

Chapter 10

To Maintain the Republic

When there is an unresolved problem around the house, in the factory, or in the community, the natural American impulse is to "do something about it." This pioneer instinct of a practical and energetic people continues, in spite of frustrations. Because the roots of self-help run deep in American soil, there is reason to believe that this characteristic can be reanimated.

But a figure of speech drawn from our agricultural background is misleading. In the vegetable realm the recovery of vitality is seemingly automatic. When spring returns, year after year the sap runs strong. Seeds germinate; the tender green emerges; buds form; and in due course the cycle of the seasons brings first the flowering and then the harvest.

There is no such procession in the field of political life. There is growth and decay, but they are not seasonal. If there is any immutable law that determines when and how a civilization shall fall, where and under what circumstances another shall emerge, the operation of this control is as yet beyond detection and, so far as our current knowledge goes, is not predetermined.

When the last page of the last history has been turned; when all the instances of stupidity have been examined and all the acts of folly have been tabulated, the record of human achievement is still so heroic as to be almost incredible. In their own image, men make their communities and mold the political pattern of their

lives. The will cannot always remove obstructions. But if the will weakens, then there is no way through.

Admittedly, circumstance does much to determine whether a particular Society shall move forward, toward the Celestial Country, or remain behind in the City of Destruction, "for want of a change in mind and will." John Bunyan personified the moral factors in his immortal allegory of *The Pilgrim's Progress*. Arnold Toynbee extended this classification to make a comprehensive examination of handicaps and stimuli in his consideration of "Challenge-and-Response."¹

There are obstacles, internal and external, so tremendous that the individual scarcely seems culpable when, like Pliable, he turns back apprehensively from the Slough of Despond. Nevertheless, there are others, like Christian, who persevere. The countless instances of weakness are offset by the many illustrations of strength. A wealth of evidence indicates that human failure is as often the result of an inadequate as of an overpowering challenge. Adversity itself is an incentive.

At no place and in no time has the response to challenge been more pronounced and more persistent than on the American Continent since the sixteenth century, between the latitudes that now bound the United States. Undoubtedly response is partly due to climatic conditions that encourage a maximum employment of human energy. It is partly due to a long heritage of voluntary co-operation, habitual in this land ever since the first colonists formed self-governing societies for their pilgrimage to a New World. Finally, Americans have responded successfully to challenge because their institutions were designed to facilitate that achievement.

Our study has attempted to analyze the deeper political reasons for American accomplishment. And consideration of the various causes has served to emphasize the significance of the result. So far, maximum challenge has always brought adequate response from the people in whom the power of this Republic rests.

There is no really convincing reason for discouragement over the confusion that has followed the disaster of the two World

¹ *A Study of History*, Vol. II.

Wars. Rather, it should be stimulating to a United States which has gone soft in many ways. But victory in the struggle ahead will not be automatic. It will be a problem of brains as well as brawn. It will be a matter of reanimating the ideals of the Republic, rather than of denouncing those that oppose it. And such a renaissance requires an individual rebirth; a continuous effort of self-improvement which no bureaucracy can ever direct or enforce, because it is a matter of personal self-government.

The spiritual strength of the Republic will not be automatically or mechanically renewed. Spring will return to this land of liberty, not with the vernal equinox, but only with the vitality of restored ideals.

II

It was a penetrating mind that first described the early stages of Russian-American antagonism as a "cold war." For the doctrines of Communism have the chill of ruthlessness, and those of laissez-faire capitalism are devoid of the warmth of human kindness. Yet it would be disastrous to view this rivalry as nothing more than a conflict of materialistic philosophies. We know that the true Russia is bigger than Karl Marx, and we know also that the American Republic is not immured by Wall Street. The ideals and traditions of the Republic are not primarily economic. The means which it employs are capitalistic. But the means are not the end. Good will counts heavily in the American balance sheet.

The United States is not unique in world history merely because of its unparalleled material prosperity, still less because of its modest cultural accomplishment. What makes the Republic distinctive is the confidence that it places in Man's ability to plan for himself; its deep-rooted mistrust of governmental planning.

Of course there is nothing distinctively American in the belief "that men may rise on steppingstones of their dead selves to higher things." This was the moving principle of Athenian thought; this is the deathless element in the appeal of Christianity. The virtue of the Republic is not that it originated the idea of self-improvement, but that it embodies a political system directed to that end.

The individual's ambition to advance himself, by personal effort, is the most obvious and deep-rooted of American characteristics. This restless aspiration is certainly closely associated with the pure spirit of liberty. Indeed, we have suggested that this spiritual restlessness *is* liberty, from which all our material blessings flow. To trammel that spirit, arbitrarily, is to strike at something fundamental and basic to the American identity.

Hostility to regimentation is written into the Constitution. But these formal limitations on arbitrary government are the result and not the cause of an attitude that is expressed in our social as well as our political institutions. Except for slaves, during the period when the practice of slavery was accepted, the satirical exhortation of Charles Dickens, in *The Chimes*, had no cogency, and therefore no sting, for Americans:

O let us love our occupations,
Bless the squire and his relations,
Live upon our daily rations
And always know our proper stations.

