

Can the West Negotiate Now?

America the Vincible by Emmet John Hughes. Doubleday. 306 pp. \$3.95.

by William V. Shannon

This book has been widely praised and mostly for the wrong reasons. It has news value because it is an attack upon Eisenhower administration foreign policy written by a man who was the President's chief speechwriter in the 1952 and 1956 campaigns and is now chief of correspondents for *Time* and *Life*, the faithful defenders of the administration. Moreover, much of what *America the Vincible* says has been said before in quite similar words by Adlai Stevenson and other Democratic critics. Many liberals have thus been delighted to read an exposition of their views written by a convert from the enemy camp. But these paradoxes and extra-literary considerations have nothing properly to do with the merits of Mr. Hughes's arguments.

Before analyzing those arguments, however, one must note that this book has been widely praised for its "brilliant" and "eloquent" literary style. It is, in fact, a badly-written book. It is choked with the pretentious rhetoric and oracular musings often found in *Life* editorials and in the introductions to the "National Affairs" section of *Time*. For example: "Such a diplomacy, in serious and supreme aspiration, would neither pretend to others (or to itself) swift and spectacular political triumph, nor forget that its ultimate commission, by the history of our age, is not merely to serve the nationhood that is America but to save the civilization that belongs to many."

Mr. Shannon, who writes on political affairs for a number of American and British journals, is Washington columnist for the *New York Post*.

That phrase "in serious and supreme aspiration" is only so much cotton wadding. And what does it mean to say that "the history of our age" has given us an "ultimate commission"?

Or again: "All our golden purposes must not, in any such abject ways, stoop to shows of dross—or the fictions of drama. And these purposes of America must move, not with the easy rhythm of pretentious American speech, but with the steady pulse of true American life. The accent of the action alone is authentic."

The potential reader is hereby forewarned that *America the Vincible* is often murky and exasperating reading.

Regrettably enough, Mr. Hughes's analysis is not much better than his prose. As a critique of the late John Foster Dulles's policies, it is manifestly unfair; as a prescription for improving our foreign policy, it is markedly deficient. The book is an argument for the importance of negotiation with the Russians, the desirability of some form of disengagement in Europe, and the saving wisdom of sobriety, restraint, and limited expectations. It is an attack upon the policy of containment backed by military force and upon the corollary slogan, "negotiation from strength".

Mr. Hughes recognizes that the act of negotiating ought not to be an end in itself: "All the debate over the mere idea of negotiation [has been] clouded by the confusion of moral principles and political practices. For the role of negotiation—precisely like the function of force—has been invested with a moral meaning that wholly belongs, not to the act, but to the end. Both force and negotiation are, in themselves, neuter—without moral gender. They possess validity, and proclaim virtue, only by the purposes they serve."

Yet the whole thrust of his book is a demand for negotiating with the Russians under any and all circumstances. He devotes little attention to the purposes the negotiation is supposed to serve and almost all his attention to the glory of the means.

Mr. Hughes echoes Walter Lippmann in his romantic evocation of the diplomatic processes. "They begin," he writes, "with the modest but meaningful resolve to use devices of daily diplomacy long left in disuse: the quiet conversation, the personal conference, the ambassador with increased authority and confidence to explore informally the mere edges of possible areas of common consent. Such a diplomacy gradually—by word and gesture—would connote a policy looking toward negotiation not with avid and fretful anxiety but with assurance and poise."

Ah happy fantasy! We are back at the Congress of Vienna and the fate of duchies and kingdoms is settled "by word and gesture" by gentlemen as they sip their brandy. What has all this to do with Khrushchev braying and bullying at a Moscow reception, or Vishinsky ranting at the UN, or Gromyko sitting, stony-faced, implacably repeating the time-killing lies? As a journalist and speechwriter, Mr. Hughes should be a true child of our age of propaganda; it ill becomes him to refurbish this useless nostalgia for a pre-totalitarian era.

In advocating negotiation, the author stresses two "familiar illusions".

"The first is the unspoken American assumption that negotiation appears inviting only when the adversary stands at some hopeless disadvantage, so that the strength of America makes great political gain inevitable. This assumption insinuates the foolish hope that there must be a vague,

but most pleasant alternative—ultimately—to either open war or open negotiation. Such a spurious third alternative has been the whispered implication of the formula of ‘negotiation from strength’. But—quite obviously—the greater the superiority of strength of one nation, the less the inclination of the other to negotiate.”

Here we get to basic issues. I believe there is an ultimate, more pleasant, and necessarily vague alternative to either war or negotiation at this time. A major war would be a catastrophe for mankind; negotiations at the present time are not going to get us very far because the Russian rulers have not given up the hope of ultimate victory and, with their missiles and sputniks, are in a cocky, exuberant mood. Our only reasonable hope is to wait, if necessary for several decades, until the pressures within Russia itself and within its satellite empire have brought about a major transformation behind the Iron Curtain.

I am hopeful that such a transformation will occur because I have faith in the ultimate triumph of human freedom and because the record of history indicates that revolutions tend to lose their inner dynamism and become quiescent and less imperialist. No one can say when such a transformation may occur or under exactly what circumstances. The sinister and foolish position is to act as if it had already occurred and that negotiations now could be beneficial to the cause of freedom.

Freedom, after all, is what we are negotiating about. We do not want anything that legitimately belongs to Russia. We are only trying to protect freedom where ever it now exists, in West Berlin or West Germany or Greece, and if possible, without war, to extend the area of freedom. We can always have a “successful” negotiation with the Russians

anytime we want to give up West Berlin or put West Germany’s freedom in pawn.

