

bit of vulgarity, one of them remarked the next day, "He said we weren't gentlemen, but we are, for Congress made us so."

Since so few citizens can give a satisfactory answer to the question, "what am I on this earth for anyway," it is not surprising that a growing number act as if they were pigs shoving each other around to get at the trough. But America was not made to be a pigsty. The dehumanization process can be arrested. Americans can recover their faith in God and in the American dream. They will only do this, however, if we as Christians, while becoming even more aware of the social implications of our faith, recognize that the crisis of our time is a human crisis and not primarily a crisis in social structure; that it is the nature of man that is at stake and not the future of an economic system. The resolution of the

crisis depends upon whether Christians themselves can demonstrate by their acts and by their words that they know why man is on this earth and what he is supposed to be about while he is here.

There are many false gods at the present time and some of these gods have millions of powerful and fanatical adherents. The fate of the world depends upon whether we can confront false faith with an equally passionate faith in the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ and in the way of life he wills for man. Otherwise history will record that our civilization was overrun and destroyed as was that of North Africa a thousand years ago and for the same reason. Decadence within can never withstand the assault from without of a dynamic faith—however false that faith may be.

F. P. M.

## As Others See Us

REINHOLD NIEBUHR

"WE have," said an exuberant campaign orator in the recent campaign, "the moral leadership of the world. The whole world trusts in our devotion to freedom and expects us to save mankind from totalitarianism." That is how we see ourselves, at least in our more complacent moods.

The world does not see us as we see ourselves. Thus Tom Driberg, a member of a dissenting British Labor Party group, declared in the House of Commons on Nov. 14th, "I must warn the foreign secretary that however much he may strive for peace, if he finds himself inexorably and irrevocably driven into a new war situation, the people of this country will certainly not follow him into war now or five years from now against the Soviet Union in partnership with the barbaric thugs from Detroit or the narrow imperialists of Washington and Wall Street." This particular stricture need not to be taken too seriously. The members of the left in Britain, who love Russia more than anything else, picture America in the most lurid colors, just as our own left which loves Russia, tries to picture Britain as the center of a corrupt colonialism and imperialism, for the sake of which we must not get into war with Russia. It is significant that in each case Russia is regarded as the fixed point of virtue, and the home country of the critics is thought of as having some virtue which could be improved if it got closer to Russia and more distant from either Britain or America. Our own pro-Russians profess to abhor British colonialism, and the British pro-Russians profess to abhor American economic imperialism.

If we had to deal with only such critics who cancel each other out we would not have to take the criticisms too seriously. But evidence multiplies

that in the whole of Europe, we are not thought of as highly as we think of ourselves. "America," writes one American correspondent in high official position on the continent, "is ideologically unpopular in the whole of Europe. If the criticisms were confined to the fellow travellers it would be of no moment. It comes just as frequently from those who would like to save Europe from communism and believe that the uncertainty of American foreign policy, together with America's inability to understand the struggle for democracy upon the continent, will play into Russia's hands."

"The United States," declares a French critic, "will lose moral prestige so long as there is fear that it may use atomic warfare to enforce its will upon Europe." "The future of Europe," declares a German refugee in Britain, "will be decided by the way America deals with her next depression. The inevitability of that depression is taken for granted in Europe from the right to the left; and there is a strong implied criticism in the very fact that it is assumed in Europe that the richest nation on earth lacks the moral and political skill to avoid the depression. But the more important question is how America will deal with it. If it should result in considerable social confusion, and if the effort is made to overcome the confusion by restricting democratic rights and passing restrictive and oppressive legislation, the moral prestige of the West will deteriorate on the continent and the prestige of Russia will correspondingly rise."

These are just a few critical voices from Europe. They can be multiplied ad infinitum by any careful reader of the European press. We might reply in self-defense that we are probably unpopular because

we are powerful. Envy and resentment of our power partly prompt these not wholly objective criticisms. But even this defense contains an important admission. Power and moral leadership are not wholly compatible. The very fact that we are the wealthiest and most powerful nation on earth makes it the more difficult to commend whatever moral content there may be in our much vaunted "American way of life." Those who are under the compulsion of our economic power will naturally be the more critical of our professed moral and political ideals. The British, for instance, can hardly be expected to be morally convinced of the superiority of our conception of international free trade, so long as they had to accept our conception under the pressure of our superior economic power.