It is not proper, but actually gross impropriety by American standards, to recognize any "station" as more than a temporary halting place. The strength of the country—its energy, its vitality, its dauntless will to accomplish—is simply a manifestation of this dynamic attitude. But restlessness can also be a source of weakness. And the less the imposition of status, the greater the dependence of the individual on guiding principles of some kind. Without this concentration his life has no focus, is literally dissipated, and becomes a mere kaleidoscope of essentially purposeless activity.

Many criticisms of American customs and practices may be disregarded as inconsequential. The boisterous, untidy, aggressive equalitarianism of the country is not indicative of a lack of culture, but represents the formative stage of a new culture in which even crude self-assertion is deemed preferable to artificial status. In the republican scale of values the dignity of Lincoln was not lessened by uncouth manners, and the shallowness of Beau Brum-

mel was not concealed by the meticulous adjustment of a cravat. Always the test of worth in America has been a matter of objective, and cultivation of appearance has never served to compensate for absence of aspiration. But there is little or no respect for the man whose objective is revealed as one of mere self-aggrandizement. For such aggrandizement is at the expense of others, and therefore antisocial—by contrast with that self-development which enlarges personality in recognizing and expanding the interest of others.

The American experiment boldly leaves most of this important field of human behavior to individual discretion. The State in this country traditionally demands only a certain rudimentary schooling and the observance of a few traffic lights. Relatively little is *verboden*. Therefore, American society has always been the more insistent on conventional conduct, because Society knows that controls are necessary but is antagonistic to their application by the State. Supervision of the individual by Society, however, has long since ceased to be dictatorial, with the result that the individual in America is at liberty to develop his own philosophy of life in a manner that seems reckless to those reared in the tradition of status. If we were more aware of the unusual nature of this form of civilization, we would also be more aware of what it entails in the matter of personal contribution.

Clearly this Republic demands of its citizens something more than, and quite other than, industrial and commercial enterprise. Indeed, if we are concerned with "free enterprise" in only the narrow sense of the term, then much that is vital to the Republic is dead already. Self-aggrandizement is not at all the same thing as self-development. The most damaging charge that has been leveled at the capitalist system does not come from the communist camp. It is the essentially Christian indictment of the materialistic concept of free enterprise. "For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also."² We cannot minimize the validity of the accusation that industry "has come to hold a position of exclusive predominance among human interests, which no single

² Matthew 6:21.

interest, and least of all the provision of the material means of existence, is fit to occupy.”³

III

That searching criticism, by a thoughtful English Socialist, is not easily dismissed. It helps to explain why the British Labour Party achieved political power. The appeal of Socialism, especially to the young, is not in its own virtue so much as in the deficiency of capitalism in spiritual qualities. The demonstrable advantages of the free market are not fully persuasive to those who are repelled by materialism. And the finer the intelligence, the more strongly it will revolt against attempted “conditioning” by techniques of high-pressure commercial advertising.

Even if they were less pronounced, the defects of an acquisitive Society should be frankly considered and confronted. For these defects serve to divert the attention of honest idealists from the far greater danger to the individual that lurks behind the architectural drawing of a benevolent Welfare State. Reliance upon the fancied panacea of State planning makes socialistic doctrine worse than futile. It also inclines the individual Socialist to be the unwitting, and often unwilling, tool of the more subtle techniques of Communism. There would have been less of this unintentional preparatory work for Communism, if the Pharisees of capitalism had not been so narrowly self-righteous.

Under our republican form of government the blessings of liberty have on the whole been widely distributed and deeply appreciated. In consequence, socialistic doctrine made relatively little headway in American thinking, even while it was capturing that of Western Europe. Much of the credit for this must go to the conscientious leaders of American business who, despite all efforts to discredit them as a class, have in the main been primarily interested in placing their creative and administrative talents at the service of Society. Through the exercise of these talents huge fortunes have certainly been amassed, and often not too scrupulously. But, just as notably, these same fortunes have been chan-

³ R. H. Tawney, *The Acquisitive Society* (English Edition), p. 241.

neled into educational, cultural, and philanthropic undertakings, to an extent for which there is no parallel in any other country.

The European experience, primarily because of the feudal background, has been different. Under primogeniture it was not even possible to "alienate" an estate in order to endow a college or charitable institution. So one must conclude that the socialistic evolution was all but inevitable in Europe. There, the State arose as an instrument in which power *had* to be strongly centralized in order to crush the pretensions of privileged Estates.

The centralization of government as supreme overlord was to be expected when the nobility formed one Estate, the clergy a second, and when "the people" as a whole were lumped together in a *Tiers État*. This arbitrary and indeed indefensible arrangement was fertile soil for Rousseau's conception of an omnipotent democratic State, based upon "natural right" and presumably responsive to something glibly called the "general will."

Socialism was the political doctrine to be expected from the condition in which a "lower class," frankly labeled as such, was immutably subordinated to established privilege. "What is the Third Estate?" asked the famous pamphlet of the Abbé Sieyès, as the clouds of the French Revolution gathered in all their ominous density. Sieyès answered his own question with the extremism which extremism itself always so tragically induces. The Third Estate, he said, is "Everything!" Then: "What has it been until now in the political order?" Sieyès' own answer: "Nothing!" Finally: "What does the Third Estate demand?" "To be Something!"

