

## Responsibility for Finland

A POLITICAL ENTITY cannot be described as either moral or immoral. Ethical standards apply only to persons, for they are based upon the behavior of individuals living in the social order. To speak of Roman cruelty, for instance, as if it were a characteristic of the empire and not of Romans, is nonsensical. For the State, or any other collective entity, is a man-made robot, without sentience, and therefore without will. Hence, it is impossible to apply standards of conduct to the State per se; judgment on acts ascribed to it must be reserved for the individuals whose will is reflected in these acts.

Indeed, it is often the desire of individuals to escape moral opprobrium for their behavior that prompts the formation of legal entities to which the responsibility for their unsocial acts can be directed. Corporate bodies—no matter how they may be justified as commercial expedients—have been found quite difficult to deal with in matters of moral behavior, merely because of the principle of limited responsibility. The expression "a corporation has no soul" illustrates the point.

Nor has a State any soul. The essential of any definition of this idea-entity is that it consists of a group of men who decide upon acts which affect the environment of the people living within a given political subdivision of the globe. Such acts may be moral or immoral, according to prevailing standards; but judgment cannot be made on the State, which is merely a dialectical convenience, a handy word to describe a concept which has no objective existence. Those who must be judged for the results of acts are the individuals in whom resides the power to initiate such acts.

That theory is involved in the idea of democracy. When the environment created by the acts of politicians in whom power temporarily resides proves unsatisfactory to the electorate, judgment to that effect is recorded in the ballot box and the individuals who composed the State are removed from power. Responsibility is placed on individuals. The failure of democracy is not due to any weakness inherent in its method, but only in the ignorance of the electorate; we actually get the "kind of government we deserve."

As the State grows in size, as it assumes more power, its responsibility to the electorate must correspondingly become less. For since the electorate

consists primarily of workers whose main occupation must be the production of things to satisfy their desires, watchfulness over the politicians becomes more difficult as the scope of their activities becomes wider and more complicated. The individuals constituting the State also seek satisfactions, including that of their own vanity, and find that these satisfactions are more pleasantly obtained by taxing production than by producing. Therefore they strive to perpetuate and strengthen their position by enlarging their range. The moral responsibility of the politicians for their acts is conveniently ascribed to the State. Sometimes it is called "the system."

Eventually the power of the State—that is, of the politicians—becomes so great that it ceases to be responsible to the electorate. In the totalitarian states this inversion results in the disappearance of the electorate, and the politicians become responsible only to themselves—or rather to the one politician whose personality typifies their corporate power. Moral responsibility then resides in one person—but by the time he appears, the electorate has disappeared. He is not answerable; he is the power.

Stalin—not communism—is the man who is murdering the Finns. Stalin—not stateism—is the man who would rob them of their homes and their possessions. Stalin—not a system—is responsible for the destruction visited upon a peaceful, industrious people. Stalin and his gangsters are the culprits.

But Stalin and his confederates are the State. The abysmal ignorance of the Russians, together with their abject poverty and the moral degradation resulting from centuries of stateism, made possible his quick usurpation of power.

In America it would take a long period of increasing decadence before a Stalin could appear. But the process whereby the power of the State increases at the expense of the people has set in. Unless the cause for poverty—and, which is more demoralizing, the fear of poverty—are eradicated, the process will be accelerated. For a poor people becomes a hopeless people, and a hopeless people becomes easy prey to the cupidity of political adventurers.