American purpose better than did America itself, and through a paradoxical reversal of roles the outside world had to recall the American message to an America that was incapable of making clear to the world what it was about. America, in ineffectual perplexity, tried to give the world its message, relating its traditional purpose to the contemporary world. Yet what it could not do for itself through the conscious effort of words and deeds, its very existence did for it. The living presence of its achievements carried the promise of further achievements to the world, and the hope of the world carried that message back to America.

denied reached a status of middle-class security which was but ephemerally threatened by mild recessions or a slow-down in the rise of the standard of living.

The inequalities of wealth which had given momentum to the movements of social protest at the turn of the century still persist, but they are accepted almost with complacency by the new members of the middle class. Between the proletariat whose condition in the England of the 1830's Engels described and the other half of the nation which did not live in misery and insecurity and without a chance for improvement there was a difference in kind. The difference between the contemporary middle-class workingman and the millionaire is rather one of degree; it concerns the quality and quantity of the amenities of life available to either. In the kind of amenities of life at their disposal and even, in a measure, in the very style of life they lead, they are equal. The proletarian who does not know where he will get his next meal and the man who does not need to worry about that are separated by a whole world, as Marx and Engels correctly pointed out. The contemporary workingman who has his regular wage, medical and unemployment insurance, a pension plan, a house, a car, paid vacations, and scholarships for his children may envy the millionaire the amount of his income, the number of his houses and cars, and the length of his vacations, and he may deplore the slowness of the process that is supposed to narrow the quantitative gap that separates the two. But both of them live in the same world, and what separates them appears to them trivial, at least in comparison to what they have—actually and potentially—in common.

What must be obvious even to the casual observer is borne out by the income statistics. If one compares the income distribution of 1929 with that of 1958 (adjusted for the change in the value of the dollar) and assumes a

1958 income of \$4,000 per household as a minimum in terms of adequacy, one finds that in 1929 almost two thirds of all incomes, counted by households, fell below that level while in 1958 slightly more than one third fell below it. If one assumes the income range between \$5,000 and \$10,000 as typical middle-class, then in 1958 38 per cent of all incomes fell into that range while in 1929 only 21 per cent did. As concerns the highest income group, exceeding \$10,000, the percentage of incomes belonging to it had risen from 8 per cent in 1929 to 13 in 1958.¹

In consequence, social conflict in our contemporary society is neither revolutionary, trying to replace one social system with another by whatever means are at hand, nor is it reformist, trying to change the social *status quo* according to constitutional rules. Rather it is concerned with piecemeal adjustments within the existing *status quo* through the use of political and economic pressures. Social conflict so-called has really been reduced in our time to the competitive attempts of parochial interest groups to increase slightly their relative share in the social product. Relatively little, and certainly nothing vital, is at stake in this competition, and the political issues in which it is reflected partake of its limited importance and unspectacular character. Nothing in these issues is likely to appeal to the imagination, to conjure up a vision of a brave new world or of a rotten old one, as the case may be, to bring men to the barricades to defend or overthrow the *status quo*.

The very distinction between the opposition and the government tends to become devoid of meaning in terms of issues, the former being incapable of presenting a clear, recognizable alternative to what the government stands for. For both government and opposition are essentially

¹ Selma F. Goldsmith: "Income Distribution by Size—1955-58," in *Survey of Current Business*, Vol. 39, No. 4 (April 1959), p. 9 ff.

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est groups, for the control of the administrative apparatus. The body politic moves slowly on, the great decisions that made it what it is seemingly behind it, administering and expanding what has been achieved rather than achieving a purpose that still awaits realization. The structure and inner purpose of the colossus are seemingly set once and for all. What movement there is within that colossus may at times carry one segment forward at a faster pace than others, and what controversies still remain are concerned with that relative pace. Political apathy joins social complacency. More of the same, improved and better distributed—this is the formula to which the popular mood seems to have reduced the purpose of America.

It hardly needs pointing out that the objective conditions of American existence do not bear out that mood. Millions of Americans are deprived of the middle-class security and comforts that have become the mode of life in America. Thirty-two million Americans have less than \$50 a week to spend for a family of four; one fifth of these are children, and eight million are over sixty-five years of age. In 1959 fourteen percent of American families had annual incomes of less than \$2,000. The very survival of America and of the civilization of which it forms a part calls, as we have seen, for a new ordering of its relations with the outside world. The inner workings of its government, the democratic relations between government and people, the relationship between public and private—and, more particularly, public and economic—spheres, the modes of economic production and distribution, education, housing, transportation, the very nature of public purposes and standards of thought and action—all these must be re-examined if America wants to remain a living civilization. For with civilizations it is as it is with men: they cannot stand still without losing their vitality; their task is never done; their purpose achieved is but a step-

pingstone to achievement of a further purpose; and when they say that their purpose has been achieved, what they are really saying is that their life has lost its meaning and that while they may go on living for a while, there is really no point to it.

What, then, accounts for the contrast between the apathy and complacency of the popular mood and the existence and even urgency of these outstanding issues? Some of these issues transcend in importance, not only for society as a whole but for each individual citizen, most of the issues that in the past have commanded the passionate commitment of the people pro or con. Is the nuclear-armaments race, for instance, more important than a tax on tea or the expansion of slavery to new territories? Objectively, there can of course be no doubt that it is, but it has not aroused the political passions of the American people one way or the other to make it a political issue. Why is this so? Two interrelated answers suggest themselves.

First of all, the great unresolved issues, while intellectually recognized by at least a minority, are not experienced by the mass of the people as being of direct concern to, or manageable by, them. The legal issue of slavery could be settled a century ago by a presidential proclamation emancipating the slaves; it takes more than a decision of the Supreme Court to stop the treatment of their descendants as though they were still slaves. It was easier to free the slaves than it is to ensure that their descendants will be dealt with as equals. And a century ago the issue of slavery presented itself in so clear-cut a fashion that a civil war could be fought about it. On the other hand, the contemporary issue of equality in all its practical ramifications is too complex to allow at least thoughtful and responsible people to take so simple a position pro or con.

private garden that he remains a citizen only in the formal sense of enjoying political rights that he sporadically and lackadaisically makes use of. In the full sense in which citizenship means making the public business one's own, he ceases to be a citizen. The public business is transacted by technicians and administrators who render many and the most important of their decisions without the participation and frequently even without the knowledge of the citizens. The elected representatives of the people in Congress, too, tend to become impotent bystanders who at best can ratify or protest against decisions after they have been taken.

The citizenry, and its elected representatives as well, are then reduced to looking at the public sphere primarily as a source of trouble or of bounty for the private sphere. The involvement of the citizen in politics (aside from voting and ritualistic performances), his active participation in the public sphere tends to be concentrated in three functions: to keep the public authority away from the private sphere in so far as it seeks to regulate and control it and to collect taxes; to make the public sphere a subsidiary of the private one in so far as it transfers public funds and public power into private hands; and to compete with other citizens in the performance of these functions. In so far as citizens appear still to be actively interested in public issues, they are in truth interested in them not *per se* for their intrinsic merits, but because of their effects upon the private sphere. The very concept of happiness which in the Declaration of Independence and the *Federalist* refers to public happiness in the sense of the general welfare now takes on an exclusively private and predominantly material connotation. Happiness and wealth tend to become synonymous.

We are here in the presence of not only a quantitative but also a qualitative shift from the public to the private

realm. While in a totalitarian society what ought to be private is forcibly absorbed into the public sphere, all that is public is here viewed as being affected by a private interest. In a telling reversal of roles, many of the regulatory commissions created by the Federal and state governments to regulate business "affected with a public interest" have become instruments through which private business secures its support from the public powers. Indeed, the Bentleyan ideal of the modern state as a congeries of pressure groups finds here an empirical approximation.²

A national purpose that has been narrowed to the enjoyment and improvement of the *status quo*, defined in hedonistic economic terms, is bound to attract to the private sphere much of the talent that previously found sufficient material and intangible rewards in the public one. Businessmen may do a stint of public service only to return to the business world richer in prestige and connections. More importantly and ominously, many public officials use public office as a steppingstone and find in business positions the culmination of their careers. The proportion of West Point graduates who leave the service at the earliest legal opportunity to enter private employment has recently amounted to more than a fourth. The President's choice of social companions, on the one hand, sanctions the preference of society and, on the other, sets a pattern that the nation actually and vicariously imitates. Thus, the private sphere becomes the focus toward which the aspirations and actions even of eminent representatives of the public sphere gravitate. Not only is the popular estimation of the public sphere being lowered in consequence; the public sphere is also gravely impoverished by the loss of outstanding talent.

² Cf. Arthur F. Bentley: *The Process of Government: A Study in Social Pressures* (Bloomington: The Principia Press; 1935).

The philosophy that underlies this depreciation of the public sphere is of course an echo of the values of nineteenth-century liberalism. The public sphere is seen as a necessary evil; it is the inevitable result of our vices, while the private sphere is the repository of both our private and public virtues. The private virtues are erected as the sole standard by which the qualities of both private and public action, the qualifications of both private and public persons, are to be judged. This philosophy necessarily destroys the tension between the private and the public spheres, between man *per se* and man as a citizen, which has been a perennial theme of Western political thought. For that philosophy, Aristotle's questions of whether the virtue of a good man is identical with the virtue of a good citizen is meaningless, for here the virtue of a good man and that of a good citizen are by definition identical.

This philosophy is translated into the folklore of American politics as the conviction that the main qualification for a political career is personal honesty. A politician may be wrongheaded in judgment, weak in decision, unsuccessful in action. "But don't you see how sincere he is?" people will say. "He is at least an honest man. He means well." The man in the street transfers the values that he cherishes in his private life to the political stage and judges the actors by the same standards he applies to himself and his fellows in their private spheres.

The values of the Eisenhower administration, both in verbal expression and in the character of its most prominent members, have conformed to these popular standards, and its virtually unshakable popularity owed much to this identity of political standards. Mr. Eisenhower, with characteristic frankness and consistency, has time and again measured his public actions by the yardstick of private values and expressed his conviction that since he did not find these public actions wanting when tested by the

objective conflict of interests to which the state of the conscience of any single individual may well be irrelevant.

Not only have the dominant members of the Eisenhower administration expressed themselves and acted in terms of a philosophy alien to politics, but many of them have been selected in view of their excellence as private citizens, on the assumption that the qualities which go into the making of a good man and, more particularly, a good businessman go also into the making of a good statesman. Many selections have been excellent within the limits of the standards applied. But these excellent men have in all innocence done greater damage to the political life and the political interests of the nation than many of their less worthy predecessors; for they have brought to their public offices nothing but personal excellence—no understanding of political life, let alone ability to cope with the processes of politics.

A good man who becomes an actor on the political scene without knowing anything about the rules of politics is like a good man who goes into business without knowing anything about it or who drives a car although ignorant of how to drive. Yet while society recognizes the need to protect itself against the latter, it feels no need for protection against the former. Indeed, the virtuous political dilettante has for it a well-nigh irresistible fascination. It is as though society were anxious to atone for the sacrifices of private virtue which the political sphere demands and to take out insurance against the moral risks of political action by identifying itself with political leaders who sacrifice the public good on the altar of their private virtue.

Society has learned to take bad men in its stride and even to protect itself against those who know the rules of the political game only too well and use them to the detriment of society. Society will have to learn, if it wants to

survive, that it needs protection also against good men who are too good even to take note of the rules of the political game. And it must reconcile itself to the uncomfortable paradox that bad men who put their knowledge of those rules at the service of society are to be preferred to good men whose ignorance and moral selfishness put the very survival of society in jeopardy. In short, it must learn what Henry Taylor taught more than a century ago when he wrote in *The Statesman*: "It sometimes happens that he who would not hurt a fly will hurt a nation."³

Corresponding to its moral depreciation, the role of the public sphere is here conceived as merely subsidiary to the private one; only the functions the latter cannot perform ought to be assumed by the former. And it goes without saying that the extent of the functions which are left to the public sphere is strictly interpreted. It also goes without saying that this conception of the relations between public and private domains is completely at odds with the relations actually existing in the contemporary world.