Karl Marx merely elaborated the third answer of the Abbé Sieyès, and logically. If the Third Estate—or "Proletariat," as Marx preferred to say—is "Everything," then it may and properly should demand to *be* everything: "Dictatorship of the Proletariat."

The tragedy of Europe is illuminated by Sieyès' oversimplified rhetoric, as developed with less political caution and more intellectual courage by Marx. This revolutionary assumption, with regard to the Third Estate, suggests why unlimited power was given to representative assemblies; why democratic States then

became socialistic States; why socialistic States finally fell easy victims to the new concept of a supranational Communist dictatorship. Napoleon and Hitler and Stalin are not just curious or vicious historical accidents. They are the natural products of a definite sequence of political thinking. We shall have such products in this country, also, unless our political theory is maintained on the wholly different plane to which the founders of the Republic directed it. Even so, the American Republic will not endure, unless its citizens fight consistently against that monopolization of power implied by the assumption that a single Estate—Nobility or Clergy; Business or Labor—is “Everything.”

Fortunately that vicious premise has always not merely seemed false, but, until recently, has also been alien to the great body of American thought. Here there has never been a first or second Estate, so that for Americans there is no reality to the argument that a nonexistent Third Estate is “everything.” Certainly there was slavery under the Republic, long after that institution ceased to exist in Western Europe. But very few Abolitionists ever argued that those in servitude were properly “everything” in the political order, and therefore should be placed in supreme power when emancipated. Indeed, the essential decency of the country recoiled in horror when, during what Claude G. Bowers called *The Tragic Era*, the former slaves were temporarily awarded legislative power in the southern states. Republican leaders themselves were appalled by the coincident Negro proclamation that “Jesus Christ was a Republican.”⁴

This miserable postscript to the Civil War actually emphasized the validity of the Republic’s fundamental canon—that emancipation by act of government always fails, unless balanced by individual emancipation from folly and excess. Europe has had similar horrifying saturnalia. It is the only word to describe the degeneracy into which the French Revolution slipped. But the history and tradition of Europe are such that men have continued to be more disposed to rely on arbitrary status, and less disposed to emphasize personal responsibility, as a solvent of their difficulties.

⁴ Bowers, *op. cit.*, p. 361.

The greatest danger to the Republic lies in the increasing tendency to abandon the American in favor of the European political philosophy. The fundamental lesson of revolutions needs to be learned again. It is that a concentration of political power which aims to liberate men from oppression almost invariably ends in oppression as great or greater than that which is removed. Our own Revolution, for reasons which have been set forth, is the exception that proves this rule.

IV

The chain of events that tends to produce dictatorships can be generalized, starting at any place, in any period, when circumstances have placed people in a condition where they have "nothing to lose but their chains."

Then a demand for governmental reform arises, stimulated by eloquent men who emphasize abuses and promise improvement—if they are placed "in power." By that phrase is meant unfettered control of the machinery of the State, as the repository of physical force.

With bows and arrows, or with ballots, or bullets—the difference in procedure is important but does not necessarily make any difference in the outcome—the existing, intolerable government is overturned, and the reformers are installed. To carry out their promises these new rulers must then proceed to enlarge the powers of government. And what they give to the favored will, for the most part, be taken from the disfavored. The acquisition of political power facilitates a redistribution of accumulated wealth. It does nothing—of itself—to create new wealth.

But deprivation of the privileged in behalf of the underprivileged is almost certain to be a disillusioning process for the latter. Some of the redistributed wealth evaporates; some of it sticks to the fingers of those who arrange the transfer; some of it is necessarily taken by the essentially unproductive machinery of redistribution—by the military, taxgatherers, administrators and the like. So only a fraction of the generous assurances made before the change of government will actually be fulfilled.

In consequence, there is disillusionment among those who have gained little or nothing, promoted actively or surreptitiously by those who have lost a great deal. And after a time the revolutionary government will itself be turned out, unless it is disposed to suppress the opposition by naked force. If willing to do this, the government is already a dictatorship, without authority in the correct sense of the word. And if the revolutionary government has achieved power by force, or trickery, its leaders will be strongly disposed to use the same devices to retain their grip on power. Therefore, the *method* of change—whether by *coup d'état* or free election—becomes a matter of fundamental importance.

The unchanging character of this cycle has long been recognized by political philosophers, and the effort to make its operation less negative has followed three different lines, leaving the Anarchists out, not because their political thought is unimportant but because it mistakenly denies any validity to the State as an institution.

In generalities, there is first the conservative attitude. This reasons that conditions are not really as bad as pictured by “agitators,” and that abuses in the existing order are at least preferable to the risks of revolutionary overturn. Such an attitude is naturally pronounced among older people and among those whose personal situation is more comfortable than that of the majority of mankind. Those who are naturally lethargic are also habitually conservative, regardless of personal circumstance. Moreover, extreme conservatives are even disposed against peaceful change through the agency of elections, because they doubt the wisdom of a choice determined by counting noses.