Mr. Hughes makes repeated veiled attacks upon the late Secretary Dulles. I wish to make myself clear: I did not admire Dulles’s personal style as a diplomat but I am convinced that he had many sound instincts about the Russians. He was able to negotiate with them perfectly well whenever they wanted to make some reasonable changes. For example, after hundreds of futile sessions, the Austrian Peace Treaty was negotiated with no difficulty once the Russians took a reasonable view. The problems of Berlin and German unification could likewise be quickly solved if the Russians would decide to release their military hold on their East German colony. Dulles made some serious mistakes, but the real obstacle to successful negotiations these past seven years was in Moscow, not in Washington.

The second illusion about diplomatic negotiations, according to Mr. Hughes, is “the spurious standard of ‘sincerity’.” In past diplomacy, it has proven a frivolous criterion of the national conduct of another. In the act of negotiation, it becomes preposterous, for it implies that the fervor of argument by another lends validity to whatever be the contention or demand.”

It implies nothing of the kind. Here Mr. Hughes is slaying a straw man. Sincerity in a diplomatic context is a synonym for seriousness. The kind of question the State Department always has to ask itself is: are the Russians just releasing more Picasso peace doves or do they really want to talk about disarmament? In other words, are they serious? Are they sincere?

The Russians make no distinction between mass propaganda, the revolutionary politics of foreign Communist parties, the trips abroad of heads of state, and the usages of traditional diplomacy.

Each of these activities is part of a broad, unceasing campaign of political warfare. In my judgment, for example, Khrushchev’s trip to the United States last year had nothing to do with negotiating a settlement of the Berlin problem or clearing the atmosphere of mutual antagonism or getting to know Eisenhower better as a preliminary to talking peace. He was simply performing the function that used to be performed by the American Communist Party before it was broken and discredited. That function is confusing America, disarming public opinion, dividing the political left, and getting an intelligence estimate of how far the Russian government can go in giving the American government a hard time.

The difficulty with people like Mr. Hughes is that they refuse to accept the fact of political warfare. They point to the historic truth that Christians and Moslems eventually made peace and that Catholics and Protestants finally settled the religious wars in Western Europe by learning to live together; but they fail to point out that these *de facto* settlements did not occur until after two centuries or more of bitter struggle.

We live in the totalitarian age. We are locked in combat with the deadly power of Russian and Chinese totalitarianisms. They may use military force in Korea or Indochina. They may use the blandishments of propaganda. They may use political subversion as in Kerala or Indonesia or Iraq. They may use economic penetration as in Guinea and the United Arab Republic. They may sometimes retreat as in Austria. They may sometimes crush rebellions brutally as in Hungary or make compromises as in Poland. But whatever they do, the Communists are the sworn enemies of freedom and of the West. We have a long way to go before their virulence runs its course.

The Russian Revolution and Religion

Edited and translated by Boleslaw Szczesniak. Notre Dame. 289 pp. \$6.75.

A collection of hitherto unpublished documents concerning the suppression of religion in the Russian Empire during the years 1917-1925, this volume provides an additional insight into Communist strategies of persecution.

Politics and Evangelism

by Philippe Maury. Doubleday. 120 pp. \$2.95.

Convinced that the church is today facing a unique crisis in its missionary task, the General Secretary of the World Christian Movement writes of the need to renew the relationship between political action and evangelistic responsibility.

The Population Explosion and Christian Responsibility

by Richard M. Fagley. Oxford. 260 pp. \$4.25.

The author explores the problem of population pressures and birth control in the light of traditional religious doctrines on parenthood and the family. While there is no one "solution", he cites the beginnings of constructive effort in "the fundamental consensus of conviction on responsible parenthood" that is evolving among Protestant churches in cooperation with the ecumenical movement.

Marxism in Southeast Asia

Edited by Frank N. Trager. Stanford. 381 pp. \$7.50.

How Marxism came to Burma, Thailand, Viet Nam and Indonesia, and how its ideas have been absorbed and, in some cases, compromised by the political, economic and ideological life of those countries, is the subject of this research study sponsored by the RAND Corporation.

Max Weber: An Intellectual Portrait

by Reinhard Bendix. Doubleday. 480 pp. \$5.75.

This book undertakes to elucidate the thought of the great German social scientist mainly by recapitulating texts. It performs the service of furnishing a more comprehensive view of Weber than is readily available to the non-specialist reader.

The Revolt of the Mind

by Tamas Aczel and Tibor Meray. Praeger. 449 pp. \$5.00.

The authors of this book, in their own words, "were worse than Communists. They were Stalinists." Here they describe in painful detail the process by which the Communist writers of postwar Hungary submitted to party orthodoxy and then rejected it to become "the vanguard of the Hungarian Revolution."

worldview

A JOURNAL OF RELIGION AND INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS
 volume 3, no. 2 / February 1960

WORLDVIEW is published monthly by The Church Peace Union.
 Subscription: \$2.00 per year.
 Address: 170 East 64th Street, New York 21, N. Y.

EDITORIAL BOARD

William Clancy, Editor
A. William Loos John R. Inman William J. Cook
 Editorial Assistant, *Arlene Croce*

Worldview
 170 East 64th Street
 New York 21, N. Y.

U. S. POSTAGE
 PAID
 New York, N. Y.
 Permit No. 609
 Non-Profit Org.

CONTENTS

Editorial Comment..... 1
 In the Magazines..... 2
 The Recovery of Ethics..... 3
 Paul H. Nitze
 Other Voices..... 8
 Correspondence..... 9
 BOOKS
 Negotiations Now? by William V. Shannon..... 10
 Current Reading..... 12

(Opinions expressed in WORLDVIEW are those of the authors, and not necessarily of The Church Peace Union.)