I seem to hear the word "mere" intruding here as it is sometimes used by theologians in speaking of "mere reason." "True enough as far as it goes" is an expression of theological condescension which borders on social callousness. The prophets believed that the actions resulting in the elimination of injustice, wrong and war could only spring from motives that have the capacity of transforming the world and they would never have spoken as lightly of these mighty social consummations as Mr. Cohen presumes to do. In a world in which injustice is mountainous and a war of annihilation a realistic possibility, the dismissal of such vast reforms as the elimination of injustice and war in a cavalier way would never have occurred to those who laid the foundations of Judaism.

Rabbi Morris Adler

The Author Replies:

New York, N. Y.

Dear Sir: Assuredly I had no desire to give offense to Rabbi Adler or to any Jews of similarly passionate sensibilities. I was stating a theological argument and that argument was founded upon theological premises. Although Rabbi Adler did not wish to enter the lists against these premises, he was exceedingly quick to locate a passage which, loosed from its foundations, made me appear quite monstrously callous. I do wish to assure him and others of your readers that I should be more than delighted—indeed, I would consider it a consummation of the highest order—if the wolf and the lamb could lie down together. I would still continue to argue that this would represent an issue of natural transformation, possible without the presence or contrivance of Divine Providence. My argument is and remains directed to the ontological foundations of social ethics and my question to Rabbi Adler—a question I would not have had to address to Isaiah—would be: how shall the conduct of man be changed other than by the radical transformation of man’s being? The being of man is existence before God; the reconciliation of man and God involves not only the work of man, but the work of God. To the extent that that work is confined to the sphere of justice—a concept which has become immensely more complex since the days of Prophetic Judaism—we are restricted to the arena of human possibility. To the extent, however, that that work is confined upon the Holy (a perfection which exceeds all other social and moral virtues), the transformation of history must await the Coming of the Messiah and the End of History.

Arthur A. Cohen

An Analysis of Modern Political Attitudes

The Two Faces of American Foreign Policy by Thomas Molnar. Bobbs-Merrill. $5.00.

by William Pfaff

Mr. Molnar describes, may be added the charge that it provokes so many of its critics into self-destruction—into the posture of self-dramatization and tasteless provocation, to a contemptible willingness to accept any innuendo about their enemies and any alibi for their friends, to a sacrifice of intellectual standards that too often renders their work ineffectual when it is not repellent.

Mr. Molnar’s argument is a familiar one, but it is stated with considerable power and eloquence, and the author, in his early chapters, makes an analysis, intelligent, and too often just, of American political attitudes which deserves greater attention than this book is going to get for it. In Mr. Molnar there is a serious man struggling to get out; this review will do him a courtesy that he does not deserve and deal with this book as though it were the serious political work that it might have been.

The author understands and describes with force a number of delusions—and let us join him in calling them liberal delusions, although they are not confined to those who profess liberalism; they underlie very much of what is said on foreign policy by Americans of every persuasion, not least by those who profess a conservativism which, in its apocalyptic vision of politics, resembles nothing quite so much as the beliefs of Marxist ideologues. These delusions include a complacent messianism ambitious to remake the
world on its own standards—standards which in fact constitute a sentimentalization of American reality. They include an unwillingness to distinguish an American revolutionary—and agrarian republican past from a present of established interests and enthusiastic world involvement, an unwillingness that results in a divorce between what America professes and what it does.

As Mr. Molnar puts it, the American mind is a battlefield of "Puritanic restraints and deep anarchistic drives, of a belief that life can be led by formulas and the temptations to lawlessness... responsible for the cohabitation of two opposing interests in the conduct of our foreign policy: the need to behave like a conservative empire with its imperial interests and techniques of leadership, and the other, equally strong urge, to change the human condition, provoke revolutionary transformations in the world-political sphere, and put the history of mankind on altogether new foundations."

One consequence of this is an incorrigible American search for solutions at the level of technique, for methodological and institutional changes in international affairs that are expected to free an underlying political harmony of mankind to fulfill itself. There is an American avoidance of too close an acquaintance with the nature of evil and of power that leads to unrealistic judgments in politics—at its most vulgar, to an insistence upon hero-nations and villain-nations—and to an indiscriminate use of power, either a fear to use it at all or, its use becoming essential, to a senseless ruthlessness.

But as with so many conservative writers, Mr. Molnar's critical analysis of modern American political attitudes is much more persuasive than the argument he makes about the nature of modern politics. A bitter critic of ideology and sentimentality in American policies, he is, when he turns to the international scene, an ideologue of curious stubbornness.