In the second place, there is the political reformer, who reasons that the risks of revolution are outweighed in balance by evident evil in the conditions of the period. The reformer is admirably impatient with injustice, but is usually disposed to believe that improvement can be imposed by governmental fiat. Thus, the political reformer is more likely to be a Socialist, placing great confidence in the coercive power of the State, than a Radical who really seeks the root of social ailments. To the reformer, cure is

generally more important than diagnosis, and reflection does not seem to be a prerequisite for action. Therefore, the more extreme reformers, for reasons quite other than those which impel the Conservative, also tend to mistrust elections, which seem a slow and uncertain method of correcting evils.

The third general category is that to which the title of Liberal properly applies. It is a middle of the road position, and, as we have pointed out, one in which the emotional factor is subordinated; therefore a position that is not easy for men to maintain. The instinct of the Liberal is neither to defend the *status quo*, nor to assume that change is necessarily progress. He seeks to solve the present problem in the light of principles that he knows to be eternal, and according to methods that he believes will be practical. Having faith in mankind, the Liberal logically favors the representative form of government. The method of election, by universal adult suffrage, on balance seems to him the most practical way of attaining and maintaining representative government.

Confronted with the political cycle outlined above, the Conservative, the Reformer and the Liberal all three exhibit characteristic reactions. The Conservative opposes governmental change; the Reformer welcomes it; the Liberal favors such change as seems to him necessary to advance the establishment of some tested moral principle.

This means that while the Liberal is more slow than the Reformer to indorse change, he is more sure than the Reformer to make it effective. And it means that while the Liberal may be as opposed to a particular change as the Conservative, he is less likely than the Conservative to regard political alteration as inherently undesirable. When a revolution succeeds, the Conservative is likely to become a Reformer—a counterrevolutionist. And the Reformer is then likely to become a Conservative, defending the new system regardless of its shortcomings.

But the Liberal remains a Liberal. He continues to be as critical of the new government as of the one that has been ousted. He knows that the fundamental difficulty does not focus in opinions, whether of the Right or of the Left. The Liberal knows that the

one enduring political folly is to concentrate in the hands of ambitious men power that they do not have the restraint to exercise wisely. He knows what Saint Augustine recalled at a time not unlike the present—when Rome had been sacked by Alaric and his Goths—that the greatest glory of any civilization is to accomplish what concentration of power must always render difficult: “To spare the lowly and strike down the proud.”⁵

V

So, in the political cycle, the Liberal has focused his attention on the problem of how change can most satisfactorily be made innocuous. It is not a matter of opposing change because “things are not so bad.” It is not a matter of welcoming a turnover because “it’s time for a change.” The problem is how to determine, *first* that there is an intellectually impressive case in behalf of any proposed political change, and *second* that the judgment of citizens can be honestly exercised in deciding the issue.

It is the remarkable skill with which this problem has been resolved in the United States that makes the Republic so worthy of appreciation. Of course, the constitutional guaranties of freedom of speech and press have not insured that spoken opinion shall be temperate, or that written opinion shall be well informed. But they *have* insured freedom of expression to opinions of every kind, and only out of that clash can men hope for anything approximating truth. The Republic bravely assumes that individuals can, on the whole, discriminate between sense and nonsense; that all of the people cannot be fooled all of the time.

If this assumption is granted, then the device of free elections, conducted at regular terms, in a manner that takes account of varying local circumstance, is as effective as any method that can be designed for the choice of representative lawmakers. Again the axiom is that the individual desires to discriminate intelligently. Election procedure in the United States certainly does not insure that legislators shall be enlightened, any more than freedom of speech insures that public utterances will be illuminating.

⁵ *Parcere subjectis et debellare superbos.* Virgil, *Aeneid*: Bk. VI, l. 853.

But no system of government can improve the quality of the individuals whom it governs. This they must do for themselves, with the aid of an Authority which is higher than that of the State. Political government can make it possible for men to secure the blessings of liberty. But self-improvement is, and must always continue to be, an individual matter.

Free speech and free elections are great achievements of the liberal mind—achievements that have always been bitterly opposed, that have been partially won for mankind through centuries of trial and error, at the cost of patient, resolute uphill struggle. But, of themselves, they are not enough. There must be other, positive, restraints upon the power of the State. For if these are lacking, it will be found that men unwittingly surrender their hard-won gains. And even when the power of the State is restrained, and held in check by an independent and wise judiciary, it is still continuously essential that men learn to restrain themselves. We “rest all our political experiments on the capacity of mankind for self-government.”

The Liberal is one who recognizes that self-restraint is more desirable than imposed coercion. And the Republic is unique in history because its form of government is based upon and embodies that belief. Among Americans, past and present, the proportion of those who can properly claim to think and act as liberals is probably no greater than could be found elsewhere. The human seed, as scattered by nature, seems fairly uniform. And there is no single line of human thought or endeavor in which an honest and well-informed American is likely to claim that his countrymen have shown themselves biologically exceptional.

But the American soil was more clement toward liberalism than that of any other country. And that soil was first cultivated at a time and under conditions particularly favorable for the growth of liberal doctrine. To emphasize that point this study has explored beyond the American frontier, as it exists politically and historically. And as one reflects upon the role of this Republic in history, one must humbly conclude that within it lie some of the attributes of Saint Augustine's City of God. For all its

worldliness there is in the United States something not of this world. Remove that element, and the experiment of the Republic loses the attributes that have really made it great.

