

in the magazines

From Aix-en-Provence, where he spent a year teaching at the university, Harold Kaplan observed the spring's events in France (*New Leader*, June 17). "My own guess," he writes, "is that the revolutionary surge of the students came at this time in large part as a response to events in Czechoslovakia. Now it seemed really possible that the revolutionary spirit could not be crushed by the orthodox Party apparatus, that it was permanent in the old Trotskyist sense, continuing until its ideal aims were achieved. . . . It was now possible for Jean Paul Sartre to announce at the Sorbonne, as he did, that this revolution was for Socialism and democracy, and that the slogan should no longer be the dictatorship of the proletariat because that had too often come to mean a dictatorship over the proletariat."

Now "all this is infectiously hopeful," says Kaplan. "Certainly the words on everyone's lips seem to be democracy and democratization. The universities are to lose their feudal structure under the mandarin professors and be democratized by the students. The workers are to democratize the factories. Shouldn't anyone whose politics is based on a belief in the democratic process throw himself completely into this revolution?"

"One is on the verge of doing just that until sober thinking warns that the unnamed, unidentified, unled revolution could have any one of several contradictory results. The strongest models for the student action seem to be the Berkeley episode, the non-violent direct action of the Civil Rights movement in the U.S., and the Chinese Cultural Revolution. But the latter, as far as Western observers could see, was chiefly the demagogic tool of authoritarian Party leaders. Direct democracy in that case was indeed a charade, for its main purpose was to crush dissent, to terrorize the opposition."

If one has been, like Kaplan, "removed as a foreign spectator from the excitement of direct action and the ecstasy of direct democracy, one can entertain second thoughts while there is still time for them. Harkening back to the tradition of liberal democracy, one wished that the French intellectual Left had read a few of the works of the revolutionary Fathers of America. How many knew the *Federalist Papers*, for instance, which might be quoted aptly these days when once again the world is alive with the electricity of political innovation: 'In framing a government which is to be administered by men over men, the great difficulty lies in this; you must first enable the government to control the governed; and in the next place oblige it to control itself.'"

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The need for an examination of "Conscience and

Compromise in Democracy" concerns C. Eric Mount, Jr. in the Spring number of *A Journal of Church and State*: "Pejorative connotations of the word *compromise* are widespread. Perhaps preference for the word *consensus* on the part of a President with unquestioned skills in the art of political compromise is an evidence of the questionable associations *compromise* conjures up. Moral absolutists decry the compromising of one's principles. Political idealists use black and white categories. Compromise with the 'bad guys' by the 'good guys' can become synonymous with appeasement, and the moderate can become more hated than the enemy even though he and the radical have great overlaps in their cause. To work within the mainstream of American politics is often to be dubbed derogatorily as a softie on socialism from one quarter or an 'establishment liberal,' that despicable form of humanity, from another. . . .

". . . Despite the mixed reviews, compromise has had a long and successful run among us, and the drama of achieving the possible at the expense of the preferable for the sake of the desirable will doubtless continue. The question is not whether or not one will compromise in his relations with others, but whether or not he will recognize his compromises and whether or not he will be satisfied with them. The dangers are in imagining a bogus purity, adopting a split ethic (morals here—politics there) or succumbing to a moral cynicism that makes necessity of expediency. In shunning the camp of those absolutists for whom compromise is impossible, one must be equally chary of the opposite jeopardy—joining the camp of relativists such as [playwright Rolf] Hochhuth's Cardinal for whom compromise is easy.

"Since we are defining compromise as the achieving of the desirable and possible at the expense of the preferable or of another desired end, we are not talking about surrender of convictions or of the norm of love of God and fellowmen. We are directing our attention to the necessity of settling for less than what we would consider ideal, to the frequently encountered impossibility of 'having our cake and eating it too' ethically speaking. William May," [in an article cited by the author] "couples the Manichaeian abhorrence of politics with a revulsion against marriage, which also makes strange bedfellows. 'Both marriage and politics,' he explains, 'presuppose the possibility of some kind of community or agreement between parties *distinct* from one another.' (Anyone who does not think marriage involves compromise is not only not married, he or she never will be genuinely so, at least not for long.)"