However, this conception, while it is nothing more than a romantic rationalization of an unfeasible alternative to the actual state of affairs, exerts a powerful influence upon the distribution of social functions and the allocation of material resources between the public and private spheres. The latter, taking precedence over the former in philosophic valuation, has a prior claim on both. Thus, it can indulge in the hedonism of production and distribution, and only the availability of resources and of consumptive capacity limits its expansion. On the other hand, the public sphere is strictly circumscribed by the requirements of a balanced budget. Taking an over-all view of national life and comparing the shares of the national product both

³ Henry Taylor: *The Statesman* (Cambridge: Heffer and Sons; 1957), p. 34.

sectors actually receive with the shares they ought to receive in view of the tasks they must perform for the nation, there can be no doubt that the relative share of the public sector has shrunk by stagnation. For a static budgetary ceiling has not allowed the relative share of the public sector to keep pace with the increase in the national product and in the functions that are called public, such as national defense and internal development, because only the government can perform them.

The subordination of the functions of government to the requirements of a balanced static budget sheds an illuminating light upon the contemporary crisis of the American purpose. It is yet another symptom of that crisis. American society finds its purpose in its own perpetuation, especially in terms of economic productivity, and the American government supports that purpose with its authority and power. That purpose is static; it is tantamount to the defense of the *status quo*. For a budget that is balanced in terms of a certain *a priori* determined figure is the financial equivalent of the *status quo*.

The issue here is not between a balanced and an unbalanced budget, but between a static and a dynamic budget, both balanced. While a static budget takes income and expenditures as fixed, a dynamic budget anticipates and promotes corresponding changes in both in view of purposes transcending the budget. In other words, a dynamic budget is a means to ends that have nothing to do with the budget; a static budget is an end in itself, the end to which all other ends of government are subordinated. There is, then, a world of difference between a dynamic budget that—answering the question: what needs to be done?—is the elastic indicator of the public purposes of the nation, and a static budget that—answering the question: what can we afford?—does not allow the public purposes to rise above a predetermined ceiling. A national policy whose reach is

determined by a static budget is in truth a numbers game of self-mutilation, played by the rigorous rules of the accountant's craft.

The philosophy of the balanced static budget requiring the government "to live within its means" provides still another example of the misapplication to the public sphere of principles with which the private citizen is alleged to comply. The government, so the argument runs, can no more consistently live "beyond its means" without going broke than can the private citizen. Yet, leaving aside the ability of the government to create new money on a massive scale, an ability of which at least the law-abiding citizen is deprived, the analogy between private and public budgets falls to the ground because ever more private budgets are becoming dynamic. To an ever increasing extent, the private citizen does exactly what the philosophy of the balanced budget forbids the government to do: he satisfies present needs through the expenditure of anticipated income. By borrowing, especially in the form of credit buying, the private citizen stimulates economic productivity, which, in turn, enables him to meet his financial obligations. While the government asks: what can we afford? the private citizen asks: what do we want? and answers the question within the rational limits of anticipated income. Yet nobody appears to ask the question: what do we need? and try to answer it by applying some objective standards of evaluation.

The substitution of means for ends, which we have noticed before and shall notice again as a specific social manifestation of the crisis of the American purpose, elevates the philosophy of the balanced static budget to the ultimate principle of government. This is consistent; for a nation that has lost its purpose, or is not aware that it has one in spite of itself, must seek a substitute in a subordinate objective. That objective now becomes ultimate since there

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morality of hiring Albert Maltz is the more crucial matter, and I will accept this majority opinion.

A society conceived so as to find the standards for its thought and action only within itself becomes the sovereign arbiter of all things human. The objective criteria of excellence through which civilized man has learned to distinguish a work of art from trash, craftsmanship from shoddiness, scholarship from pretentious sophistication, a good man from a scoundrel, a statesman from a demagogue, greatness from mediocrity—those vital distinctions are blurred if not obliterated by the self-sufficient preferences of the crowd. Those distinctions tend to become altogether meaningless, and what the crowd desires and tolerates becomes the ultimate standard of what is good, true, beautiful, useful, and wise. What you can get away with, then, is morally permitted; what you can get accepted in the market place, to paraphrase the famous saying of Holmes, becomes the test of truth; art is what people like; what can be sold is useful; and what people will vote for is sound. The honest man and the scoundrel, the scholar and the charlatan, the artist and the hack, the businessman and the racketeer, the statesman and the demagogue live side by side, and it is not always easy to tell which is which.

The blurring of these qualitative differences, accomplished by the reduction of the objective standards of excellence to the test of social acceptability, results in a lowering of the quality of actual performance in all fields of individual and collective endeavor. Even to approach the objective standards of excellence requires a supreme effort. The aspiration to satisfy them strains to the limits the capabilities of men and nations and brings out the best in them. Their greatness is measured by the distance between their aspirations and their achievement, and their reward is pride in an achievement that is a living embodi-

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among the highest man is capable of—become altogether impossible. Since work is no longer oriented toward objective and transcendent standards from which it once received its meaning, the dynamic distinctions and controversies that once pushed it forward toward ever new achievements also tend to disappear. It is hard to tell what is worth knowing and doing from what is not, and the rewards of conformity and the penalties of its lack tempt the thinker and doer without a purpose to seek refuge in the irrelevant. Facts and figures and their symbols, in particular, become the socially acceptable substitute for the qualitative distinctions that have lost their meaning. Social activities, such as education, scholarship, administration, propaganda, foreign aid, military strategy, tend to transform themselves into self-sufficient technical undertakings that find their standards within themselves in the form of technical competence and efficiency.

In scholarship, for instance, substantive controversy, the life blood of creative renewal here as it is in politics, becomes not only meaningless but also suspect. Controversy is no longer regarded primarily as a contest about who and what is right, but as an attack upon conformity—that is, upon society itself. Dissent is not to be refuted or confirmed on objective rational grounds inherent in the subject matter of the controversy; rather, as a threat to society, it is to be eliminated through ostracism, absorption, or indifference. The contest over what is right, then, transforms itself into a struggle of society to survive as it is against those who appear to endanger it by their dissent.

The other consequence of the decline of objective standards of excellence makes certain activities impossible altogether. In their genuine manifestations religion, philosophy, tragedy, and humor require an objective position outside society. They require objective standards through which society can be understood, judged, and given mean-

ing. When such standards are lacking or are weakened to the point where they no longer provide plausible guidance for thought and action, those great manifestations of human activity change their function and their very nature. Society, having become the be-all and end-all, draws them into its vortex and either uses them for its own perpetuation or else, in so far as it cannot use them, makes it impossible for them to exist.

Thus, religion loses its concern for truth and sin and joins other social forces in justifying, strengthening, and improving society. In the measure that it presumes to sit in judgment over society in the name of objective, transcendent standards it is suspect as a force alien and potentially hostile to society. Philosophy either retreats into the irrelevancies of methodology and semantics or else provides ideological justifications and rationalizations for the *status quo*. Tragedy, having lost the key to the understanding and resolution of the human predicament, either envelops itself in an unrelieved pessimism, as in the work of Eugene O'Neill, or else dissects morbidity for its own sake, as in Tennessee Williams's work. Social humor as a human attitude and literary form becomes virtually inconceivable. For a society that is continuously concerned with its survival and perpetuation cannot afford to understand itself by laughing at its incongruities. Not to take itself seriously appears not far removed from subversion. Thus, America still awaits its Molière and Daumier, its Cervantes and Swift.

A system of production whose purpose exhausts itself in its own limitless and aimless expansion is wasteful of the material resources of the nation, and a social system whose purpose does not go beyond its own perpetuation is wasteful of the human resources of the nation. Since the ultimate standard of social action is social acceptability—that is, conformity with the *status quo*—individual ener-

gies are directed toward tasks sanctioned by that standard. They are so directed by the rewards—prestige, money, power—which await the performance of such tasks, and by the disabilities to be braved by those who seek to comply with standards of excellence regardless of social approval. Society thus cultivates in its members social qualities which are conducive to its own perpetuation without drastic change and much friction and which are only by sheer and rare coincidence the ones that make for excellence and greatness. In the process of stifling its own dynamic impulses and of being engrossed, as it were, with the perfection of what it has already become, society cannot help but cripple its own members, remolding them in its sedentary image.

The sterility of society finds its natural counterpart in the atrophy of the individual capacity for self-fulfillment. The vision of human perfection, of all the excellences man is capable of, which carries man beyond the limits of his nature and makes him do the impossible and unforeseen, is blotted out by the utilitarian picture of a society whose members do not deviate too much from one another. The risks and rewards of excellence yield to the utility of being like everybody else, and men who could be great find satisfaction in being useful without being obtrusive. Thus, society compels its members to live below their capabilities rather than exhausting them. It misdirects their energies and wastes the best of their talents. Since it can use excellence only when excellence conforms, it must discourage and neglect excellence that does not conform. In consequence, the very idea of excellence is discredited, and the individual faculty of aspiring to it and achieving it withers from lack of use.

Education itself, whose mission ought to be to institutionalize, demonstrate, awaken aspiration to excellence and guide toward its achievement, becomes the main instru-

ment of subordinating it to the overriding standard of social acceptability. It teaches not to aspire to what is excellent but to adapt to what is common. Who can forget the spectacle of the best of the country's youth entering the institutions of higher learning, thirsting for knowledge and achievement, and so many leaving them dull-wittedly looking for a safe job! They have been educated—that is to say, they have been cut down to size according to the social specifications. Lord Bryce asked seventy years ago "why great men are not chosen presidents." We are raising here the question: why, in spite of an abundance of human resources, does the nation refuse to produce great men?

By subordinating excellence to social acceptability, American society renounces the achievements through which excellence is revealed and compels itself to live on the accumulated achievements of the past. It exchanges the risks and rewards of creative change for the stability of the *status quo*. A society can carry on in this state of mind some length of time, giving the appearance of life where the source of life has been shut off. But no society can go on like this forever without decay following stagnation; the fate of Spain tells us what is in store for such a nation. American society can afford less than any other to stand still, embroidering and enjoying what it has achieved; for its constant renewal in the light of its purpose, culminating in a succession of revolutions, is the very law of its distinctive being. A static, ingrown, self-satisfied society looking back to what it has achieved rather than forward to the achievements demanded by its purpose is in a profound sense un-American; for American society, by denying its purpose, disavows its past and precludes its future.

And such a society is bound to be at war with itself. That is to say, its self-centeredness and complacency, its conformism and dedication to the *status quo* are at odds

prehending and embodying the objective standards from which a transcendent purpose can be derived, it sought a substitute that would leave the social *status quo* intact while creating the illusion of transcendence. It found that substitute in what passes for the achievement of excellence from abroad, and in novelty and eccentricity at home. American society came to admire as superior what was foreign and what was new and eccentric. Here it seemed to find the standards by which it could judge and improve its own achievements, unaware that it was creating the true standards within itself and only needed to recognize them and bring order into their chaotic manifestations.

22 The cultural provincialism that equates foreign origin with superior quality may have been justified once, but was rendered absurdly out of date by the vitality, creativeness, and accomplishments of American culture. While Europeans began to notice that the creative forces of Western civilization had moved westward across the ocean, Americans continued to look to Europe and, more particularly, to England for standards of intellectual and aesthetic judgment and creative aspiration. They failed to notice that there was more intellectual vitality, although less formal learning and literary polish, in any one of the five or six best American universities than in any two European universities combined. It did not occur to them that in architecture, literature, music, and the theater America had begun to set the standards and pace for all of Western civilization. Long after Europe had begun to imitate America, America still thought it had to imitate Europe. Its own originality, for instance, in the field of ideas remained hidden from it. Americans would listen with rapt attention when traveling Englishmen would tell them what America was all about, unaware that what they heard were American ideas garbed in English dress and speaking

with an English accent. American ideas, in order to be intellectually respectable in America, could do no better than to travel to England and return with an English imprint.

The subservience to foreign imports as a substitute for objective standards of excellence depreciates the achievements of American culture. It diminishes its self-respect and daring and, hence, its creativity. The internal substitutes, novelty and eccentricity, result in more serious damage. Novelty destroys what has been created, and must do so ever again. It thereby dissolves the continuity of culture which builds stone upon stone, preserving what has been left behind, and without which there can be no genuine culture at all. The illuminating and warming glow of genuine culture is here reduced to a series of isolated flashes of genius. For genuine culture is first of all reverence for tradition, for the living achievements of the past as the continuing embodiment of the perennial standards of excellence, as a memento of what men were able to do in the past and as an earnest of what they can do again.