Others have sensed this—more readily than many Americans. Sir Henry Maine, as one example, was not the type of man to praise lightly or lavishly. He could refer bitinglly to “the nauseous grandiloquence of the American panegyric historians.” But he could also discern, in the same essay, that: “The Constitution of the United States of America is much the most important political instrument of modern times.” And, writing in 1885, Maine could conclude that the success of American political institutions has “arisen rather from skillfully applying the curb to popular impulses than from giving them the rein. While the British Constitution has been insensibly transforming itself into a popular government surrounded on all sides by difficulties, the American Federal Constitution has proved that, nearly a century ago, several expedients were discovered by which some of these difficulties may be greatly mitigated and some altogether overcome.”⁶

The real reason for the success of those “expedients” is that they were not merely expedients. They were an application of essentially Christian principles to the practical problems of Man in Society.

VI

It was the triumph of the liberal mind, reaching its highest political attainment in the writing of the Constitution of the United States, to break the vicious circle that until then had always restored dictatorship in the train of revolution against dictatorship. This accomplishment, however, will not be sustained unless its full significance is more widely appreciated. Of late years deification of the State has destroyed liberalism in countries where it was always weak, and threatens its survival in the United States, where it is still strong. The threat is the more dangerous because it is advanced under the mask of a spurious “liberalism.” Those who have no training in political theory succumb easily to this deception.

⁶ *Popular Government*, Preface, pp. xi-xii.

Nothing that advances the power of the State over Society, thereby subjecting the individual to the State, can properly be called liberal. The "nationalization" of an industry could possibly be advocated sometimes on economic grounds, but never philosophically by those who believe in human liberty. Other factors aside, the mere increase in numbers on the governmental payroll itself endangers the continuation of representative government.

An ever expanding bureaucracy ties the personal interest of a great army of jobholders to the political fortunes of the group managing the State. This group is in turn encouraged by the size of its mercenary following to speak with increasing assurance in the name of "the people." The stage is then set for the entrance of the monolithic party which seeks to absorb the power in the people, identifying party welfare with general welfare. When that essentially dictatorial party has once seized power, in the modern State, it will not permit itself to be dislodged. On the contrary, this monstrous perversion of party government spreads like a cancerous growth through the whole fabric of Society. The social units—church, school, trade union, co-operative, employers' association, professional organization, athletic club, and eventually even the family itself—are "regimented" into the "totalitarian" State. Society in all its aspects is subordinated by the State, and the individual finds that his entire life is directed and confined by State controls.

But the State is an artificial creation. People lived before States were formed, and people go on living after States have been destroyed. For two centuries the people of Alsace could be shifted back and forth, from French to German sovereignty, with reasonable happiness under either political allegiance. That was because their natural dependence was on social institutions, which can prosper regardless of the pattern on the flag that waves over them. Only when rival States destroy each other, after first sucking the blood of social institutions in vampire fashion, is the individual left helpless amid a rubble of the homely attributes that made his life.

Then the poor creature, regardless of his language, his color,

or the measurements of his skull, is easy prey for Communism. That supertotalitarian doctrine appeals to him, not because of his nationality but because of his humanity. It provides an attachment to which he can cling when the State, after it has destroyed Society, has itself "withered away." To those who have seen the fabric of their lives destroyed, their social institutions undermined, their State humiliated, the appeal of Communism is extremely potent. Its hypnotic effect will not be exorcised either by economic homilies, or by threats of atomic warfare. Only a greater and more vital religion can exorcise an avenging passion, which is the more resolute because it has been nourished on despair. And those who are without faith themselves need not expect to win converts by doling out dollars or mobilizing armies. Such measures may be useful to support a faith already vital. They can never rekindle a flame which has expired.

VII

The flame of the Republic has not expired. But it burns more dimly than it did. And now that two States which are more than States stand face to face across a prostrate world, the spirit that animates American civilization must be revived. This should be the easier because there is nothing occult about the American way. Its underlying theory is as simple as that of a gasoline engine. All that is necessary is to apply to matters political the same objective, unemotional, critical faculty that Americans utilize instinctively in matters mechanical.

Such application will soon convince us that much of our confusion stems from our failure to understand and guard against the dangerous degenerative tendencies inherent in democratic action. "There is no word," says Sir Henry Maine in his caustic essay on *The Nature of Democracy*, "about which a denser mist of vague language, and a larger heap of loose metaphors, has collected." The force of that observation is certainly not lessened by the skillful manner in which the Communists have exploited the American tendency to speak of "democracy" as though it were simultaneously an objective, a procedure, and a panacea.

Because of the general misinterpretation of this word symbol, it cannot be too strongly emphasized that "democracy"—reduced to political compass—is merely a form of government that enlists the participation of many people as opposed to a few. Therefore, the more democratic the system of government, the more insistently it must stipulate that political decisions shall be made by a majority, in which the most careless and uninformed opinion has equal weight with that which is thoughtful and closely reasoned.

Unless its natural tendencies are very carefully restrained, a system of this nature is inevitably suicidal. Unless the philosophic importance of "states' rights" are recognized, emphasis on popular government is certain to enlarge the functions of centralized government. And deference to majority opinion is equally certain to make aspirants for political office promise more than they are able to perform. Thus hypocrisy becomes a characteristic of democratic government, while a steady proliferation of governmental agencies is its functional consequence.