But it is not merely envy and resentment of our power which prompts the critical attitude toward America in Europe. The primary cause of the difficulty between ourselves and Europe lies in the fact that we seem to have made the maximum freedom of the economic process from political control the *sine qua non* of democracy. Europe, on the other hand, is convinced that there is no way of avoiding totalitarianism if the ideal of political democracy becomes inexorably associated with economic insecurity. One can speak of "Europe" in this instance in pretty general terms. All the Scandinavian governments, Britain and the western continental nations are seeking a middle way between too much planning and a too unregulated freedom, with the resultant economic insecurity. One must consider in this connection not merely that the socialist movements of the continent, which American conservatives equate with communism, are looking for this middle way. One must consider that the Tory party of Britain and all the so-called "Christian" parties of the continent, assume the necessity of wider political control of economic life than we do in America.

There is, for instance, an organization called "Spiritual Mobilization" in this nation which uncritically equates even the mildest forms of governmental control with "pagan statism." If its standards are accepted, every nation beside our own is already caught in this paganism. Said a British Tory, not a British socialist, visitor to this country who had been given a leaflet of this organization: "The uncritical identification of 'Christian liberty' with a *laissez faire* economic program would not be possible in any modern nation except your own. I assume, of course, that the program has plausibility only among your politically illiterate parsons. But even so, there is no other nation, in which even such illiterates would accept such a program."

The mildest criticisms of our view of democracy suggest that we are sufficiently wealthy to allow ourselves the luxury of this kind of democracy. The more rigorous criticisms suggest that we want to reduce the world economic realm to a great arena

of free-for-all economic competition, because we know that we have the power to beat our competitors in that competition. In the one case it is hoped that we will not insist upon exporting a luxury which poor nations cannot afford. In the other case it is suggested that if the most powerful nation on earth insists on turning the clock back and seeks to solve the problems of war-torn continents by methods which had a certain validity in the hey-day of modern industrial expansion, we will sow the wind of economic chaos and reap the whirlwind. In this connection it might be observed that Europe is not blind to the fact that influential men in American politics, who fought the Bretton-Woods economic agreements, are now more powerful in our counsels than they were when their opposition proved fortunately futile.

The struggle for the "middle way" is the battle for democracy in Europe. To a certain degree that is also true in Asia, where our justified desire to prevent communism from encroaching further on China, seems inexorably to strengthen the more reactionary forces behind Chiang Kai-shek and to prevent a more democratic middle way from gathering strength. This struggle for the middle way is made more difficult not only by lack of American support, but also because the Vatican gives only reluctant support to, or actually opposes, the economic program of the lay Catholic parties, which have sprung up all over Europe, and which have the promise of making a genuine contribution to the democratic reorganization of Europe.

The problem of America's "moral" leadership is thus the problem whether our nation can rise above the modes of thought and behaviour, which are characteristic of the political life of a very wealthy nation; and understand the problems of nations, as devoted as we to freedom but unable to afford the price we pay for it. This assumes, of course, that we will be able to continue to pay the price, which is an assumption we need not either challenge or defend for the moment. The history of the next decades will decide that issue. Meanwhile history in Europe cannot wait upon the answer.

It might be said in conclusion that for a devout Christian it may be more important to know what God thinks of us than what others think of us. But since it is very easy to attribute our favorite prejudices to God, it is a helpful procedure to allow the criticisms of foes and friendly critics to supply some accents which our estimate of ourselves is bound to leave out. However dangerous Russian totalitarianism may be, if we allow the world to drift into a position in which war against Russia becomes the only alternative, little of any value in Western, or any other civilization, can survive. This dread possibility cannot be avoided by dreaming up ideal constitutional schemes for world government.

In a sense the primary responsibility rests upon this nation, for creating the conditions, which will prevent totalitarianism or anarchy from spreading, or for the one to be aggravated by the spread of the other. America as the wealthiest nation, must become conscious of the fact that the highly favorable condi-

tions of our life are a hazard to the formulation of democratic principles, which are universally applicable; and that the enforcement by sheer power of ideas and principles which lack the universal validity which we ascribe to them, will render them the more odious.