Novelty and eccentricity as standards of cultural evaluation are appropriate to a society which finds its purpose in its own perpetuation, which is committed at most to the improvement of the *status quo*, and moves within rather than beyond itself. A society whose purpose it is to comply with objective standards of excellence can measure progress by the distance that still separates it from those standards. A society that has lost the vital link with those standards must define progress as sheer movement, aimless and self-sufficient. What is novel is superior to what precedes it by dint of its novelty. Much of that novelty is spurious; the newest models of consumer goods, of art, of literature, and of scholarship are more often than not the models of the day before yesterday which nobody remem-

bers. But, spurious or not, novelty creates the illusion that a society which has decided to stand still is actually going somewhere.

Where novelty is genuine and consistently so, it is at its most destructive. It has virtually destroyed American education, the very fountainhead of a continuing culture. What has been taught in a certain way before—from reading, arithmetic, and English to foreign languages and social studies—must be taught differently, not because the old methods have proved ineffective, but solely because the methods are old. In the process of incessant innovation, the original purpose of teaching, which is to transmit knowledge, understanding, and intellectual discipline, tends to be lost altogether. What has never been tried before, probably because it is absurd on the face of it, must be tried in order to see what happens. To cite two examples: nobody has ever thought of teaching high-school freshmen symbolic logic instead of first-year algebra; so let's try it, and never mind that a junior who has never learned first-year algebra, even if he did understand symbolic logic, will not learn second-year algebra either. Nobody has ever tried to teach one half of a class of high-school juniors exclusively by television in order to find out what happens to them in comparison with the other half who are taught by teachers; so this must be tried, too, and the professor of education who made this experiment summarized the results by saying in a public lecture: "I think we got something there, but I don't know what it is." How many teachers have asked me for a new method of teaching international relations and no doubt found odd my question as to what was wrong with the old one!

Like the hedonism of production, the hedonism of novelty, the urge to experiment regardless of the consequences, becomes a cancerous growth, threatening life it-

self with its aimless proliferation. Its most irrational manifestations blend into eccentricity. The toleration and even cultivation of eccentricity, whose original home is England, performs for American society a substitute function akin to that of novelty. Eccentricity—from outlandish experiments in education, art, literature, and scholarship to the political maverick, the beatnik, and the deviationist in dress and manners—creates for a self-centered and self-sufficient society the illusion of a challenge from within. The eccentric does for such a society what the court jester did for the prince: he defies prevailing values without endangering them.

More particularly, eccentricity as a social institution takes the place of the permanent American revolution, the reality of which society no longer tolerates. Society is incapable of even recognizing the reality of that revolution and treats it nonchalantly as mere eccentricity where it still appears in our midst as radical proposals for reform. The eccentric plays the role of a bogus revolutionary kept by society because he does not need to be feared. The eccentric can defy society, he can thumb his nose at it, but he cannot, and would not even if he could, endanger it. Society is secure, and it is exactly because it is secure that it can tolerate and even subsidize eccentricity in its midst. That spectacle of the irrelevant and, hence, innocuous deviation doubly reassures society: it reassures it of its stability and also, as it were, of its revolutionary soul. Society proves to itself through the toleration and institutionalization of eccentricity that it can still transcend itself, although that transcendence has no purpose except deviation and, hence, means nothing for the purpose of society. But a society content with its conformity and ill at ease with it as well is thus enabled to enjoy both the spectacle of nonconformity and the reality of its opposite.

However, the sense of security which society derives

The Transformation of Equality in Freedom

invocation and application of substantive principles of justice to the issues of the day, such as slavery, state sovereignty, or social reform. These principles were the terminal concepts from which the American purpose of equality in freedom received its concrete content and its structure.

In our time the experience of possible or actual failure has been replaced by the persuasion that the purpose of America has by and large been achieved, and the substantive principles of justice have been dissolved into the standard of social acceptability. In consequence, equality and freedom have changed their meaning. They now stand, as it were, all by themselves; no concrete issue or transcendent principle gives them structure and significance. They must find their meaning within themselves, and those meaningful questions that we have just mentioned can no longer be answered because they can no longer be asked.

If the question: equal with regard to what? can no longer be asked, it is no longer possible to distinguish between legitimate and illegitimate equality. The principle of equality, then, comes to cover the existential equality of men created equal, equality of political rights, and equality of opportunity, on the one hand, and an indiscriminate egalitarianism that makes everybody equal with everybody else. Different persons and things, then, must be treated as equal even though by objective standards they are not equal. The very distinction between what is excellent and what is not in art, literature, ethics, politics, and scholarship appears to be odious, an aristocratic infringement upon the egalitarian principle. Even the elemental distinctions between adults and children, the wise and the foolish, the learned and the ignorant become suspect.

Equality without distinction also destroys the meaning of freedom; for, as we have seen, absolute equality and

absolute freedom are identical and without civilized meaning. He who is absolutely equal is also absolutely free; for any limitation upon freedom implies subordination, which runs counter to equality. Yet meaningful freedom requires a distinction between the spheres and modes of action with regard to which man ought to be free and those which ought to be regulated from above. In other words, meaningful freedom requires a distinction between legitimate and illegitimate freedom. Hence, if the question: freedom from what? can no longer be asked, it is no longer possible to distinguish between freedom and license, order and anarchy. The hierarchical orders within which alone legitimate freedom can flourish, such as those between parents and children, teachers and pupils, the government and the citizens, become themselves suspect of illegitimacy because they impair freedom.

If the question: equal and free for what? can no longer be asked, equality and freedom, however conceived, are deprived of meaning in still another sense. Equality and freedom are indeed good in themselves in that they are proper to the nature of man and correspond to his elemental aspirations. Yet their achievement constitutes but one of the preconditions of man's self-fulfillment. To achieve that self-fulfillment itself equality and freedom must be directed toward a transcendent substantive goal, for the sake of which freedom and equality are sought. It is from such a goal that equality and freedom receive their order, their limits, and their purpose—that is, their meaning. Thus, paradoxically enough, equality and freedom, divorced from such a goal and sought for themselves, evolve into an egalitarianism and a libertarianism which first stunt both individual and social development and then put into jeopardy equality and freedom themselves.

In such an egalitarian and libertarian society, order tends to become a mere matter of fact, the result of the

much less, if it mattered at all, than that there was a balance of some kind.

Similarly, the will of the majority, regardless of what its content was, began to carry within itself the assumption of rational and moral superiority. This assumption was of course questioned by interests adversely affected, but it could no longer be subjected to the objective test of a "higher law." In consequence, the pluralistic variety of substantive standards by which each political action ought to be judged according to its merits tends to be replaced by the monistic and formal standard of the majority will. The majority will, operating for its own sake, thus joins conformism for its own sake, production for its own sake, and defense of the *status quo* for its own sake as still another principle that locates the national purpose within society itself. None of these principles connects the national life with a goal that lies beyond what society has already achieved and, hence, can serve as its purpose.

The triumph of the majority principle over the objective standards of government has been neither complete nor direct. It has been kept in check by the constitutional arrangements of the separation of powers, the institution of the Supreme Court, and the presidential veto. Its triumph has been psychological and political rather than institutional. It has done for the political sphere what the spirit of conformity has done for society at large. It has consisted fundamentally in the ascendancy of a popular mood adverse to the recognition, let alone application, of objective standards to the operations of government and inclined toward the belief that the decision of the majority is naturally endowed with virtue and reason and should be accepted as final. From this popular mood three perversions of the democratic process have sprung: the decline of minority rights, the committee system as the main instru-

ment of governance, and the public-opinion poll as the principal mouthpiece of the majority will.

The popular tendency to believe that government with the consent of the governed is identical with government by the majority has vitally affected the popular estimation of minority rights. Respect for minority rights is incompatible with the right of the majority to govern as it sees fit. In the measure, then, that the majority is endowed with that right, the minorities, and most particularly the political ones, are deprived of theirs. Yet, paradoxically enough, democracy can perform its political function of limiting the power of the government only if the power of the majority is limited by a respect for minority rights. While democracy requires that the will of the people limit the freedom of the government, it also requires that the freedom of the popular will be limited. A popular will not so limited becomes the tyranny of the majority which destroys the freedom of political competition and thus uses the powers of the government to prevent a new majority from forming and to entrench itself permanently in the seat of power. There is only a small step from the destruction of the freedom of competition—that is, imperfect democracy—to the destruction of competition itself—that is, totalitarianism.

The freedom of political competition essential to democracy can be impaired in two different ways. The people are being deprived of their freedom to choose among alternative policies by choosing among different candidates for office if the different candidates for office are not identified with different policies but compete for power as an end in itself, not as a means to pursue a particular policy. The people may still be able to choose in terms of the personal qualities of the candidates, such as competence and trustworthiness, but their choice has no meaning

for the substance of the policies to be pursued. The people, if they do not vote for the person of a candidate as such, will then vote out of habit or not at all, and in the measure in which this happens democratic elections will have lost their ability to protect the freedom of the people by limiting the freedom of action of the government.

The other—and more insidious—threat to freedom of political competition stems from the tendency of all majorities to act upon the assumption that they are more—at best—than temporary approximations to political truth, that they are the repositories of all the political truth there is. They tend to think and act, as long as they last as majorities, as though their will provided the ultimate standard of thought and action and as though there were no higher law to limit their freedom. The majority, as long as it lasts, tends to become the absolute master, the tyrant, of the body politic, stifling in that body the vital spirit of questioning and initiative, and evoking instead the submissiveness of conformity. Yet since there is no higher standard for thought and action than the will of the majority, in theory at least each successive majority may produce a new tyrant with a political truth of its own. One political orthodoxy may be succeeded by another, calling forth a new conformity, and the very relativism which is the philosophic mainspring of the supremacy of the majority will produce not only the tyranny of the majority but also a succession of tyrannies, all justified by the will of the majority.

While this is possible in theory, it is, however, not likely to occur for any length of time in practice. For the majority, by making itself the supreme arbiter of matters political, must at least implicitly deny to the minority the right to make itself the majority of tomorrow. Since the majority of today tends to claim a monopoly of political truth, it must also tend to claim a monopoly of political

power, freezing the existing distribution of power. The majority of today tends to perpetuate itself as a permanent majority and, by the same token, to relegate the minority of today to a permanent minority status.

This development deprives the minority of its democratic reason for existing. That reason is its ability, equal in principle to that of the majority, to have access to political truth and act upon it; hence its claim to compete freely to become the majority tomorrow. The assumption that the majority has a monopoly of political truth destroys the minority's political function and gives the respect for its existence an anachronistic quality. Since its continuing existence implicitly challenges the majority's monopolistic claims, is a living reminder of alternative rulers and policies, and may, by virtue of these attributes, become a political nuisance to the majority, the minority cannot for long survive the destruction of its philosophic justification and political function. With its destruction, democracy itself comes to an end. The unlimited freedom—that is, the tyranny—of the rulers corresponds to the unlimited lack of freedom of the ruled.

Thus, decadent democracy goes through three stages before it transforms itself into its opposite: totalitarian tyranny. It starts out by emptying itself of part of its substance: it destroys the freedom to choose policies by choosing men. Then it substitutes for the spirit of free political competition, which derives from a pluralistic conception of political truth, the monistic assumption that only the majority possesses that truth. Then it subjects the minority to restrictions that put it at a decisive disadvantage in the competition for intellectual influence and political power, thus transforming the majority into a permanent one existing side by side with a permanent minority. The process of degeneration is consummated when the majority becomes the sole legitimate political organization and com-

bins the claim to a monopoly of political truth with a monopoly of political power.

Against these tendencies toward self-destruction, inherent in the dynamics of democracy, the institutions and the spirit of classical liberalism stand guard. Liberalism has erected two kinds of safeguards: one in the realm of philosophic principle, the other in the sphere of political action.

Liberalism holds certain truths to be self-evident which no majority has the right to abrogate and from which, in turn, the legitimacy of majority rule derives. These truths, however formulated in a particular historic epoch, see in the individual—his integrity, happiness, and self-development—the ultimate concern of the political order. This concern is thought to be inherent in the nature of things to owe nothing to any secular order or human inspiration.

