

in the magazines

The Ecumenical Press Service weekly of October 31 reports that "an open letter has been sent by twelve leading Protestant and Anglican clergymen to South African Prime Minister Balthazar J. Vorster notifying him they are not intimidated by threats against their anti-apartheid stand." They were responding "to the Prime Minister's recent statement criticizing 'certain members of the clergy who use sermons for preaching politics.'"

Said the letter: "We are deeply disturbed by your remark, not on account of ourselves or from fear as to what may happen to messengers of Christ, but because the head of our government has spoken in this manner. . . . The highest service the Church can at present render the government in our country is to urge it in all seriousness and in God's name to become converted from its ideology of apartheid."

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"Let Bishop X, Pastor Y, and Rabbi Z sign all the petitions they want, and address all the rallies they are invited to. In the categories developed in this paper [says Quentin L. Quade in "Religious Value in Political Judgment," *The Review of Politics* (October)], they may in that manner be fulfilling their citizen's role by expressing what they take to be the implications of their central values when brought to bear on crucial issues of our time. But let them be aware that their special responsibilities as religious leaders are not fulfilled in their social dimensions through such action. This special role will be fulfilled only insofar as they teach their followers that the flocks, too — indeed the flocks especially — must continuously and seriously articulate their values, discern the consequences of those values for all the significant issues of the day, and intervene precisely as political persons on the basis of their values and discernment.

"The beginning political question for religion, then, is not how one can influence politics. Instead, the beginning question is how to teach believers that an integral existence requires the elaboration of the meaning of belief in the world of human encounter. If this can be done, the practical problem of influencing politics will yield easily enough. . . ."

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" . . . You go to school today in order to fit into a certain slot in society tomorrow.

"The thing is, what do you do if you come to believe that the particular society in which that slot exists is, in some kind of objective way, evil? What do you do if you observe that that society is responsible for most of the suffering that goes on in the world and that simply by taking your place in that slot you will be contributing to that society's ability to

continue being responsible for that suffering? . . ."

Gerald Long, writing in *SDS New Left Notes* of October 25, has no answers. A great "many would-be radicals," he says, resolve these problems "by a very clever manipulation of logic so that they come up with a category of existence known as 'working from within.' In this way, they assure themselves, they are contributing to the downfall of the pernicious social system while at the same time achieving job security. Unfortunately for these folks, the scientific study of history has proven that the notion of 'working from within' is bullshit. If your job within the system is secure it is only because you are no threat to the system." If "the system actually begins to feel the effects of your radical work, then you will be ejected from your slot. . . ."

"When dealing with the question of 'education' and its role within the system, this problem is the major one facing the Movement and would-be members of the Movement. Listen closely to your school song, take a close look at the faces of the governing body of your school, then compare what's said in your classes with what kind of coherent picture of the universe you can glean from the newspapers and television news; you can hardly help but conclude that our educational system is full of shit because it is the prostitute of an evil society.

"But this conclusion is useless unless it impels us to figure out how to utilize ourselves to a good radical end without at the same time filling slots which allow the evil society to function. In a society in which your education, your career, is your meal-ticket, great numbers of people will feel hard pressed to the wall when asked to give that meal-ticket up. There is no simple solution to this problem, the whole thing about 'style of life.' That is what the Movement is really all about, but a movement whose purpose is to assault an oppressor's power provides certain functional roles in which to begin to solve this problem."

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What is "the Movement's" purpose and role? Historically, says Sidney Lens (*Liberation*, November), "it seems to me, the New Left must compare itself to the New Left of the first half of the nineteenth century rather than to the *Old Left* into which it degenerated. Like the earlier one, it is a *New Left* precisely because it faces a new set of historical circumstances. . . ."

"Now, a century and a quarter [after Marx] . . . a new [ideological] model has become indispensable, and if there are those who criticize the New Left for being 'fuzzy' they might well recall that it took a half-century for the nineteenth century 'New Left'

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to do the same job. Today's New Left is also going through a 'Luddite' and 'utopian' phase. The beatniks, hippies and yippies who 'resign' from this corrupt society are comparable in many ways to the machine breakers; and the students and blacks who organize demonstrations against discrimination, poverty, the war and HUAC have not graduated to a cohesive ideology. But that ideology — what may be called 'humanistic radicalism' — is already evident in outline. With time it will fill out into a comprehensive system.