## The World Church: News and Notes

### Opening of the Ecumenical Institute

The official opening of the Ecumenical Institute, situated in the chateau de Bossey not far from Geneva, took place in October.

During the opening ceremony an address was given by Professor Hendrik Kraemer, who has consented to become director of the Institute. Professor Kraemer is a specialist in oriental languages, an authority on Missionary questions, and one of the leaders of the Resistance and of the renewal of the Church in Holland.

"The Christian revelation," said Professor Kraemer, "does not aim first and foremost at the individual salvation of man, but at the salvation of the world, for the God of the Bible is Lord of earth and heaven, of man and human history. . . . The pale, individualistic version of the Bible message which was accepted without resistance by the Christian conscience of a liberal epoch, is intolerable today, when the world is plunged in a crisis not only of intellectual and moral certainties, but of all human relationships—social, national and international. It is high time the Christian Church re-discovered a Biblical version of the redemption and proceeded to reform its ways of thought and action.

"It is within this setting—this new confrontation by the church of its own real nature and message—that we must place the opening of the new Ecumenical Institute. . . . The church must show the world that the present crisis is not primarily a form of sickness, whether temporary or fatal; it is the manifestation of a *religious* fact. We are living in a world which is lost and completely disillusioned. It shows the failure of man who claimed that he could construct new societies and new worlds, when he was himself without norms and without roots . . . man who wanted to create *ex nihilo*. The philosopher, Karl Jaspers, defines the spiritual atmosphere of our age in these biting terms: 'a vacuum created by a vacuum.'

"The relativism which plays such a large role in the analytical methods of our age is not a philosophical tendency; it is a fundamental characteristic of contemporary mentality. It is almost as inherent in our spiritual life as the categories of time and space are inherent in human understanding. This relativism, this resigned agnosticism, has penetrated our spiritual life to such an extent that we have to make an effort to perceive that modern man has lost the sense of value which is normally connected with the idea of truth. . . . We must recognize that the recent historical development of the church makes it partly responsible for the secularization of the world. The church should not, therefore, criticize nor condemn this secularization; it should regard it as God's judgment on its own inca-

capacity to discover the real Christian attitude, and a call to overcome its feeling of self-righteousness."

### Lutheran Churches United in Relief Work

Lutheran World Relief, Inc., relief agency for American Lutheran groups, has made 19 shipments of food and clothing overseas, according to Dr. C. E. Krumbholz, chairman of Lutheran World Relief administrative committee. Six of these shipments went to Germany, three to Finland, two to Holland, and one each to China, Czechoslovakia, Denmark, England, Hungary, Poland, Yugoslavia and Latvians in the British zone of occupation in Germany.

Materials shipped consisted of 24,919 bales of clothing, 8,304 bags of shoes and 2,696 cartons of food, books, cloth, notions and other goods, with a net weight of 2,695,788 pounds and an estimated value of \$2,262,540.

All relief supplies from Lutheran sources were shipped to the Hilfswerk, relief agency of the Evangelical Church in Germany, for distribution to areas of greatest need. Several additional shipments, held up by the maritime strike have been piled on New York docks or in the holds of idle freighters.

In our news note in the November 11th issue of *Christianity and Crisis* we commented on the contributions to world relief of other American church groups. Due to an oversight we did not include this extensive work of the Lutherans. It should of course be pointed out that Lutheran World Relief, Inc., has contributed 65 per cent of all the clothing which has been shipped to Germany through CRALOG.

### German Churches Reported Stressing Bible Teaching

Germany's Protestant churches are turning more and more from religious "liberalism" to the fundamental teachings of Bible for inspiration and guidance, Dr. Julius Bodensieck, newly-appointed liaison officer between the American occupation forces and the churches, stated at headquarters of the World Council of Churches.

"Evidence of this trend," Dr. Bodensieck declared, "can be found in the types of sermons being preached in German churches today. There is nothing abstruse or theoretical about them. They are positive testimonies to the all-sufficiency of God's grace, and to the great need of forgiveness for sins."

These sermons, according to Dr. Bodensieck, who is president of Wartburg Theological Seminary, Dubuque, Iowa, are being listened to by church congregations "with evident interest," and some of them last a full