It is on this absolute and transcendent foundation that the philosophy of genuine democracy rests, and it is within this immutable framework that the processes of genuine democracy take place. The pluralism of these processes is subordinated to, and oriented toward, those absolute and transcendent truths. It is this subordination and this orientation which distinguish the pluralism of the genuine type of democracy from the relativism of its corrupted types. For in the latter the will of the majority is the ultimate point of reference of the political order and the ultimate test of what is politically true. Whatever group gains the support of the majority for its point of view gains thereby also the attributes of political truth, and the content of political truth changes with every change in the majority. Out of this relativism that makes political truth a function of political power develops, as we have seen, first the tyranny, and then the totalitarianism, of the majority. Thus, the relativism of majority rule, denying the existence of absolute, transcendent truth independent of

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safeguards of minority rights exemplifies one horn of that dilemma; the partial, temporary impairment of minority rights by McCarthyism offers an example of the other. That the restoration of these rights was in good measure due to the intervention of the courts points to the organic connection between the judicial function and the preservation of the objective standards essential to genuine democracy.

Besides weakening the rights of minorities, these two dilemmas produced, as it were, by the mechanics of the democratic process itself have robbed the very position of the minority of some of its plausibility and respectability. The intellectual and social embarrassment of being of the minority is of course a by-product of the disappearance of great issues and of the concomitant transformation of conformity which I have discussed before. In the absence of great issues worth fighting for there is little incentive to take a strong stand against what appears to be the view of the overwhelming majority. Where conformity for its own sake has become the integrating principle of society, there is a very strong incentive not to dissent, and that incentive is greatly strengthened by the difficulty of making one's dissent effectively heard. A writer, for instance, who either cannot find an outlet for his dissent at all or can find only an ineffective one is naturally tempted to give up dissenting altogether.

The devaluation of the minority position itself has been most decisively advanced by the centralization of the mass media of communications. Press, radio, and television are the products and the major instruments of conformity. They are its products because they are commercial enterprises whose success is measured by the support they are able to obtain from advertisers and the consuming public. The range of diverse opinions to which they can afford to give hospitality is circumscribed by what these two

fields of human endeavor—artistic, scientific, diplomatic, military, and so forth. Even the rediscovery of the purpose of America has been entrusted to a committee.

The universal committee system, operating by majority rule and preferably through unanimity, replaces the decision by one wise and expert man. Such a decision, derived from the standards of excellence appropriate to this particular sphere of action, is denounced as undemocratic because not everyone who has an interest in a decision is allowed a voice in it. The intellectual process of discovering the truth among a welter of diverse opinions is assimilated to the democratic process of protecting divergent interests. In consequence, the very distinction between truth and error is reduced to the distinction between different interests of which none is *a priori*, but of which one may turn out to be, by virtue of the distribution of votes in committee, entitled to particular respect.

2. *Government by Committee and by Public Opinion*

The perversion of the democratic process, confounding the consent of the governed with the rule of the majority and endowing the latter with a monopoly of virtue and reason, finds its apogee in the misunderstanding and misuse of the committee system and of public opinion. The committee system has become the prevailing method of reaching decisions in government. Literally thousands of departmental and interdepartmental committees—the State Department alone is reported to be represented on four hundred of them—from the National Security Council dealing with the most momentous matters of state to those dealing with the most mundane chores of housekeeping thrash out decisions. Nor is the committee system limited to the government. It has become a way of life for the

whole nation. Businesses, families, and nursery schools are run that way. Authority qualified to find the truth and responsible for it is being replaced everywhere by the collective representation of interests. The extension of democratic procedures to all spheres of social action is being hailed as the triumph of democracy and its ultimate consummation. Thus, the committee system of the National Security Council has been defended as “democracy in action,” “government of laws and not of men,” “representative” government; and the proposal to substitute for the committee system of the Joint Chiefs of Staff a single command has been condemned as contrary to “democratic process and procedures which are the basis of our government at home” and as “regimentation of opinion.”

This point of view is doubly mistaken; for it misunderstands both the nature of democracy and the nature of policy formation and perverts them in practice. Democracy as popular control of public officials is responsible government; that is to say, the people or their representatives can hold the officials of the government to account for their policies. Yet it is the earmark of government by committee that it shifts responsibility from an individual to a faceless collectivity. Who is responsible for the neglect of Latin America or the surprise of the Iraqi revolution of 1958? Who will be responsible when tomorrow a renewed crisis over the islands off the Chinese coast confronts us with a new dilemma and an increased danger? Below the President, one can point to nobody in particular. In a sense, all the committees who had a hand in these policies are responsible, and since, as it were, everybody is responsible, nobody is.

As democracy demands individual responsibility, so does the process of policy formation. The conception of that process as “representation” of different points of view misunderstands the difference between the executive and the

legislative decision as well as the relation between the making of a decision, on the one hand, and information and consultation, on the other.

The policy decisions of the executive branch of the government, like the decisions of the business executive or any decision an individual must make in his private affairs, are fundamentally different from the legislative decision. The latter is supposed to represent the compromise of divergent interests wherever one interest has not won out over the others. The executive decision is supposed first of all to be the correct decision, the decision more likely than any other to bring about the desired result. The committee system is appropriate for the legislative process, and it is not by accident that it originated and was institutionalized there. The executive decision requires that one man, after hearing the evidence and taking counsel, should himself decide what action under the circumstances should be taken.

The relation between the making of the decision, on the one hand, and information and consultation, on the other, is hierarchical, not equalitarian. The informant and the consultant are the servants of the decision maker, not participants in the decision-making process. They provide the raw material for the decision, not the decision itself.

This universalized committee system acts as a powerful incentive to evade decisions and replace them with compromises that reshuffle, rather than point beyond, the *status quo*. For the committee system tends not toward sharpening the differences between alternative policies but toward glossing them over and making them disappear. Not the daring initiative or the bold innovation is the natural product of this system, but rather the defense of the *status quo* through the perpetuation of established routines. The committee system naturally shies away from a clear-cut decision in which one side wins and the other

loses, and tends as naturally toward a compromise or else conceals the evasion of decision altogether in a vague and frequently exhortative formula that satisfies everybody because it means all things to all committee members.

Consequently, the spirit of compromise permeates the whole executive branch. Before an issue reaches the President, it has already been formulated, generally several times over, on the lower levels of government with a view toward compromise on the highest level. Whatever spirit of innovation may have animated the lower levels cannot survive the process of adaptation to the views of a number of agencies with different outlooks and interests. When the issue reaches the President, its outlines, in terms of both information and judgment, are likely to be blurred, while the alternative solutions have been dissolved in the formula of compromise. The President is thus relieved of the burden of choosing; he approves what is presented to him as the unanimous advice of the agencies concerned.

Then, when the formula has become the policy of the United States, the process of compromise starts all over again. For since the formula has not really resolved the issue but only glossed it over for the sake of agreement, the agencies charged with the execution of policy must now go to work to give the formula operational meaning. In doing this, they again act as representatives of their respective agencies, each interpreting the formula in terms of his agency's preferences. The result again is either compromise or no new policy at all. At the level of policy execution, what connects the several agencies is not coordination and supervision, but a soothing and amorphous something that might be called "departmental courtesy." It follows its own golden rule: mind your own business, and I shall not mind yours; don't criticize me, and I shall not criticize you. Thus, the general tendency of society to turn within itself and administer what it has achieved

rather than move forward into the unexplored is powerfully supported by a system of reaching decisions which is really a device for avoiding decisions and continuing safe routines that are incapable of disturbing the *status quo*.

Democratic governments must be responsive to public opinion as the potential source of voters' preferences. A government that is neglectful of public opinion risks being disavowed by the voters and losing its ability to govern. In this sense the concern for public opinion is simply the concern for the consent of the governed, the very fountainhead of democratic legitimacy. This, however, is not the sense in which contemporary democratic practice conceives of public opinion and its relation to the government. It considers public opinion less as the source of democratic legitimacy whose consent for the government's policies must be secured than as the ultimate arbiter of policy with whose wishes the government must comply. It then becomes incumbent upon the government to ascertain the preferences of public opinion in order to be able to comply with them.

The public-opinion poll serves that purpose. It has become the chief instrument through which the will of the people is ascertained. The men and measures the polls find supported by public opinion are found acceptable in democratic terms. These men can govern, and these measures can become policies. The men and measures that fail the test of the polls are excluded from democratic legitimacy. Thus, the polls define the limits within which the government can safely operate. The poll becomes the oracle telling both government and people who can be elected and which policies can be pursued. Democracy is no longer government with the consent of the governed, nor is it government by majority rule expressed in the votes of the people and their representatives. It has be-

come government by public opinion revealing itself through the plebiscite of the polls.

This last type of democracy is a perversion of the democratic process because it perverts the relationship between government and people. That perversion, in turn, derives from a fundamental misunderstanding of the nature of public opinion. This conception of democracy assumes that public opinion, supporting or opposing a certain policy, exists before that policy itself, somewhat in the manner in which a rule of law exists before the action to be judged by it. In truth, public opinion is not a static thing to be ascertained by polls as legal precedents are by the science of law or as the data of nature are by the natural sciences. To the contrary, public opinion is a dynamic thing, created and continuously being changed by the very policies for which its support is sought. Public opinion does not exist before a policy, except perhaps as a vague, inchoate, and inarticulate disposition.

People do not possess opinions on policies as they possess tangible things; rather they arrive at opinions through experiences of which the policy itself is the most important one. What the public-opinion poll taken in advance of a policy tests is not opinion but at best disposition, mood, or taste. Public opinion becomes aware of itself only by being aware of a policy behind which it can rally, or which it can oppose. Of this dynamic relationship between policy and public opinion, the crystallization of French public opinion as a result of De Gaulle's leadership provides a classic example.

Without being able to choose among policies that some authority has put before it, public opinion will remain passive, and its answers to pollsters will accentuate the negative, since it will inevitably prefer what is known and familiar to what is purely speculative and cannot really be known outside a clearly defined political context. The

popular mood is certainly against taxation, to cite but one example, and a poll taken in a political vacuum will show this. But that poll can tell us nothing about how public opinion would receive a particular piece of tax legislation that served a particular purpose and was supported by certain persons and interests while being opposed by others. For only after such a measure has been made "public" by having been made a political issue can public opinion crystallize around it.

For the government to postpone action until after public opinion has spoken is tantamount to doing nothing, since public opinion will speak with precision only after the government has committed itself. The democratic process thus degenerates into an Alphonse-and-Gaston routine, the government waiting for public opinion to tell it how far it can go and public opinion waiting for the government to guide it. Having surrendered the initiative to a public opinion that does not exist until the government has taken the initiative, the government can do no more than carry on the day-by-day chores within the established *status quo*.

Worse than that, the government, and with it the nation, continuously runs the risk that the place of leadership vacated by the government will be occupied by someone else, more likely than not a demagogue or a demagogic elite catering to popular emotions and prejudices who will create a public opinion in support of a certain policy more likely than not to be unsound and dangerous. The predicament of the government, originating in its own passivity, is then magnified and complicated by the emergence of a public opinion that, far from being passively contented with the *status quo*, is actively committed to a policy that dangerously disturbs it. The government, unwilling to mold public opinion on behalf of the policies it would like to pursue, then blames an unenlightened

its version upon society by concealment and misrepresentation. Yet a government that has abdicated as the leader and educator of the people and allowed the democratic contest for the consent of the governed to degenerate into a contest for popularity cannot help but put appearance in the place of substance. Thus it is not by accident that the techniques of advertising have so thoroughly replaced the processes of free discussion in the relations between government and people. Inevitably the people are being reduced to the status of an inert object of expert manipulation. Their reactions to competing public-relations techniques are the contemporary version of the consent of the governed, which ideally is supposed to issue from the dialectic interchange of competing philosophic conceptions and political conclusions.