This means that the direction of the State becomes simultaneously less forthright and more powerful. As the centralized State gains in power, the management of its affairs becomes more attractive to ambitious men, who become more unscrupulous not merely because of their ambition, but also because it is almost impossible to placate a majority without being unscrupulous. Thus the disinclination to abandon office, when once secured, becomes stronger. And the most practical way to remain in office is to identify one's party with the public welfare. This, of course, involves governmental "publicity."

At the outset, governmental publicity is always justified on the grounds of "informing" the taxpayer on the manner in which his money is spent. It seems unnecessary for bureaucracy to emphasize that the tax rate must be again increased—a very little—merely to provide this information. Then it is discovered that the information itself can scarcely explain, unless it also defends, the doings in the bureaucratic labyrinth. Moreover, if there is unfriendly criticism from abroad, the government should properly have a "Voice"—not for itself, of course, but for the Nation,

with which to answer back. So, almost imperceptibly, the day of the "Ministry of Enlightenment" is at hand.⁷

Governmental propaganda does not proceed far before it begins to propagandize for the party that controls the machinery of government. When that happens, tyranny is just around the corner. In the United States, prior to the New Deal, administrative officers really regarded themselves as such. They had nothing of a revolutionary character to put over, and throughout the country reformist sentiment was concentrating on specific abuses. Moreover, any drift toward governmental dictatorship was checked by the constitutional provisions restricting popular government in the United States. The Fifteenth, Seventeenth, and Nineteenth Amendments certainly weakened these restrictions, while the Sixteenth Amendment, giving Congress the power to tax incomes, paved the way for an enormous development of centralized authority. These changes, however, were of themselves insufficient to break down the federal structure, to which the Democratic Party continued to give at least nominal allegiance until its national convention of 1948.

In Europe, on the other hand, a definite theory and philosophy of governmental aggrandizement had been entrenched for centuries. Private enterprise had long been denounced as something inherently evil. That "public" ownership would somehow prove essentially more moral was blandly assumed. Even before the New Deal, doctrinaire European Socialism was making headway in the United States, especially in allegedly "intellectual" circles. And for the gains made by diluted Marxism, there were two major reasons. One was the general failure of the colleges and universities to give any adequate instruction in American governmental theory, as distinct from structure. The other reason was the connected American tendency to regard Western European political thinking as being somehow more "advanced" than that of the United States. To these causes must be attributed the conclusion that it was an American "duty" to ally this country

⁷ For an important study of developing administrative propaganda in the United States, see "Reports of the Committee on Expenditures in the Executive Departments," 80th Congress, 2nd Session.

with Western Europe against Central Europe in the essentially feudal conflicts among the Nation-States of that Continent.

Because these feudal conflicts were also futile, in respect to the true objectives of this Republic, it became necessary to bamboozle the American people with emotional slogans calculated to baffle analytical thinking. The most absurd, and therefore the most damaging of all, was the one that declared it an American purpose "to make the world safe for democracy." Nobody, certainly not President Woodrow Wilson as its sponsor, has ever explained what this phrase means. But the damaging suggestion was that the American system of government is undesirable. For obviously the outstanding characteristic of our whole system of checks and balances is its intent to make the United States safe *from*—not for—democracy.

So the natural centralizing tendencies of political bossism came to be strengthened, in the Republic, by theoretical advocacy of the Welfare State, as it had developed in Europe. For the first time, in this country, a considerable stream of opinion began to run in the direction of governmental tyranny. The stream grew to a torrent with the suffering and confusion engendered by the depression that brought the New Deal to power. Even without another war, always a potent means for expanding centralized authority, the roots of the American tradition were being eroded. By 1936 this tendency had gone so far that President Roosevelt could attempt to subordinate the judiciary to the executive, and could simultaneously say to a member of the House Ways and Means Committee, in words that might well have been used by Charles I: "I hope your committee will not permit doubt as to Constitutionality, however reasonable, to block the suggested legislation."⁸

Apparently the long travail of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries had been in vain. Apparently the American Revolution had failed, less swiftly but as surely, as the two earlier attempts in England. It seemed as though the Republic had merely served to elongate the vicious circle that restores dictatorship after a rev-

⁸ Quoted by Garet Garrett, *The Revolution Was*, p. 23.

olution designed to overthrow dictatorship. It seemed as though Alexander Hamilton had spoken hollow rhetoric in saying: "It belongs to us to vindicate the honor of the human race."

VIII

Now, in a way that was certainly unexpected by the American people, the chance for recovery has come. And the seemingly irrelative manner of its coming must make men feel that the Republic really has that "protection of Divine Providence" on which the signers of the Declaration placed "firm reliance."

