

## ***in the magazines***

Summarizing "De Gaulle — A Summing Up," George Lichtheim writes (*Commentary*, September): "Every age has its own cant. Ours is that of 'pragmatism,' a phrase designed to conceal the fact that the old conservative-liberal ideologies are dying and nothing else has yet taken their place. Technocracy? But how can one glamorize it? Call it 'socialism' or what you will, but don't go about proclaiming that henceforth the world is going to be run by astronauts and such-like characters, not to mention nuclear physicists or prophets like Herman Kahn. Technocracy is a state of affairs, and pragmatism is a state of mind. Neither represents a system of beliefs, and people have to believe in something: France, Europe, America, the Soviet Union, the Cultural Revolution, Black Power, or what-you-will. Technocracy fills the vacuum left by the disappearance of liberal democracy in its nineteenth-century form, but it is not something that anyone is going to shed blood for. This was the hardcore sense in de Gaulle's sneers about the 'stateless bureaucrats' in charge of the Common Market. Europe? A splendid idea, but not at the expense of France if you please. France has been there for a thousand years and men have died for it. This is how nations are born. It is still true. If Biafra ever becomes a nation, it will have been at the cost of blood. Not to mention Israel . . . ('Of course they are admirable people,' the General blandly remarked to protesting Gaullists the day after he had imposed the arms embargo . . .) Are the Europeans ready to die for Europe? One doubts it.

"At Colombey the old soldier now has time to complete his memoirs, while his successors divide his heritage. For the rest one may be sure he will carry on as usual: thinking of France and despising the French. 'They will return to their vomit,' he said contemptuously some years ago, when asked what would happen to the country after his departure. They have in fact decided to go forward so as to become part of the modern world, and while the process is not quite complete, it is far enough advanced to make it improbable that anyone can reverse it. Now that the archaic armature of Gaullism has been removed, the lineaments of a new society are becoming discernible. Strange to relate, it is a society not greatly different from the new Germany across the Rhine. When the historians get down to the writing of this chapter, they are likely to conclude that Charles de Gaulle presided over a transformation that spelled the death of everything in which he believed."

"Had Barth lived longer, would he have given us a theology of revolution?" Answers Jacques Rossel of Switzerland, a member of the Executive Committee of the World Council of Churches (*The Ecumenical*

*Review*, July), "Probably not. To him the expression 'revolution' was far too ambiguous. Nevertheless, he may not have dismissed the possibility of outlining a theology of revolution *in the perspective of the theology of crisis*. Revolution can be defined as the passing from an old world into a new one. Assuming this, the revolutionary event towards which we are pressing is the consummation of God's revolution in Christ. We are in the continuing process of passing from the old world into the new one. There is a constant fermentation because the new world is already acting as a ferment in the old one. Fermentation is therefore another expression for revolution. In this perspective fermentation and revolution are closely related to crisis and judgment.

"Barth has given us the earnest of further thinking in the last chapter of his *Dogmatics*: 'Life in Hope.' In this chapter Barth comes down strongly with a teaching of eschatology requiring of Christians to act in the present world as potential ferments of the new one. A Christian who is only interested in the last things and not in the present ones, on the ground that the present things are penultimate and must pass away, has a wrong understanding of hope. The Christian whose hope is fixed only on the last things is acting as if there were a period of hopelessness through which he had to make his way, looking neither to the right nor left. But if Christ is the goal and end of time, says Barth, this means that *time with all its contents is at least partly determined by the fact that it moves towards this as its end and goal*. There are in this world already signs of the new world. The Christian cannot shut his eyes to it. He expects to come up against these signs and indications. He perceives them as such. He is both comforted and startled by them. He is 'directed by them to the coming of the Lord, and to be prepared for it. Just because the Christian hopes for the ultimate and the definitive, he also hopes for the temporal and provisional.' And further on Barth says: 'Hope takes place in the act of taking the next step. Hope is action, and as such it is genuine hope.'"

An article in the September 3 issue of *The Christian Century* challenges the denial by an Assistant U.S. Attorney of conscientious objector status for an American Jew who based his claim on Jewish teachings. The government attorney, as reported by the *National Jewish Post & Opinion*, had stated that "the Old Testament is 'replete' with instances of violence and war," and that the best example of the Jewish position lies "in Israel itself today."