3. *The Paradox of the Thwarted Majority*

It is the supreme dual paradox of contemporary democracy that the expansion of its methods goes hand in hand with the recession of actual popular control over the government and that this decline of the power of the people is not compensated for by a corresponding increase in the power of the government. As the power of the people has declined, so has the power of the government. It is not so much that the power of the government has been dislocated, as has been said, by being shifted from the executive to the legislative branch. Rather the power of the government is being dissipated because it is being arrogated by numerous semi-autonomous public and private agencies, business enterprises, and labor unions. In other words, we are in the presence of a new feudalism that resembles the old one in two important respects. On the one hand, the substance of governmental power slips

formed into the unchallengeable superiority of the government. The government has today a monopoly of the most destructive weapons, and the people can neither defend nor protect themselves against them. Due to their centralization, the government can acquire instantly a monopoly of the most effective means of transportation and communications as well. For the people to revolt against such a monopolistic concentration of superior power is utterly impossible, and the very thought of revolution, still lingering on, transforms itself into either a utopian dream or else a neurotic nightmare.

The same concentration of military power which makes popular revolution impossible has, however, the paradoxical effect of diminishing drastically the effective power of the government vis-à-vis other governments similarly equipped. For modern weapons have become so destructive that their use in support of the traditional goals of foreign policy is suicidal folly. What rational purpose would be served by blowing up the United States and China and probably the Soviet Union as well in a contest over control of the islands off the shore of China? In consequence, governments must tolerate infringements of their rights, impairments of their interests, and personal affronts that in former times would have called for a military response. Since the results of all-out violence are less tolerable than virtually any such disadvantage, governments cannot help but reconcile themselves to the latter. Unprecedented concentration of military power finds them unchallengeable at home and paralyzed abroad.

Thus it is not by accident that for technologically advanced nations this is the age not of popular revolution but of the *coup d'état*. That is to say, what a modern government must guard against is not primarily the disaffection of the people but the disloyalty of the armed forces. A modern government can rule over a thoroughly disaf-

power and being forced by the army to surrender it. Government with the consent of the governed had become government with the consent of the army. And once the Fifth Republic had assumed power with the consent of the army, government with the consent of the army became government by the will of the army.

The army has taken the place of the people and its elected representatives. The refusal of the army to obey certain orders necessary for the execution of a certain policy performs the function that the refusal of parliament to pass a law performed before. That refusal compels the government to refrain from pursuing that policy either altogether or in a certain way. The refusal of the army to obey the government altogether has the same effect that a parliamentary vote of lack of confidence had before. That refusal compels the government to resign. The government, in order to be able to govern, must negotiate its policies with the army as before it had to negotiate them with the parties in Parliament. What the people and their elected representatives want and are willing to support does not matter. The composition and the policies of the government are determined by what the army wants and is willing to support.

In no other of the Western democracies has the shift of power from the people to the armed forces been revealed with such stark simplicity as it has in the Fifth Republic of France; nor have anywhere else the political consequences been drawn from this shift with such radical consistency. Yet the shift has occurred everywhere by virtue of the irresistible superiority of the means of violence which modern technology has put in the hands of the armed forces. The political consequences of that shift have differed from country to country by virtue of different political and social conditions. In the United States

while the executive branch acts, setting the course of policy perhaps for years to come, the people and Congress can but deliberate, investigate, and resolve; they can approve within the limits of the information accessible to them or, if they have no knowledge to go on, forgo judgment altogether, on the assumption that the executive branch knows best since it knows more. This advantage of the executive over the legislative branch and the people at large derives of course from the nature of the executive function itself and, hence, is inherent in a system of government which makes the executive independent of the legislative branch. What is unprecedented is the qualitative shift—paralleling the shift in the control of the means of violence—of the power of decision from the people to the government in matters of life and death. It has made the government the master of the national fate.

4. The New Feudalism: The Paradox of Thwarted Government

We have thus far dealt with one of the two paradoxes of contemporary democracy, the paradox of thwarted majority rule: universal democratization goes hand in hand with a drastic shift of power from the people to the government. We turn now to the paradox of thwarted government: that drastic increase in the power of the government in relation to the people goes hand in hand with a drastic decrease in the over-all power that constitutional authorities exercise within the state. In other words, universal democratization and the increase of the power of the government at the expense of the people result in a net loss of governmental power. While more powerful vis-à-vis the people than it has been in living memory, the government governs less than it did when it was weaker.

This paradox is the result of the decomposition of governmental power from within and without: through the feudalism of semi-autonomous executive departments and through the feudalism of the concentrations of private power.

When we refer to the executive branch of the government, we are really making use of a figure of speech in order to designate a multiplicity of varied and more or less autonomous agencies that have but one quality in common: their authority has been delegated to them either by the President or by Congress. But neither the President nor Congress is able to control them. The reason must be sought in the inadequacy of the Presidency and of Congress for the control of the executive branch as it has developed in our time. The executive branch of the American government has become an enormous apparatus of the highest quantitative and qualitative complexity. The functions of the executive branch have been divided and subdivided and parceled out to a plethora of agencies. Most of the functions these agencies perform overlap or are at the very least interconnected to such an extent that an agency needs the support of other agencies in order to perform its functions. There can be but few policies of any importance which an agency is able to pursue without regard for the position of other agencies. In the absence of hierarchical direction and control, one agency can act only with the consent of another agency, and how to secure that consent—through co-operation or competition—becomes a vital issue upon which the usefulness of the agency depends.

This quantitative proliferation of the executive function is accompanied by its qualitative atomization, which is due to the technological complexity of many of the most important executive functions. This complexity gives the agency that masters it an advantage in policy formation

which may well amount in some of the most important areas to a virtual monopoly. Such specialized knowledge, which is a unique source of power, is typically guarded by a wall of secrecy, and excluded from it are not only the general public and Congress but also other—and especially rival—agencies.

Upon this sprawling and unwieldy agglomeration of executive agencies, which are legally speaking but an arm of the executive and the legislature, the President and Congress try in vain to impose their will. The President as Chief Executive and Commander in Chief has of course the constitutional power to impose his conception of policy upon the executive departments, with the exception of the independent regulatory commissions, which are supposed to operate according to the statutory standards laid down by Congress. However, reality diverges sharply from the constitutional scheme. Even so strong and astute a President as Franklin D. Roosevelt was incapable of assuming full control even over the State Department, the constitutional executor of his foreign policy. His successors have had to an ever increasing degree to limit themselves to laying down general principles of policy in the hope that they would not suffer too much in the far-flung process of execution. On the other hand, the main weapon at the disposal of Congress, the investigating power, is clumsy; it can at best deal effectively with abuse and violation of the law, but is hardly able to correct an executive policy that is at variance with its own. For the statutory standards by which Congress must judge the executive performance are generally so vague as to leave the executive branch and, more particularly, the regulatory commissions a vast area of discretion.

Thus the constitutional intent to translate the presidential and congressional will into purposeful action, as the movements of the arm reflect the impulses emanating

from the brain, has produced instead the anarchy of a war of all against all, fought among as well as within the executive departments. The objective of the war is the determination—either directly or by influencing the decisions of higher authority—of at least that segment of policy which falls within the jurisdiction of the agency. The proliferation of agencies with overlapping functions and the equal status of many of them make the inter-agency phase of the war almost inevitable. The absence of clear lines of authority and of an organization appropriate to the functions to be performed invites intra-agency war and in certain departments, such as State and Defense, makes it inevitable. To win these wars, the belligerents enter into alliances with other belligerents, with factions in Congress and in the White House, with business enterprises, and with the mass media of communications. The deliberate leak to a journalist or member of Congress becomes a standard weapon with which one agency tries to embarrass another, or force the hand of higher authority, or establish an accomplished fact.

This process of policy formation and execution resembles the feudal system of government in that the public authority is parceled out among a considerable number of agencies which, while legally subordinated to a higher authority, are in fact autonomous to a greater or lesser degree. The executive agency, competing for the determination of policy with other agencies, more and more resembles a feudal fief that owes its existence to the delegation of powers by higher authority but becomes in active operation an autonomous center of power, defending itself against other centers of power and trying to increase its power at the expense of others. This system of government resembles the feudal system also in that the fragmentation of public power carries within itself a diminution of the sum total of public power. Fragmented

The New Feudalism: The Paradox of Thwarted Government

What the philosophy of the Constitution could conceive only as the extreme and exceptional conditions of crisis have become the normal conditions of American existence. The revolutions of the Civil War, the Square Deal, the New Deal, and the Cold War have established in permanence the dominant role of the government in the affairs of the nation. The quantitative proliferation of executive agencies implements that role. Yet the organization of the Presidency is adequate only to lead and control the weak and but sporadically active Federal government of bygone times, but not a Federal government which has become in permanence the determining factor in the vital concerns of the nation. No President can perform at the same time the functions of Head of State, Chief Executive, Commander in Chief, and head of his party. He can not even plan, formulate, co-ordinate, and supervise the execution of policy at the same time. The President has the constitutional authority to do all these things: but he has not necessarily the extraordinary combination of knowledge, judgment, and character required for such a task; and most certainly he does not have the time. In the absence of an effective Cabinet system, the President is separated from the day-by-day operations of the executive branch by a gap which he can but occasionally bridge. Normally, he presides over the executive branch, but he does not govern it.

Congress, on the other hand, is kept from effective control of the executive branch by the constitutional separation of powers, especially as interpreted by the executive branch itself. This impotence, bred in good measure by ignorance of what the executive branch is doing, has engendered in Congress an endemic mood of frustration and irritation which seeks relief in the harassment and persecution of persons rather than in the formulation, supervision, and enforcement of policies. Lack of party discipline

and archaic rules of procedure make it difficult for Congress to discover a will of its own and impose it upon the executive branch. The disintegration of the executive branch and the debilitation of the public power resulting from it must be cured by infusing the executive branch, on the one hand, with a purpose transcending the feudal interests and loyalties that rent it assunder and, on the other, by superimposing upon it a power capable of neutralizing, subduing, and fusing the fragments of feudal power which tend to be a law unto themselves. Both purpose and power can come only from the President's office. For only here do we find the visible authority and the fullness of implied powers necessary to make the national purpose prevail over the parochialism of feudal fiefdoms. As in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Europe the monarchical authority and power had to be called into being in order to create a nation out of the fragments of a territorial feudalism, so in our age must the presidential power and authority come forward to save the unity of the national purpose from functional fragmentation.

The debility of the executive power, caused by its inner fragmentation, invites attack from the concentrations of private power, especially in the economic sphere. Throughout history, factions within the state have frequently made common cause with a foreign enemy in order to improve their position in the domestic struggle for power and have thereby delivered the state itself into the hands of its enemies. So the feudal lords within the executive branch ally themselves with the princes of private power, each ally pursuing his particular goal. The former seek to expand their fiefdoms within the executive branch and thereby increase their share in the power of the government. The latter seek to turn the instruments of government control to their own advantage and expand their own power without regard for, and at the expense of, the public power

Thus, the public power is diminished through concerted action from within and without. The economic sphere has lost whatever autonomy it has had in the past: it is subject to political control as it, in turn, tries to control political decisions. We are in the presence of the revival of a truly political economy, and the major economic problems are political in nature.

The interconnectedness of the political and economic spheres is not peculiar to our age. Even in the heyday of nineteenth-century liberalism, the strict separation of the two spheres was in the nature of a political ideal rather than the reflection of observable reality. The monetary, tax, and tariff policies of the government had then, as they have now, a direct bearing upon the economic life—and so had the outlawry of associations of workingmen as criminal conspiracies. Yet the ideal of strict separation served the political purpose of protecting the economic forces from political control without impeding their influence in the political sphere.

What is peculiar to our age is not the interconnectedness of politics and economics but its positive philosophic justification and its all-persuasiveness. The state is no longer looked upon solely as the umpire who sees to it that the rules of the game are observed and intervenes actively only if, as in the case of the railroads, the rules favor one player to excess and thereby threaten to disrupt the game itself. In our age, aside from still being the umpire, the state has also become the most powerful player, who, in order to make sure of the outcome, rewrites the rules of the game as he goes along. No longer does the government or society at large rely exclusively upon the mechanisms of the market to ensure that the game keeps going. Both deem it the continuing duty of the government to see to it that it does.

In the United States the state pursues three main pur-

poses in the economic sphere: observance of the rules of the game, maintenance of economic stability, and national defense.

The rules of the game are oriented toward the pluralistic objectives of American society. Thus they seek to prevent any sector of the economy from gaining absolute power vis-à-vis other sectors of the economy, competitors, or the individuals as such, by controlling and limiting its power. Regulatory commissions, legislation controlling and limiting the strong and supporting the weak, tariff and monetary policies serve this purpose.