World War II had three great historical results, written so large that they became almost immediately obvious to all. In the first place, the civilization of Western Europe was so thoroughly blasted as to eliminate any lingering feeling of American cultural inferiority. It is impossible to be deferential, as contrasted with sympathetic, to one's dependents. In the second place, the United States became simultaneously conscious of its material strength and its spiritual weakness. The duality of the discovery was salutary. It was impossible for Americans to be arrogant about winning a war in which their representative government proved utterly incompetent to make its stated ideals effective. In the third place, the sharply contrasting success of the Communist leadership had a humiliating but helpfully invigorating effect on American thinking. To use a much abused word, it really became necessary to "evaluate" our political instruction. So, fundamental reconsideration of our educational practices, and of the philosophic thought that alone gives animation to education, was certain to result from the celerity with which the United States proceeded to lose almost all the long-range objectives for which its people had so gallantly fought.

Between these three results of World War II there is an important linkage. This connection must be seen if the postwar disillusion of the American people is to prove constructive, and if the lives and treasure that were so lavishly expended are not to be altogether wasted. There is a moral underlying the crash of Europe; the blundering of America; the expansion of Asiatic

tyranny as directed from Moscow. And that moral emerges from the analysis of this book.

For historical reasons that have been outlined, the civilization of Europe has never—since the fall of Rome—been truly liberal. It has never subordinated political considerations to the spiritual development of Man as a creature endowed with an immortal soul. The civilization of Europe has focused on political status. And for over a thousand years the major European effort has been concentrated on making men conform to politically enforceable status—first under the Estate, then under the State, now under Communism.

Because of the feudal heritage, private enterprise of every sort has long been regarded in much of Europe with suspicion. The very name of “bourgeois” has always been flavored with contempt. The “middle class” was suspect alike by those to whom status assigned either more or less privilege. Sir Henry Maine discerned the absurdity of this long since, when he observed that: “The movement of the progressive societies has hitherto been a movement from Status to Contract.”⁹ The word “hitherto” was prescient. Maine was well aware that in Great Britain the progressive movement could easily become retrogressive—from contract back to status. And that has happened.

The law of free contract is, of course, the law of the free market. Both arose in response to the effort to reconcile liberty and authority. In the Republic, under liberal leadership, this reconciliation was made effective. Elsewhere, a starkly reactionary movement, away from contract and back to status, prevails. This means the loss of freedom; the triumph of force masquerading as authority.

Liberalism must give primary importance to productive enterprise, because without production the most humane theories of distribution are meaningless. But for centuries the European producer was satirized as something almost uncouth. An absentee landowner was paradoxically more “cultivated” than those who actually cultivated his soil; to take royalties from coal production

⁹ *Ancient Law* (Pollock ed., 1930), p. 182.

was socially more distinguished than to extract this important mineral; to chase a fox, in the company of one's peers, was to reach a pinnacle of social attainment to which no "tradesman" could properly aspire. So Monsieur Jourdain could be ridiculed as *Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme*, and Old Jolyon Forsyte, "in whom a desperate honesty welled up at times," felt compelled to insist that his pig-raising forebears were "yeomen." And "he would repeat the word 'yeomen' as if it afforded him consolation."¹⁰

In consequence, European liberalism was never really sure of itself. It was always oppressed by status. First the Estates showed ill-concealed contempt toward all who were not born to the purple. When this became intolerable, the State was called in to control the Estate. But in the process the centralized State itself assumed the right to assign a subordinate role to everyone. In both cases status ruled, and the producer, the necessary prototype of liberalism, was subordinated to status.

Under such regimentation, whether feudal or socialistic, liberalism must languish. For the liberal must be sure of himself and must be free from status. The creed is not to be confused either with the condescension of an enlightened aristocracy or with the well-meaning tyranny of a bureaucracy run rampant. The man who accepts a title that is not functional cannot be a true Liberal, because in claiming nobility he tacitly asserts a fictitious superiority to his fellowman. And even the moderate Socialist must mistakenly assume that the State has a magical power to make men better than they are. Americans understand this instinctively. The idea of honoring a Lincoln by calling him "Sir Abraham" is repulsive. The idea of an economy stabilized by governmental control of wages is almost equally grotesque.

Status is unquestionably pleasant to a certain type of mind. Americans are by no means immune to its appeal. There were many who hated to relinquish status at the time of the Revolution. Many sought to retain it, through the institution of slavery and in other ways, under the Republic. Through monopoly power,

¹⁰ John Galsworthy, *The Forsyte Saga*, Part I, Ch. I.

both organized Business and organized Labor have tried to recreate the privileged Estate. Many would now like to see a new form of status established in America, through a governing elite or managerial class of "planners." They are the most subtle fellow travelers of Communism.

The American tragedy lies in this continued flirtation with the seductive principle of status, which is merely a pleasant name for slavery. The Russian triumph centers in the skill and determination with which it has subordinated all the forms that status may take to the single centralized dictatorial status of a governing elite. This is seemingly democratic, because any man with ability can hope to become a member of that elite. It is intelligent, because it discerns the artificial nature of nationalism. It is powerful, because for all its social waste Communism can focus a physical strength greater than that of any single nation, excepting only our own. It is ruthless, because Communism has religious fanaticism without Christian moderation, and because its respect for the individual is limited to the service that he can give within the status assigned to him.

The rise to power of this philosophy has at last shaken many Americans out of their complacency and their pitiful concern with the purely material advantages of contract. The insidious undermining of liberalism is resulting in a re-examination of the principles on which liberalism must take its stand. The effort to destroy Christianity has stimulated reconsideration of the truths for which Christ stood. It is reasonable to expect that this maximum challenge will produce a maximum response.