Mount then moves to an appraisal of the positions of three modern American theorists "who have ad-

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dressed themselves to the role of compromise in democracy from diverse ethical stances"—Joseph Tussman ("Compromise as Culprit"), T. V. Smith ("Conscience as Culprit"), and Reinhold Niebuhr ("The Normative Pull and the Practical Drags").

Carl Cohen, a member of the University of Michigan philosophy department, presents "The Case for Selective Pacifism" in the July 8 issue of *The Nation*. "The refusal to recognize conscientious objection to particular wars is unwise as well as unjust," he asserts. "The world being as confusing as it is, and human affairs as complex as they are, principles of the form "Always do . . ." or "Never do . . ." are almost sure to lead to error through oversimplification; while principles of a more limited scope, though also uncertain, have a far better chance of approximating the truth. We do well, therefore, to credit the conscientious man with limited principles, rather than to discredit him because his principles are limited.

"Such limitation, after all is the normal product of rational reflection and analysis. We do not find fault with the criminal law because it punishes many forms of violence but excuses violence resorted to in self-defense. We do not say: 'If the law were really moral it would punish all violence or none at all.' We dismiss sweeping generalizations of that sort as naive, crude, inadequate to deal with the complexity of human activity."

Cohen asks readers to "note that those who refuse to allow conscientious objection to a particular war, but permit it to all war, admit the competence of the individual to judge the morality of a means (war, killing, etc.) but not his competence to judge the morality of an end (dictatorship, democracy, national power, etc.). To put this more exactly, while they may think the conscientious objector gravely mistaken in his judgments, they are prepared to honor the conscientiousness of those judgments when expressed about means, but not when expressed about ends. . . ."

Thus, "we refuse any citizen the opportunity to weight ends and means together, as one must if he is to make refined and sensitive moral judgments, whether of his own acts or of another's. This refusal invites, sometimes forces, that very disparity of ends and means which is so disastrous in social affairs, and which we so vehemently and rightly condemn in the conduct of other nations."

The author does "not claim here that all conscientious objection, or all conscientious objection to a particular war, is objectively right or justifiable"; for he is "not sure how that objective rightness (or wrongness) is to be determined." But he does "insist that conscientious objection to a particular war may be

as right and as justifiable as the conscientious objection we now permit. Moreover, since conscientious objection of the more specific sort involves the reflective consideration of means and ends, it is more likely, to be the outcome of an intelligent and reliable moral judgment. And in any event, the opportunity to weigh ends as well as means certainly does not keep the objector from being fully and profoundly conscientious."



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The Reporter is dead at 19. With the issue of June 13, editor and publisher Max Ascoli put the "magazine of facts and ideas" to sleep, noting, in requiem: "We have been faithful to our beliefs, no matter whether the prevailing opinion had gone in the opposite direction. The balance of power between ourselves and the Communists can never be construed as a balance of values, as the fifteenth anniversary editorial put it. But practically everybody is saying now that it is pedantic and old fashioned to insist on ethical principles when it comes to political régimes, most particularly those of the Left, and to the behavior of youth, especially when uncontaminated by ideals. This bypassing of ethics has been the major heresy of our times.

"Has *The Reporter* done well enough in denouncing and fighting back these most amoral trends? I doubt it. In the assignment it has given itself it has been endeavoring to carry through a type of liberalism different from the amorphous one prevailing in this country—a strange mixture of old-fashioned populism sustained by the firm belief in the healing power of bureaucracy, particularly when this power is exercised by freewheeling liberals. No, *The Reporter* hasn't done enough in countering the most weedy strains of liberalism. On a number of occasions it did call a few of these liberals by their right name. But it did so too early, thereby offending them twice; once when the description was made, and then when they had to accept it.

"Some of the major *Reporter* failures came from its being overstrained by the fear of being predictable and of sounding preacherish. Perhaps one of the most grievous mistakes has been mine: I muzzled myself when it came to spiritual and religious matters because I was afraid of showing myself for what I am: a deeply religious man. This should be enough with mea culpas were it not for a little addition: my last two heroes were Charles de Gaulle and Lyndon Johnson."

PAMPHILUS