While the state started to assume responsibility for the rules of the game in the last decades of the nineteenth century, it made itself responsible for economic stability in the 1930's. Economic stability, in this context, signifies the mitigation, if not the elimination in certain sectors, of the business cycle. Its main positive characteristics, as conceived by the government of the United States, are stability of employment, stability of the value of the dollar, and stability of agricultural prices. A plethora of legislative and administrative devices serve this purpose.

Since the end of the Second World War, technological research and industrial production have become to an ever increasing extent the backbone of military defense. The regular annual expenditure by the government of more than forty billion dollars on national defense, its decrease or increase from year to year, its shift from one sector of the economy to another, all exert a sometimes drastic influence upon the economic life of the nation. They have made the government the most important single customer for the products of the national economy. In addition, many tax and monetary policies and price and wage policies are determined by considerations of national defense.

With the government thus exerting an enormous controlling, limiting, and stimulating influence upon the eco-

nomie life, the ability to influence the economic decisions of the government becomes an indispensable element in the competition for economic advantage. Economic competition manifests itself inevitably in competition for political influence. This political influence is exerted through two channels: control of, and pressure upon, government personnel.

The most effective political influence is exerted by the direct control of government personnel. The economic organization which has its representatives elected to the legislature or appointed to the relevant administrative and executive positions exerts its political influence as far as the political influence of its representatives reaches. In so far as the representatives of these economic organizations cannot decide the issue by themselves, the competition for political influence and, through it, economic advantage will be fought out within the collective bodies of the government by the representatives of different economic interests. While this relationship of direct control is typical in Europe, it is by no means unknown in the United States. State legislatures have been controlled by mining companies, public utilities, and railroads, and many individual members of Congress represent specific economic interests. Independent administrative agencies have come under the sway of the economic forces they were intended to control. The large-scale interchange of top personnel between business and the executive branch of the government cannot help but influence, however subtly and intangibly, decisions of the government relevant to the economic sphere.

However, in the United States the most important political influence is exerted through the influence of pressure groups. The decision of the government agent—legislator, independent administrator, member of the executive branch—is here not a foregone conclusion by virtue of the

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come laws unto themselves, deciding with finality the matters vital to them and using the government only for the purpose of ratifying these decisions, they would not only have drained the life blood from the body politic but also have destroyed the vital energies of the economic system. For the vitality of the American economic system has resided in its ability to renew itself from new technological opportunities unfettered by the interests identified with an obsolescent technology. Seen from the vantage point of individual enterprise, this is what we call freedom of competition. This freedom of competition has been a function of the rules of the economic game, as formulated and enforced by the state.

Yet the new feudalism, if it is not controlled and retrained, must inevitably tend to abrogate these rules in order to assure the survival of the economic giants which, in turn, tend to take over the functions of the state. The consummation of this development, possible but not inevitable, would be a state of affairs in which for those giants the rule of life would not be freedom of competition, which might jeopardize their survival, but freedom from competition in order to secure their survival. The dynamics of the capitalistic system, especially in the United States, as continually destructive and creative as life itself, would then give way to a gigantic system of vested interests in which the established giants would use the state to make themselves secure from competitive displacement, only to die a slow death from attrition.

It is the measure of the quandary which modern society faces in this problem that the most obvious cure raises issues as grave as the disease. That cure is a state strong enough to hold its own against the concentrations of private power. Yet such a state, by being strong enough for this task, cannot fail to be also strong enough to control, restrain, and redirect the economic activities of everybody. In

other words, as the liberal tradition correctly assumes, a strong government, whatever else it may be able to accomplish, threatens the liberties of the individual, especially in the economic sphere. Thus, modern society is faced with a real dilemma: a government which is too weak to threaten the freedom of the individual is also too weak to hold its own against the new feudalism; and a government which is strong enough to keep the new feudalism in check in order to protect the freedom of the many is also strong enough to destroy the freedom of all.

There can be no doubt as to which horn of the dilemma the government has chosen. It is in full retreat before the onslaught of private power and a passive onlooker at its unbridled exercise. It can no more see to it that the natural monopolies in the fields of transportation, utilities, and mass communications be used in the public interest than it can protect the public interest in its dealings with the suppliers of manufactured goods. The government has become the biggest customer of private industry, but it has also become one of its most hapless customers because it is among the most impecunious ones. In the field of military supplies in particular, the government is at the mercy of its suppliers. Only within very narrow limits can it do what customers in a market are supposed to be capable of doing if they do not like the terms of trade and the quality of the product: take its business elsewhere.

This dependence of the government upon the suppliers of its military matériel evokes still another similarity with the feudal system. As the king had to buy military support from the feudal lords with parcels of his land and fragments of his power, so is the government within the terms of a commercial relationship at the mercy of its suppliers who control not only the quality of the product and the terms of trade but in good measure also the very identity of the product.

While the government is thus a weak contractual partner of the concentrations of private power, it is a virtually impotent bystander when it comes to the control over the exercise of private power. The government is incapable of enforcing the laws against a corrupt and tyrannical union. It cannot enforce the criminal laws against its officials, nor can it protect the members of the union against the abuse of power on the part of the union officials. The government of the union has become in good measure an autonomous private government, making and enforcing its own laws and pursuing its own policies, regardless of the public laws, the public policy, and the public interest.

What holds true of unions applies to the legitimate business enterprise, and it applies likewise to the illegitimate business enterprise, the racket. The racket is in our society the most highly developed type of private government in that it operates not within the letter of the public law, as do the private governments of legitimate business, but, by definition, outside it. Its distinctive characteristics are the institution of private criminal justice and methods of commercial competition resembling feudal warfare.

The retreat of the public power before the expansion of private governments has been particularly patent when it has failed to perform its most elemental function: to defend the public interest—and more particularly the public peace—against the war, industrial or physical, of private governments. Both Truman and Eisenhower were unable to prevent or settle industrial warfare between the giants of industry and labor. After Truman's seizure of the steel industry during the strike of 1952 had been invalidated on constitutional grounds, Eisenhower did not even attempt to intervene in the steel strike of 1959.

The issue in industrial wars of this kind is but ostensibly economic; in truth, it concerns the distribution of

power between either management and labor or different labor unions or both. The economic settlement by which such a war is finally terminated amounts essentially to a conspiracy between management and labor to shift the economic burden of the settlement to the consumer. Whether or not such a settlement is actually supported and sanctioned by the government and whether or not its effects upon consumer prices are postponed for tactical reasons, as was done in the settlement of the steel strike of 1959, does not affect the intrinsic nature of the settlement and the government's impotence in the face of it.

The impotence of the government to assert its authority against the private governments comes nowhere more strikingly to the fore than in its dealings with the rackets. A racket is actually not only a private government but also a counter-government, complete with all the characteristics of a public government, such as police and military forces, executive organs, courts, taxation, and its similarity with a feudal fiefdom in its organization, functions, and relations to the public power, other rackets, and its outside tributaries is indeed most impressive. The racket as an institution has proven invulnerable to the authority of the public power. The best the latter has been able to accomplish has been sporadic harassment of the institution and the elimination of some of its members through criminal, contempt-of-court, and deportation proceedings. The very fact that the public power has found its most effective weapon in the income-tax laws, whose evasion constitutes neither the most serious of the misdeeds of the rackets nor one peculiar to them, demonstrates the weakness of the public power's position.

Harassment by the public power, more or less good-naturedly submitted to by private government, has become the essentially ritualistic method by which the public power asserts, and the private government submits to, its

authority, similar in its symbolic function to the feudal obeisance. The arrest of known hoodlums, the indictment of labor racketeers, and the anti-trust proceedings against business enterprises perform that function. The general futility of such public measures in terms of the institutional relationship—in contrast to their effects upon certain individuals—only serves to underline the weakness of the public power and the semi-autonomy of private government. Were it not for the public power's ability to tax the private governments—which has remained effective albeit impaired—and for the public power's control over the most potent means of physical violence, the autonomy of the private governments would be complete. And it must be said in passing that the public power is weak in meting out justice even to individual wrong-doers; of 2,340,000 persons arrested in 1958 for major crimes only 88,780—that is less than four per cent—were sent to state and Federal prisons.

The decline of the public power, revealed by disintegration from within and usurpation from without, can be traced to a paralysis of will within the public power itself. That paralysis, in turn, has been brought on by that perversion of the democratic process which reduces the government to an agent of what is thought to be public opinion. Such a government, as we have seen, cannot be but a weak government. A government which considers itself the agent rather than the molder of public opinion cannot help setting in motion that fatal mechanism through which influence over public opinion is being surrendered by default to the counter-elite of the private governments. Public opinion, which in view of its interests ought to be the ally of the public power, then becomes the instrument with which the private governments disarm the public power.

That so enfeebled a government still gives the appearance of governing and actually governs with a modicum of

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The public power is weakened and threatened with disintegration from within and without by a new distribution of power, by new private interests, and by the universalism of the democratic processes misunderstanding the nature both of democracy and of executive decision. These threats are of a material and, to a greater or lesser degree, of a tangible nature; they are social facts that are subject to direct empirical observation. Yet the public power is being protected and in a certain measure immunized against disintegration by a factor which is intangible in that its existence can be ascertained only by indirection from certain words, deeds, and conditions pointing to its existence. That factor is the all-persuasiveness of the national purpose. Both the defenders and the opponents of the public power—like the partisans of the other great political controversies of the past—are parties to the purposeful consensus which sets America apart from other nations. They are Americans before they are partisans. The vitality of that consensus stands in inverse relation to the strength of the disintegrating factors threatening the purposeful unity of the nation itself. The disintegration of the public power remains relative so long as the national consensus outweighs in the thoughts and deeds of the people the commitment to parochial interests. That disintegration becomes absolute and, hence, disastrous for the public power when this commitment takes precedence over the consensus. Either the public power will then survive only as a shadow to which autonomous feudal fiefdoms will pay ritual tribute, or else it will be destroyed in one cataclysmic act through revolution and civil war, perhaps to be resurrected by one feudal power prevailing over the others.

In this confrontation between national consensus and parochial commitments what matters first of all is the vitality of the consensus, however defined. Even the pur-

great historic pronouncements that put the living experience of the national purpose into words as so many magic formulas which seem to protect us from the contemporary world and at the same time create the illusion that we have come to terms with it.

The other misguided attempt at renewing the national purpose results from what might be called the "intellectual fallacy." It is represented by a presidential commission that is charged with telling us what our national purposes are, and by a symposium, organized by a mass-circulation magazine, in which a number of eminent men tell us what their conception of the national purpose is. What is fallacious in these endeavors is the assumption that facts will yield to the power of abstract thought. In truth, facts will yield only to facts that prove to be stronger, and old experiences will yield only to new ones that prove to be more persuasive. "American democracy," to quote Frederick Jackson Turner, "was born of no theorist's dream; it was not carried in the *Susan Constant* to Virginia nor in the *Mayflower* to Plymouth. It came out of the American forest, and it gained strength each time it touched a new frontier."¹ Similarly, the purpose of America was not created, and it will not be renewed, in an editorial office or a committee room—nor, for that matter, in a professor's study. It was created and achieved in the encounter of purposeful action with a natural and social environment conducive to that action, and so it will be renewed. Crèvecoeur, Thomas Paine, Benjamin Franklin, Charles Pinckney, John Adams did not speculate about the American purpose, they did not figure out what it was or what it ought to be. Rather they saw that purpose in action and reported what they saw.

What holds true of the achievement of the American

¹ Frederick Jackson Turner: *The Frontier in American History* (New York: Henry Holt; 1920), p. 293.

What Is Not to Be Done

achievement. To ask America to defend a particular *status quo*, then, is tantamount to asking it to forswear its purpose.

The great issues of American politics concern neither the preservation of the present nor the restoration of the past but the creation, without reference to either, of the future. American politics does not defend the past and present against the future; rather, it defends one kind of future against another kind of future. While in philosophy and method conservatism is the most potent single influence in American politics, the purposes of our politics from the very beginning were unique and revolutionary, not only in the narrow political sense, but also in the more general terms of being oblivious to tradition. They have so remained, only temporarily disfigured by periods that were dominated by a conservatism of purpose and, hence, in the context of American politics spelled stagnation. In other words, the point of reference of American politics has never been the present, and only in a historically inconsequential way has it been in the past. Thus, the political program of both parties favors domestic changes in the *status quo*; for it is only with such a program that they can hope to appeal to the voters. We have no conservative political party because the number of conservative voters is not sufficient to support one on the national scale. We have only conservative minorities, which must try through obstruction and subterfuge to prevent change or at least to slow it up.