IX

In his essay on "Self-Reliance" Emerson tells us that: "Travelling is a fool's paradise. We owe to our first journeys the discovery that place is nothing." Thus it is with the difficult journey which we now conclude. It has led us back to our original assertion. This Republic is distinctive in all history for one outstanding reason. Its government is based upon, and is designed

to strengthen, a moral code of honorable individual conduct. In Emerson's words:

It is only as a man puts off from himself all external support, and stands alone, that I see him to be strong and to prevail.

As with its people, so with the United States. To depend on others is a sign of weakness, not of strength. To demand security, from one's own or other governments, is to forfeit liberty. The strongest country in Europe is little Switzerland, which never formed a military alliance and never submitted to domestic tyranny. The empires around it rise and fall. The Swiss Republic, strong and clean as its snowcapped Alps, endures.

The United States has developed a civilization of its own, and no apologies are needed. This civilization owes much to Europe, but it is different from that of Europe. Owing something also to Asia and to Africa, the American way of life is nevertheless basically dissimilar from anything those continents have produced. In this country men have stood alone, unfettered by status, unhampered by the State, contracting with each other in an essentially free Society. So standing, men have grown strong, and have prevailed. They have prevailed because it is only when Man stands alone that he rises above himself, hears the still small voice of conscience, and hearkens to the Authority of his Creator. Then, paradoxically, he is no longer alone. "And yet I am not alone, because the Father is with me."¹¹

The American civilization is neither mature nor fully stabilized. Its pains, therefore, are those of growth, not dissolution; of strength, not weakness. This civilization will continue to grow as long as it is based on the assumption that people are generally honorable and trustworthy, simply because of their humanity.

That is what most Americans mean when they loosely use the word "democracy." Of course, a faith in human goodness is not at all the same thing as democracy, which, as an abstraction, means the "rule of the people" and, as a political system, means the unrestricted majority rule that our Constitution so carefully forbids. But a belief that Man is honorable for himself is Christian

¹¹ John 16:32.

and liberal and inspiring. It is democratic to the extent that it opposes the privileges and restrictions of status. And for a civilization based on that belief there will be a bright future, so long as the people retain the power that is in them.

Because it has faith in the individual, American civilization is hostile to any seizure of power from the people, and is particularly hostile to the seizure of this power by centralized government. From the assumption that Man is honorable comes the conclusion that self-government is desirable. To assist self-government the American is expected willingly to accept the conventions and reasonable regulations of a free Society. But he is also expected to oppose resolutely all arbitrary government by the State. The power is in the people. They must retain it.

The average American is, at least vaguely, conscious of the importance of the tremendous Revolution, finally accomplished in this country, whereby men threw off the slavery of status. He believes that other peoples can similarly achieve freedom, if they so desire. But the most that any government can do is to set people "at liberty." The State can stabilize the condition of freedom, and that is its sole excuse for being.

Liberty is from God, and men must develop their liberty from within. It cannot be doled out by governmental agencies. To create a political dictatorship in America, on the specious pretense of liberating others from their particular dictatorships, would be to destroy the whole achievement of the American Revolution. And that is the way in which the Republic is most likely to be destroyed. That is what Washington meant when, in the Farewell Address, he asked: "Why quit our own to stand upon foreign ground?"

In the field of charity, of companionship, of trade and intellectual intercourse, no ground is foreign to Americans and no man is a foreigner. There has never been a people whose natural instincts are less "isolationist." Mixed blood and mingled origins dispose Americans to think well of men as men. They are happily not disposed to think well of governments as governments. The fundamental American faith responds to association of men—

everywhere. It has no confidence in associations of governments—anywhere.

For essentially the same reason, Americans mistrust empire. Common sense tells us that the Republic was never designed to run an empire. Imperialism requires centralization of power, and all the political institutions of our federal union were carefully planned to make that centralization difficult. To become an empire, the United States must cease to be a Republic. Of course, this could happen here, as it happened in Rome. But it is hard to detect any popular enthusiasm for the imperial role. Sent overseas, the chief desire of the average American boy is to do the assigned job as quickly as possible and then “come home.”

One may believe that this homing instinct will continue, as long as home is significant to Americans. And if it ceases to be significant, we are lost. For after all, the homely things are those in which the American people take most pride; of which they have most to offer. It is not accidental that the outstanding esthetic contribution of the Republic has been in the field of domestic architecture. Probably there is no American ambition that runs deeper and is more pervasive than that of “making a home.”

And that is what the student of American history and American institutions would infer, even if he had never set foot upon American soil. For in the home are first instilled those lessons of self-government and of voluntary co-operation for the common good which the Republic expects of its citizens; without which the Republic will not endure. It is the home that first molds the conduct of the individual. It is in the home that he first learns to appreciate the nature of liberty. It is the home, and not the palace of potentate or proconsul, that has determined and will continue to determine the character of American civilization.

In recent years Americans have been abroad, in more than the literal sense. We can stay abroad, or we can come home. We shall never make the world safe for democracy. But we can keep and continuously strengthen the power in the people, here at home. Only thus will the light of this Republic continue to shine before mankind, as a beacon unique in history.