His is not a traditional conservative view; he is, for example, incapable of understanding Gaullist policy. It is not merely that he does not sympathize with a man who is surely the most distinguished and creative conservative political figure in the contemporary world, but that he does not grasp what de Gaulle is about in insisting that the permanent interests of France and of Europe are not identical to those of the United States, and that Europe—should—and can—deal with Russia on its own authority and with its own resources. Mr. Molnar finds the political concepts of a de Gaulle "bewildering members." He means, it seems, that for de Gaulle to withdraw from Algeria is a betrayal: a capitulation to a nationalism objectively—if not subjectively—aligned with the communism which is the West's implacable and marvellously pugnacious enemy. He means that de Gaulle fails to understand the nature of communism in dealing with Russia as a power whose ambivalent and violent relationship with Europe extends deep into the past, as a nation in which a crucial continuity exists from Peter to Stalin to Khrushchev.

De Gaulle is estranged from an America whose national style, as Mr. Molnar knows, expresses a taste for ideal structures and moralist ambitions. But Mr. Molnar condemns de Gaulle for essentially the reasons that the Kennedy Administration does, except that where they see the French President as withdrawing cooperation for an alliance which might lead from anti-Communist necessity to a peaceful triumph of federal democracy, Mr. Molnar condemns de Gaulle for weakening an alliance which faces a protracted battle with a Communist world bloc growing ever stronger. The author is stern and pessimistic in the face of liberal idealism, but in the end his argument is not so different: a vision of a great historical confrontation with an age in the balance; and there is little patience for those—like de Gaulle—who say that politics are not so easily defined nor history so dramatically settled.

The same spirit is at work in Mr. Molnar's description of the "Third World" of Africa, Asia and Latin America. Here, he says, are the "soft areas" in which the world battle is being fought—and being won by the Communists. "Many times even the steadiest anti-Communist is on the verge of giving up in despair, so automatic have Russian successes become, so brilliant the techniques used, so safely arrogant Stalin's or Khrushchev's behavior." He is curiously indifferent to serious analysis of the states he is talking about, of the character of their politics or of the evidence—or lack of it—of effective Soviet or Chinese power, the real evidence of military, economic and political control. He is, in effect, content with the Leninist claim that nationalist revolutionaries of Africa and Asia provide a transition, comprehensible in the Marxist scheme, from imperialism to communism: that they are, objectively, of the Camp of Peace and Socialism.

The author's preference for such schemes over fact is perhaps best understood by a remark he makes about the Sino-Soviet dispute. He declares that "to even an elementary student of communism, it should be clear that if there were basic conflicts between the two main Communist powers, the outside world would never learn about them." Now this, of course, is a statement which could be made only by someone who is not an elementary student of communism. It is a statement which should, perhaps, be true, if Communists understood as well as Mr. Molnar where their real interests lay, but it is not true. The history of the Communist Party
of the Soviet Union and of the
Comintern/Cominform is a his-
tory of one basic and well-pub-
lized conflict after another: the
controversy in 1923 and 1924 that
led to the condemnation of “Party
democracy” at the Thirteenth
Party Conference, the controver-
sies that led to the emergence of
a “Left Opposition” and the event-
tual expulsion of Trotsky and Zi-
novlev from the Communist Party
in 1927, the debates leading up to
Bukharin’s condemnation, the in-
dustrialization controversy, the trial
of the Shakhty engineers and the
subsequent purge trials of the
1930s.

Only in the late 1930s did a
curtain fall over Soviet internal
controversy. But even Stalinism
could not prevent the conflict
with Yugoslavia from breaking
into the open and producing an
open split between Communist
powers. After Stalin’s death came
the public emergence of reiision-
ism in the Communist Parties of
several satellites, the Polish mu-
tiny, the drastic revelations of the
Twentieth Party Congress, the
“anti-Party group” controversy, the
conflict and break with Albania,
the conflict with China. All of
these disputes were, as the saying
has it, over how best to bury the
West, and all of them should sen-
sibly have been concealed from
the hostile outer world. But they
were not; and they shook com-
munism—and they make a differ-
ence.