Conservative in philosophy and method, revolutionary in purpose—such has been our political tradition from the beginning of colonization. It has been so by dint of its own inner dynamics, of the peculiarly American way in which human purpose transformed the natural and social environment into an experience confirming and expanding the purpose. Yet we have tended to view the restoration

of that purpose primarily as a means to the end of keeping up with the Russians. We have been doing so in a dual sense. Since the Russians have a simple and intelligible purpose, we have been arguing, so must we, and what the Russians are trying to achieve we must achieve, only in a bigger and better way. Yet even if we can compete successfully with the Russians in this fashion we shall in the process defeat our true purpose. The very essence of the American purpose, as we have seen, is that it is uniform in procedure and pluralist in substance; as a national purpose, it exists only as a particular mode of procedure. Give it a uniform substance as well, in imitation of the Soviet Union, and you have destroyed its very essence, its very vitality, its very uniqueness. Thus, it is heartening to note and testifies to the innate strength of the American purpose, truly understood, that the attempts to invent a slogan which would tell us and the world what we are about in substantive terms have remained utterly futile.

Even if we were still living in the isolation of the western hemisphere, we would owe it to ourselves to restore the national purpose that gives meaning to our existence as a nation and is our original contribution to the patrimony of mankind. It is primarily in order to be able to compete not with the Russians but with ourselves, to stay ahead of ourselves rather than of the Russians, that we must restore that purpose. That we are driven to the re-examination of the national purpose by fear of Russian superiority rather than by the awareness of our failings, in view of what our own past demands of us, illuminates from still another angle the depth of the contemporary crisis.

The distinction between these two attitudes toward the restoration of the national purpose is crucial. If to stay ahead of the Russians is what we primarily seek, then we shall really accept the Russian standards as our own. What they do we must do, only better; what they achieve we

and its sense of mission; it deprived its existence of meaning commensurate with its past. Today such a failure is also a matter between ourselves and our will to survive; for if we fail, the nations of the world will look elsewhere for models of social organization and political institutions to emulate, and we will be alone in a hostile world. Alone in a hostile world, we would no longer be able to renew our sense of purpose through the experience of territorial expansion and universal emulation. At best, equality in freedom would still have a home in America. Yet, thus mutilated, could the national purpose survive in America itself? And if it should not survive, could America survive without its purpose?

Thus, the restoration of the national purpose in our time takes on a novel urgency. That restoration is no longer, as it was in the crises of the past, a matter of social justice, economic order, and the limits of territorial expansion. Rather the survival of America and of the civilized world depends upon it. We must, then, ask again the question that Americans have asked whenever the national purpose has met with a crisis: how can equality in freedom be achieved in America? How can the area of equality in freedom be expanded beyond the territorial limits of the United States? How can equality in freedom be offered to the world as a model to emulate? The answer must evolve, as it has in the past, from the character of the natural and social environment within which the purpose of America is to be achieved. This environment has today six main characteristics: a vertical mobility that still functions and promises to expand, by virtue of the rapid succession of technological revolutions, into new and unknown areas, but that is threatened by the concentrations of private power; the opening of a new cultural frontier that needs the support of organized society to bring forth a great American culture; the need for a new horizontal mobility of

world-wide dimensions because of the obsolescence of the nation state as principle of political organization; the new significance of America as a model of equality for the nations emerging from colonial or semi-colonial status, and as a model of freedom for the nations living under autocratic rule; the nuclear threat to survival; the need to restore democratic government and defend freedom against it.

2. The New Mobility and the New Frontiers

Of the three American frontiers—the territorial, the natural, and the frontier as social artifact—the territorial one no longer performs a function for the purpose of America, but has become the rampart that protects the existence of America. The natural frontier of resources to be exploited and tasks to be performed has changed its character but not its importance for the achievement of the American purpose. New resources wait to be exploited, such as nuclear energy and space, and major tasks wait to be performed, such as the rebuilding of our cities and the reform of education.

The frontier as social artifact—that is, social contrivances facilitating vertical mobility—has remained open to an impressive degree. Yet we must be on guard against the potential threat that the concentrations of private power constitute to its continuing effectiveness. They do so as potential agencies not only of economic but also of social and political stratification and as impediments to competition. The combination of functional stratification with personal mobility, which we found to assure a considerable measure of vertical mobility within the concentrations of private power, is threatened by tendencies inherent in these concentrations. For they tend to develop into stratified structures of power on the basis not only of wealth but

also of social and political distinctions. While stratification on the basis of wealth is naturally most pronounced in the big corporations, the tendency toward the other type of stratification is clearly revealed in the structure of the big labor unions. Equal access to the positions of power, not only at the top but also in the middle layers, is here sharply limited by the formation of closed ruling groups impervious to control and displacement by the rank and file. The degree of this stratification and the corresponding decline of democratic competition for office is indicated by the fact that hardly any of the leaders of the big unions or their lieutenants have ever been replaced or compelled to change their policies by a vote of the union members. The government must protect and restore vertical mobility in such conditions either by controlling directly the procedures of such private organizations or, more effectively, by promoting outside competition that provides those whose mobility is impaired with an alternative chance for advancement.

Vertical mobility is further threatened by the concentrations of private power because they are able to retard technological changes that would affect their interests adversely. Corporations and labor unions have under certain conditions a vested interest in the preservation of the technological *status quo*, and they have preserved the *status quo* at least for the time being when technological change requires large and risky investments that private sources will not provide. They have thus retarded the peaceful uses of atomic energy, they are artificially preserving uneconomic enterprises, and have made us pay through systematic featherbedding an unnecessary price for automation. The government must, because it alone has the ability, see to it that the technological frontiers of America remain open by using its economic and political resources to advance technological change.

The vitality and creativity of American society imposes upon the government still another and entirely novel task: that of guarding and caring for the cultural frontier. It may be deemed paradoxical that the government should be called upon to be the guardian of culture when society is superior to government, not, as nineteenth-century liberals thought, in virtue but in accomplishment. This is as it must be; for bureaucratic organization, however efficient, and political decision, however wise, can at best facilitate and make more effective, but can provide no substitute for, the creativity of the individual. Yet it is extraordinary and intolerable that the vitality and creativity of American society in all its various manifestations should be so inadequately reflected in the collective image the nation presents to itself and to the world. The nation does not recognize nor does it reward excellence in its midst through the instrument of its collective will, the government. The American landscape is dotted with innumerable islands of excellence, which are surrounded by an ocean of mediocrity and threatened with being swallowed up by the tidal waves of incompetence. Societies that are not only economically stratified, as is ours, but, in contrast to ours, culturally as well, have created autonomous institutions and devices by which excellence is recognized, encouraged, promoted, and held up as a standard for judgment. Academies, competitions, honors, and prizes create a commonwealth of excellence, composed of the federated republics of letters, scholarship, and so forth, which bring the isolated and dispersed excellences of individuals to bear upon the life of the nation as a whole.

The cultural institutions, such as those of a higher learning, and the professional organizations, such as those of scholars, which America has developed in great proliferation have not been able to institutionalize consistently standards of excellence. For these organizations have fash-

ioned themselves after American society as a whole and have allowed themselves to be guided by the standards of conformity rather than excellence. Thus, the standards of excellence are supported only by isolated individuals or small nuclei of them, and not by a coherent identifiable group, endowed with the prestige of tradition and achievement, bestowing or withholding rewards according to objective standards, and looked up to by society as the guardian and embodiment of these standards. When standards of excellence are in conflict with those of conformity, these organizations have frequently been responsive to the pressures of conformity. For these anonymous pressures of unorganized society present real and—for the individual—well-nigh irresistible social power, to which only organized society in the form of its government is able to furnish an effective counterweight.

Governments have indeed provided such a counterweight throughout the civilized world in all periods of history. They have recognized, encouraged, and promoted the standards of excellence in art, literature, scholarship, and education by supporting them materially and lending them their prestige. This has been so in ancient Greece and Rome, in the Italy of the Renaissance, in Elizabethan England, in seventeenth-century France, and wherever else a great culture has flowered. The anarchy of American culture was tolerable as long as there was little of it and most of it was only the concern of a few. But no nation is rich enough in cultural endowments to be able to afford squandering its cultural resources in a period of great creative vitality and of mass participation in it. More particularly, it cannot allow a majority of its children to be cut off from contact with its cultural heritage and contemporary achievement by being either miseducated or not educated at all. No nation can afford such neglect under any circumstances; for through such neglect it lowers the

level of its creative attainments and renders itself inferior to what it could be. Yet in our time such neglect may well endanger the very existence of civilized society. The central social problem that our society is likely to face is the problem not of work but of leisure; it is not unemployment and exploitation of labor that will plague it, but wasted leisure, hours emptied of content and life shorn of meaning. And the deadly threat against which our society must defend itself is likely to be, not the struggle of classes, but the alienation of the masses which have lost a stake in society because they have lost a stake in life.

Society, when care for the necessities of life is no longer its primary task, must concern itself with the meaning of life—that is, its culture. It can do so effectively only in its organized form, as government. Yet the government of the United States is singularly ill-equipped to perform that task. For it is itself to a large degree a product of the conformity that it is its task to overcome. Whoever has contact with members of our government must be impressed by the excellence of many of them as individuals and by the inferiority of their collective achievements. What a galaxy of eminent men the Senate of the United States can boast of, and how undistinguished are generally its policies! What a wealth of intelligence, knowledge, and good judgment one can find in the middle layers of government—say, the Department of State—and how frequently dismal is the product of their labors in the form of policy! That product is the result not of their individual excellence, but of their collective fear of a public opinion to whose actual or fancied preferences they hasten to conform. Thus, few officials of our government actually believe in the soundness of our Far Eastern policy; but since public opinion seems to approve it, it is not changed. Here, again, conformity tends to win out in the contest with excellence.

If a government so oriented were to intervene actively

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great majority of our citizens. The progress we have made, considerable in absolute terms but small in comparison with what still needs to be done, has been in good measure the result not of constitutional and legislative enactments and judicial decisions but of changes in the moral climate and of social pressures that a discriminatory minority cannot resist. That is likely to be true of the progress we must make in the future. For that progress the President, as the moral leader of, and the moral example for, the nation, will bear the major responsibility.

Progress in the achievement of equality in freedom by our racial minorities has become in our time an urgent matter not only because of the sharpening of our moral sensibilities and of changing economic and social conditions but also because of the emergence of the non-white members of the human race into consciousness of their individuality and into political independence. The racial minorities of America are in the process of merging into that vast movement of non-white peoples, comprising four fifths of mankind, who demand equality. These peoples have undertaken to achieve for themselves and in relation to the white man what America has offered to the world as its purpose: equality in freedom. What an irony it would be if the majority of mankind were to achieve the American purpose for itself in opposition to America! And how dangerous it would be for the very survival of America if America were to harbor an irredenta which was to strive for the achievement of the American purpose against its professors!

3. The Global Frontier as the Condition for Survival

The direct bearing that the achievement of racial equality in America has today upon America's relations to the world is but a particularly obvious example of the radical

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focus of the issue, and the issue, when it reaches either them or the President, may already have been resolved and the alternative solution may never come to their or the President's attention. Thus it has been said that when the President chose the Vanguard over the Redstone as the missile for space exploration, he actually confirmed a choice made on lower levels without being aware of the relative merits of the two missiles. This danger—that the President will see through the eyes of his immediate subordinates the great issues he must decide—is always present. It is aggravated if some of these subordinates have strong policy preferences of their own or seek to shield the President from controversy.

This "extraordinary isolation," to which Woodrow Wilson called attention,¹ from the great issues he must decide and from the implementation of his decision is indeed the great ailment of the modern President's office. The President tends to become the top manager of an administrative machine, the co-ordinator of the co-ordinators. He presides over the "Presidency" but governs neither it nor the executive branch as a whole. This diminution of the President's power is in part the result of the help the President has received in the form of an institutionalized and far-flung "Presidency." It has lightened his workload to such a degree as to make his continuous participation in the day-by-day operations of the government virtually superfluous. With regard to these operations, the "Presidency" has for all practical purposes become the President, either collectively or in the person of a powerful assistant to the President, such as was Sherman Adams.