"A radical ideology begins with an analysis of what is wrong with the present society. It must prove that this society is consumed by inner contradictions that cannot be patched up or saved by reforms."

To Lens the evidence is indisputable. "It is the insatiable competitive spirit, leading as it does to this lust for universal power, which requires the maintenance of an enormous military establishment for its foreign adventures. Its by-products are manipulation, repression, hate, violence, exploitation, imperialism and war. The United States, the most over-competitive society in all history, manifests all these characteristics in varying degrees in different places. If American organized labor is no longer economically exploited, it is harshly coerced into conformity. In the academic community professors and students are manipulated into perpetuating militarism, the profit motive, and all the other values of this society. . . .

"To the credit of the New Left," he states, "it has understood instinctively what men like Howe and Rustin," members of the Old Left, "have forgotten: that there is something fundamentally wrong with the capitalist system and that the liberation of man can take place only within the framework of a new institutional pattern, based on humanism and collectivism. Its weakness is in the area of strategy: it has not yet elaborated a road to power that flows from coherent analysis of the new capitalist economics and the new imperialism. . . ."

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". . . There is no better sign of the vitality of contemporary Christianity (at least in certain aspects, if not in others) than the sympathetic interest of so many Christians in the possibility of radical change," writes a member of the St. Louis University department of history (*The Christian Century*, November 27).

"Yet it is precisely this concern for 'revolution,'" James Hitchcock continues, "which casts doubt on the genuine worldliness of the modern Christian — whether or not worldliness is considered desirable. The eye of the renewed Christian remains firmly set on the apocalypse, the parousia; his gaze strays to obdurate, presently existing reality only long enough

to envision its future transformation. . . .

" . . . Christian radicals should be aware of the implications of their positions, particularly of the fact that their commitment to 'revolution' is perhaps no less vague or improbable, and no less absurd, than belief in the traditional afterlife. Perhaps what the world requires from Christians is precisely the holy madness which asserts these impossibilities. But at least those who would be fools for Christ's sake should not labor under the delusion that they are actually being 'relevant' in a worldly way. . . .

" . . . A serious danger posed by present-day Christian revolutionism is the old one of invincible holiness: since one's purpose is so high and one's sincerity so deep, all scrutiny and criticism approach the blasphemous and should not be permitted. . . .

"Another danger is a quasi-chiliasm which, yearning for the new dispensation, becomes convinced that it is already here. . . . And since it is almost of the essence of elite radical groups for them to be solipsistic and semiparanoid, hard-headed criticism is one of their major, if unrecognized needs. . . .

"This is by far the most serious flaw of contemporary revolutionism, both secular and religious. It is the flaw which ultimately prevents the revolutionaries, at least in the United States, from achieving more than peripheral successes. The new radicalism often approaches belief in salvation by faith alone and in redemption through inner experience. Within the New Left there is an often breathtaking disregard for the effectiveness of tactics and methods and a profound indifference even to some of the most elementary requirements of good organization.

"The ordinary imperialistic capitalist or paternalistic liberal bureaucrat works much, much harder at his chosen tasks than the vast majority of self-proclaimed radicals work at theirs. The New Left and the hippies, and the new Christians who admire them, remain preoccupied with style and with releasing and sustaining the 'right' feelings. Whatever is dull, burdensome, prosaic or routine they instinctively shun, and subsequently they provide ideological justification for the shunning. . . ."

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From an article by Irving Kristol in the *New York Times Magazine*, November 24: ". . . the American political tradition explicitly leaves the governance of moral life to our nonpolitical institutions. . . . Ours is a *limited* government of a *free* society, and it is rooted in the assumption that it is the task of government to reconcile conflicting interests in a reasonable way. . . . If you want a polity with an overriding moral purpose, then you want a government that *rules*, that *forms* the young citizens according to some pre-conceived political end, and that (subtly or crudely) *represses* all deviations from its orthodoxy. . . ."

PAMPHILUS