In short, Mr. Molnar is not real-
ly very interested in what the
Communists actually have done
or in what they actually are ac-
complishing today. His is a vision
of a movement which has welded
together a bloc of huge propor-
tions and single-minded power, a
bloc whose quarrels and national
interests are subordinated to a
master-plan of conquest. And the
forces of light, he says, do not un-
derstand the malevolence and
cunning of the enemy. They at-
tribute to him their own motives
and gratifications, they compro-
mise with him and sentimentalize
him, and they thereby conform
unwittingly to his plans. Safety is
to be found only in tight Western
unity, in powerful conduct in the
Third World to reward friends
and punish enemies, in blows
dealt against the enemy’s weak-
ness—his discontented East Euro-
pean empire, the enemy’s possible
retaliation checked by nuclear
power. (And one of Mr. Molnar’s
many odd factual mistakes is the
repeated assertion that the USSR
enjoys nuclear supremacy over
the United States today and will
continue to do so “at least until
1964”)

But there is more to it than a
struggle between communism
and the Western alliance. The full
drama of Mr. Molnar’s ideological
vision becomes apparent late in
the book, when this passage ap-
pears: “At present, Western po-
itical circles . . . consider as their
real and ultimate enemy not com-
munism (which is expected to lib-
eralize itself), but the ‘reaction-
aries’. . . . Thus one may safely
say that if the pressure in Amer-
ican intellectual-political circles is
mounting for disarmament, peace-
ful coexistence, the admission of
Red China to the United Nations,
etc., it is to strengthen the Left in
the coming reckoning with the
Right. The last hundred years or
so of Western history might be
explained in terms of gigantic,
now open, now covert civil war;
and it is notorious that civil wars
are fought more bitterly, and shed
more blood, than wars between
nations. In this hour, under the
dramatically evoked mushroom
cloud of the ‘nuclear holocaust,’
the Left prepares to find allies in
order to finish the Right. The
Kremlin’s leaders know this; they
are, once again, ready for a grand
alliance.”

Indeed. One must reflect that if
such a phantasy found realization
the world would at least be treat-
ed to a final comedy, the great
confrontation of one titanic ir-
relevancy with another. Mr. Mol-
lar has some eloquent pages on
why the conventional Left has so
little of interest to offer the mod-
ern world, but he illustrates con-
clusively that the conventional
Right can successfully challenge
the Left only in rabid commit-
tment to illusion.

“It is not inevitable that men should ask whether it is moral to
intervene in the internal affairs of other nations. To some, it has
obviously become a mere question of posture—how to keep a
straight face while intervening, how to smile piously when dis-
covered, and how to win converts during the moral upsurge that
should accompany the exposure of others in the great game of in-
tervention. Some are convinced that the Communist world repre-
sents a menace so evil that any action against this threat, as long
as it is successful, is by definition moral, or else merely a problem
of techniques.”

from
THE MORALITY AND POLITICS OF INTERVENTION
by Manfred Halpern
just published by the
the Council on Religion and International Affairs
36 pages • 25 cents • quantity rates available upon request

April 1963 11
A Nation So Conceived
Reinhold Niebuhr and Alan Heimort. Scribner's. 155 pp. $3.50.
These "reflections on the history of America from its early visions to its present power," are an examination of the forces, both material and visionary, which shaped the American destiny and the American character. "The American Sense of Mission" is the title of a final chapter.

The Price of Glory
The tactics and toll, personalities and politics of the "grimmest battle" in World War I and "perhaps in History itself"—Verdun—come under scrutiny in this volume. Effects of the ten-month battle on the tide of the war and on the French defense in 1940 are also evaluated.

The Modern God
Gustave Weigel, S.J. Macmillan. 168 pp. $2.95.
A prominent Jesuit thinker discusses "Faith in a Secular Culture," and finds that modern man, caught in a conflict of faiths, has lost sight of the unifying ideals necessary for the preservation and growth of culture.

The Politics of Foreign Aid
This book, published for the Council on Foreign Relations, concentrates upon the political effect of foreign aid in both the recipient and donor countries. Case studies of U.S. mutual aid programs in Southeast Asia are presented to illustrate the complex political requirements and processes of a foreign aid operation.

U.N. in the Congo
This account of the U.N. role in the Congo between mid-July 1960 and summer 1962 is based on United Nations documents, the author's own experience in the Congo Operation, and his discussions with participating officials of the world organization.

On the Coming World Transformation
Ferdinand Lundberg. Doubleday. 305 pp. $5.95.
The author, a professor of social philosophy, has as his aim "to predict on a systematic and theoretically justifiable basis future developments of basic and general importance" in education, religion, government, science, economics during the next century and a half.