To Stuart Gottlieb (executive director of the Amer-  
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ican Council for Judaism) the U.S. Attorney "makes the mistake of confusing the historical narratives of violence, war and nationalism in the Hebrew Scripture with its *religious* teachings. However significant the historical record, the major strand in the Bible is the universalist message of the great Hebrew prophets from which the Judeo-Christian religious values of the Western world derive. To identify Judaism with the military and nationalist exploits of the biblical Hebrews is to do it incalculable violence.

"Furthermore, Attorney [Roger] Williams should be aware that Judaism did not stop, as it were, at the water's edge of the Bible once the canon was closed. There is a 2,000-year old history of Jews in the Diaspora, set down by generations of rabbis in the Talmud and remembered in the oral tradition which indeed taught Jews 'to place the pursuit of peace above all other goals' except God. . . .

"Mr. Williams' second error is more complex and difficult. He would have it that the state of Israel exemplifies 'the Jewish position' on peace. Is this true? Israel is the state of its own citizens and nationals, not of Americans. Granted that Israel is known as 'the Jewish state' and claims to be 'the sovereign state of the Jewish people.' This claim, insofar as it implies sovereignty over Americans who are Jews, has been rejected by the United States . . . .

"Clearly, our government cannot insist that it does not 'condone the involuntary identification of its citizens with a foreign state' and then proceed, as Attorney Williams does, to identify an American citizen with Israel because that American appeals to Judaism's teachings. Nor can our government protect its citizens of Jewish faith from any Israeli claim upon 'the Jewish people' and also assert that U.S. Jews are to be judged by the example of 'Israel itself.'" . . .

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Dramatist Arthur Miller's account of his travels and encounters with writers and others "In Russia" (with accompanying photographs by Inge Morath), adds an interesting dimension to the literature produced by American visitors to that country — not withstanding an initial historical inaccuracy ("It is now over fifty years since a relatively small radical party in Russia overthrew the government of the Czars . . ."). He begins:

" . . . the problem has always been, with what to compare? The American is especially torn by this because he is both the best and the worst observer of Soviet things. The best because the Soviet Union is at present the only country cast to the same physical scale as the United States in terms of its technological possibilities and resources; and the ideal standard of accomplishment in the Soviet mind itself is more often

than not that of the United States. We are the worst observers, however, wherever we are face to face with poverty, inefficiency, or dirt. The moment we set foot abroad we forget that some of our cities are the dirtiest, worst kept in any 'developed' country, our public transportation most abominable, our medical services for the poor close to horrible, and so forth. Instead, we compare the worst in Russia with the best in America. Food, for example. Nourishing though it is, most Russian food seems heavy and not very varied. There is some terrific food in New York, but between New York and Chicago, Chicago and St. Louis, St. Louis and San Francisco, is a gastronomic wasteland, and so it goes.

"We are also the best and the worst when it comes to understanding what Russians are talking about — the language difficulty itself apart. We both share an absolute faith in progress, which is to say that man's fate is to go from worse to better, and we are as one in believing that the benefits of progress must be spread among all the people. So we are both very eager to know what a person 'does,' how much he makes, what sort of house he lives in. The Russian conversation, however, soon gropes toward fundamental attitudes, states of mind, the nature of the person rather than his occupation, and this is something we do not know how to talk about; it verges on 'philosophy,' which to most normally educated Americans is what history was to Henry Ford — 'bunk.' It is perhaps the basic reason why Chekhov, for example, is so hard to perform outside Russia, and especially difficult in the United States. To us, the characters seem vague, disconnected from one another, strangely abstract rather than real. We are much more interested in what a thing is, how it works, and very little interested in what it means. We are the triumph of technology. The irony is that the Russian aspires to hard, materialist, dialectically sound explanations of process — the American style — when in fact he is extraordinarily quick to idealize and to reach for general principles. Nothing could be more alien to the American.

"This account makes no attempt to compare Russia with any other place. . . . It reports the images which underlie the Russian cultural consciousness — the images evoked by novels, poems, paintings, and plays and by their creators, and there is nothing that has more sweetness, more personal meaning for these people."

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In other periodicals:

"The Solitary Revolutionary: Proudhon's Notebooks," by George Woodcock. (*Encounter*, Sept.)

"Cold-War Scholarship: The Hoover Institution," by Peter S. Stern. (*The Nation*, Sept. 1)

"A Problem of Ethics" (the Arab-Israel dispute), by Ben Halpern. (*Midstream*, Aug./Sept.) PAMPHILUS