By curing the ailment of overwork we have—paradoxically enough—aggravated the ailment of isolation. The real problem is no longer that the President has too much to

¹ Woodrow Wilson: *The President of the United States* (New York and London: Harper and Brothers, 1916), p. 39.

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resolution of conflicts the public power must take precedence over private interests. Finally, society at large must help the government to free itself from the tyranny of public opinion by testing its own preferences against the objective standards that once gave meaning to its aspirations for equality and freedom. In brief, society, too, must free itself from the tyranny of public opinion.

These are the tasks that the purpose of America imposes upon our government and people. Shall we achieve them? That question will be answered by what Machiavelli called *virtù* and *fortuna*. The one, the quality of our wills and minds, is in our hands; the other, the benevolence of fate, is beyond our reach. Those who came before us knew their purpose and had the courage and ingenuity to transform their environment in the light of their purpose. The purpose, courage, and ingenuity with which they conquered the wilderness were different only in terms of the demands of the environment, and not in intrinsic quality, from the purpose, courage, and ingenuity with which we are called upon to conquer nuclear power, space, anarchy, and ourselves. Those who came before us made it, as it were, easy for fate to grant them victory. Even so, they were not vouchsafed victory. Yet even if they had been defeated, posterity could have said of them: they deserved to be victorious. Let us comport ourselves in such a fashion that posterity can say at least as much of us!

trance, toward the ultimate holocaust which will destroy all of us and all that Western civilization has created. In the short run, we are moving quickly into a zone of mortal danger created by the military superiority of the Soviet Union. Yet the American people live in the best of all possible worlds, and the voice of the individual, with no other mandate but his knowledge, judgment, and conscience, has no chance to make itself heard above the euphoric din of the chorus of delusion. Is it utopian to suggest that Congress, bridging the gap between the facts of life and a knowledgeable but ineffectual elite, on the one hand, and the people, on the other, constitute itself a kind of collective Demosthenes, explaining, warning, proposing, hammering away at the urgency of the dangers and the availability of the remedies?

The economic task which faces the 86th Congress is both more tangible and politically more delicate and difficult to execute than its tasks in the field of military and foreign policy. It is more easily taken hold of, but it requires great political courage and skill for its achievement. It requires a veritable revolution in our economic thinking and practices. For the first time in our history, our economic task does not arise from a domestic problem, such as monopolies or unemployment, nor from a limited foreign situation, such as currency devaluation, tariffs, or dumping. We are challenged, all of us, not just the watch industry or the cotton producers or the Treasury, and we are challenged not just as producers, distributors, and consumers of economic goods, but as representatives of a distinctive way of life, as members of a particular social system with principles, institutions, and arrangements of its own. The challenger is not a foreign industry or a foreign government pursuing hostile economic policies, but the social system of Communism in its totality, directed single-mindedly by a totalitarian government.

The Last Years of Our Greatness?

afford to have its foreign trade carried on exclusively by private enterprise for private gain and have the Government intervene by and large only for the purpose of maximizing exports and protecting the domestic producer against foreign competition. But it would also have to raise the much more fundamental issue of whether, in view of the total challenge of the Soviet Union marshaling all its economic resources to one end, the United States can still afford the enormous wastefulness of its economic production, distribution, and consumption. Can it still afford its Government-stimulated and paid-for agricultural over-production? Can it still afford the artificially induced annual obsolescence of its hard consumer goods? Can it still afford the production of scores of slightly different models of essentially the same merchandise, production which serves no economic need but only the whim of producer and consumer? What about a system of distribution which has in good measure become an end in itself, a ritual performing no valid economic function and being in some of its advertising manifestations hardly more than a respectable racket? And what about the consumer who has been conditioned not to use what the economy has produced for him until it can no longer be used, but to throw it away and tear it down when it is no longer as new as it is supposed to be? Finally, can we still afford the luxury of thinking about our economic problems in the obsolete terms of socialism *vs.* capitalism, spending *vs.* saving instead of facing the real issue: expansion *vs.* stagnation?

To these absurdities the Government could remain indifferent, or it could even allow itself to promote them, as long as, economically speaking, the United States was, as it were, alone in the world. The United States could then play havoc with its economic resources and still remain a great and powerful nation. Yet with the Soviet

when the magnitude of the outrage exceeds the customary, when corruptive practices run counter to the political and commercial mores which are indifferent to some, such as implicit bribery, and condemn others, such as open blackmail, or when a prominent member of the other party or of the competition has been caught. The moral issue which political and commercial corruption poses is but the general issue of human fallibility. That fallibility was brought into the world by Eve and will be with us to the end of time. The best we can hope and strive for is to restrict its manifestations and mitigate its evil. In one form or other, we must live with it.

The Van Doren case raises an issue different and more profound than political or commercial corruption. It arose in a sphere whose ultimate value is neither power nor wealth but truth. The professor is a man who has devoted his life to "professor," and what he is pledged to profess is the truth as he sees it. Mendacity in a professor is a moral fault which denies the very core of the professor's calling. Power and corruption go together, as do wealth and corruption; pecuniary corruption is, as it were, their illegitimate offspring, preformed in their nature. Yet mendacity is the very negation of truth, the enemy which seeks its death. A mendacious professor is not like a politician who subordinated the public good to private gain nor like a businessman who cheats. Rather he is like the physician who, pledged to heal, maims and kills, or like the policeman who, pledged to uphold the law, assists the criminal in breaking it. He is not so much the corrupter of the code by which he is supposed to live as its destroyer. This is the peculiar enormity of his outrage, which sets his deed apart from the common corruption of power and wealth.

It is in view of the nature of the deed that the reaction of American society must be judged. There is nothing extraordinary in the deed itself. The truth is being be-

The Great Betrayal

greater measure as time went on, by conformity to whatever values appeared to be accepted by the elite or the majority of the moment.

At the beginning of American history and in its great moments of heroic dedication, the moral relativism, if not agnosticism, of that conformist attitude was mediated and even at times overwhelmed by the intellectual awareness of those eternal verities and the compliance with them in deeds. Yet in our day-to-day collective life that tension between objective standards and the ever changing preferences of society tends to be resolved in favor of the latter. Mr. Justice Holmes' famous dictum: ". . . I have no practical criticism [with regard to laws] except what the crowd wants," is the classic expression of that resolution. It is also expressed in one Congressman's hope that Columbia University would not act "prematurely" and would at least wait to judge public reaction to Van Doren's statement.

The objective standards which constitute, as it were, the moral backbone of a civilized society are here dissolved into the ever changing amorphousness of public opinion. What a man ought or ought not to do is here determined not by objective laws immutable as the stars, but by the results of the latest public-opinion poll. What is expected of a man is not compliance with those laws, but conformity to the demands of society, whatever they may be. A man who has gotten into trouble because he is temporarily out of step with public opinion only needs to slow down or hurry up, as the case may be, in order to get back into line, and all will be all right again with him and the world. Moral judgment becomes thus the matter of a daily plebiscite, and what is morally good becomes identical with what the crowd wants and tolerates. The Congressional reaction to the Van Doren case, then, is easily understood in terms of the trend, deeply ingrained in American society, toward

making conformity with prevailing opinion the final arbiter of moral worth.

The moral illiteracy of the student is less easily explained. For the students, so one would like to think, are apprentices in that noble endeavor of discovering and professing the truth, not yet compelled by the demands of society to compromise their convictions; they behold truth in all its purity; and they must look at a mendacious professor as a student of the priesthood looks at a priest that blasphemes God. How is it possible for a young man of presumably superior intelligence and breeding, predestined to be particularly sensitive to the moral issue of truth, to be so utterly insensitive to it? These men were not born morally blind; for, as I have said elsewhere, man "is a moralist because he is a man." These men were born with a moral sense as they were born with a sense of sight; they were no more morally blind at birth than they were physically blind. What made them lose that moral sense? Who blinded them to the moral standards by which they—at least as students—are supposed to live?

The answer must be in the same sphere which produced Van Doren himself: the academic world. There is profound meaning in the solidarity between Van Doren and his students, and that meaning is found in the academic sphere which made them both what they are as moral beings. While public opinion has pinned responsibility on television, advertising, business, or low teachers' salaries, nobody seems to have pointed to the academic system which taught both teacher and students.

A system of higher education, dedicated to the discovery and transmission of the truth, is not a thing apart from the society which has created, maintains, and uses it. This is especially true of a decentralized and largely private system such as ours. The academic world partakes of the values prevailing in society and is exposed to the social

pressures to conform to them. Its very concept of what truth is bears the marks of the relativism and instrumentalism dominant in American society, and by teaching that kind of truth, it strengthens its dominance over the American mind.

Yet even its commitment to this kind of truth is bound to come into conflict with the values and demands of society. The stronger the trend toward conformity within society and the stronger the commitment of the scholar to values other than the truth, such as wealth and power, the stronger will be the temptation to sacrifice the moral commitment to the truth for social advantage. The tension between these contradictory commitments typically issues in a compromise which keeps the commitment to the truth within socially acceptable bounds—exempting, for instance, the taboos of society from investigation—and restrains social ambitions from seriously interfering with the search for a truth cautiously defined. In the measure that truth is thus limited and defined, the search for it is deflected from its proper goal and thereby corrupted. On either end of the spectrum, one finds a small group which either is subversive of the truth by telling society what it wants to hear, or else is subversive of society by telling society what it does not want to hear.

Contemporary American society offers enormous temptations for the academic world to follow the former path—that is, not only to corrupt the truth, but to betray it. In the process, the academic world tends to transform itself into a duplicate of the business and political worlds, with the search for truth subordinated to the values of these worlds. To the temptations of wealth and power held out by government, business, and foundations, the scholar has nothing to oppose but his honor committed to a truth which for him, as for society, is but a doubtful and for most of them at best a relative thing. He has his feet on an

island of sand surrounded by the waves of temptation. The step from corruption to betrayal is big in moral terms but small in execution. What difference is there between receiving \$129,000 under false pretenses from government, business, or a foundation, which has become almost standard operating procedure, and receiving the same amount under false pretenses from Revlon? The difference lies not in moral relevance but in the technique, which in the former case is discreet and elegant and remains within the academic mores while in the latter it is blatant, vulgar, and obvious. Van Doren and his students were formed by a world which makes it easier for some of its members to receive money than reject it and condones the betrayal of truth for the sake of wealth and power, provided the academic amenities are preserved. Van Doren is indeed a black sheep in the academic world, but there are many gray ones among the flock.

In the world of Van Doren, American society beholds its own world, the world of business and politics, of wealth and power. It cannot condemn him without condemning itself, and since it is unwilling to do the latter it cannot bring itself to do the former. Instead, it tends to absolve him by confusing the virtues of compassion and charity for the actor with the vice of condoning the act. Yet by refusing to condemn Van Doren, it cannot but condemn itself. For it convicts itself of a moral obtuseness which signifies the beginning of the end of civilized society. The Van Doren case is indeed the Dreyfus case in reverse. As France, by acquitting Dreyfus, restored itself as a civilized society ordered by the moral law, so must America by condemning Van Doren. Otherwise it will have signed the death warrant of its soul.

Epistle to the Columbians on the Meaning of Morality

for that matter, your own, but whether you and your University could afford to let a violation of the moral law pass as though it were nothing more than a traffic violation. Socrates had to come to terms with that issue, and he knew how to deal with it. You did not know how to deal with it. And this is why you hide your faces and muffle your voices. For since your lives have lost the vital contact with the transcendence of the moral law, you find no reliable standard within yourself by which to judge and act. You are frightened by the emptiness within yourself, the insufficiency stemming from a self-contained existence. And so you flee into the protective cover of the anonymous crowd and judge as it judges and act as it acts. But once you have restored that vital connection with the moral law from which life receives its meaning, you will no longer be afraid of your shadow and the sound of your voices. You will no longer be afraid of yourself. For you will carry within yourself the measure of yourself and of your fellows and the vital link with things past, future, and above.