

In the Magazines

Just last month *Worldview* published two quite different views of the colonels' regime in Greece—David Holden's "The Greek Colonels and Their Critics" and Thomas Pew's review of *Eyewitness in Greece*—neither author expressing optimism about a democratic future for that land.

But Leslie Finer, writing in the *New Statesman* of April 21, is cautiously optimistic, and this because of the formation of "the most effective of any of the Greek resistance organisations" to date: the Society for the Study of Greek Problems. "Treading with the utmost caution, and stretching to the limit the tight margins which the regime allows for the expression of open dissent, this society, under its innocuous title, has become the focal point for the desire of Greece's intellectual leaders to engage in active opposition. . . . The importance of the SSGP. . . is that it escapes the ban on political parties while performing an active political function"—providing "a public area for the emergence of an alternative future leadership of a democratic Greece."

"It is true," Finer notes, "that there is little or no enthusiasm in Greece for a return to government by the old (and now five years older) bunch of politicians, whether of the Karamanlis Right or the Papandreou Centre. It is the lack of a visible alternative to these discredited men, it is said, which has inhibited the growth of an effective resistance movement. But this is to argue in a circle. Public leaders, by definition, can only emerge and be recognized as such in the full daylight of public politics. They cannot be seen in the dark. . . ."

"But in the absence of alternative leaders *now*, these men (and even King Constantine if he could be stirred from his Roman lethargy) are the only public figures in opposition whose names alone can provide a rallying point. In this context, the society . . . brings an improvement: through the total blackness of suppression of all political activity, it illuminates, however faintly, an area in which potential alternative leaders of the country can be seen in action. And it is encouraging that relations between the society and the political 'old guard' seem to be of the best."

Finally, and "paradoxically" for Finer, "it is the dictators who teach us the most telling lesson about democracy: that direct political participation in government (a qualified concept even in the most advanced of democratic systems) is not nearly so important as the assurance of the maximum freedom for the widest range of expressions by the leaders of thought and opinion. . . ."

"It is perhaps not surprising that this eminently

Platonic idea has been well and truly grasped by the present rulers of Greece. They have been largely indifferent to the aim of wooing the masses; but they have made sure of their stranglehold over the cultural and intellectual leadership, not only in terms of individuals but, above all, by control of its institutions. . . ."

"It is in their capacity to preserve at least the memory of sane and civilised standards in the education of the rising generation of Greeks that those who are active in the [SSGP] can offer the most effective resistance of all. . . ."

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A couple of issues back a book called *The Secret Army: The IRA, 1916-1970* was favorably reviewed in these pages. Now the author of that study, J. Bowyer Bell, has taken a look at "the first wave" of books attempting to chronicle the "recent troubles" in Northern Ireland. Virgin territory, yet "neither the observers nor the participants have in print as yet produced a single definitive work nor in fact a very satisfactory plain tale of events—much less a revelation into the nature of the conflict," he says (*The Review of Politics*, April).

This initial flood of publications, Bell concludes, "largely the product of journalists, instant analysis and official—not authoritative—investigation has if nothing more revealed 'the problem' to a wider if still not very interested audience. And yet when all is read and done, there are not only no answers but no explanations. All agree that the troubles have historical roots but one man's history is another's myth. Even the alien from afar become involved; his perceptions adjusted to the Celtic mists and Orange passions. Even his book becomes part of the problem. For some the troubles are the result of The Devil, Roman or Protestant, Class Conflict or Imperial Predilections. Some do find the simple explanation in the hidden hand of Roman power or the machinations of Perfidious Albion. Some see Northern Ireland as a typical postcolonial situation and others as a unique combination of the most diverse and peculiar historical trends. . . ."

"Perhaps serious academic investigation can reveal the basic common ground available in Northern Ireland on which those long forgotten bridges might be built. Perhaps such investigation might reveal no such ground, . . . not all problems are amenable to compromise or even conciliation. When children prattle different nursery rhymes, play different games, curse with different words, live from the moment of birth in an alien world to that of the child across the lane—and when full grown gain certain benefit from the difference—then books probably can do little at the moment for Ireland. But books, at least, unlike bombs, are not a clear and present danger. And, who knows, each may come a bit closer to the truth and, despite all, the search for truth still seems an important activity—even in Northern Ireland."

From Jacob Bronowski, Director of the Council for Biology in Human Affairs at the Salk Institute, some thoughts on "Technology and Culture in Evolution" (*American Scholar*, Spring):

"The fact, the dreadful fact, is that the assertion by those who speak for a counterculture that technology distorts human nature is not only false, as biology and as history. It is a deliberate act of mischief, for it is a recapitulation in modern dress of the anti-intellectual, irrational and illiberal prejudices that have always been endemic in America. In the past this homespun obscurantism has been a defensive faith for the old; now it is being sold to the young as a respectable brand of snake oil that

will dull the itch of ignorance. . . .

"What we have done, and should be proud to own, is to make the benefits of technology (in the sense of a high standard of health, convenience, privacy and information) as much a human right as life and liberty. . . . Of course, the proliferation of the apparatus to do these things, the water mains and the sewers, the apartment houses, the roads and the telephone wires, the tin cans and the gift wrappings, for a time has turned the landscape cockeyed. But that distortion is not the price of technology—it is the price of revolution anywhere, at any time, like the guillotine springing up in the Place de la Concorde. . . ."

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were too young to hear it will come to understand the truly radical and revolutionary meanings of it.

Otherwise, change will be sought by "radicals" who are creatures of the culture's overemphasis of violence, and their "revolution" will produce no real change at all.

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The End of Progress?

To the Editors: Noel Perrin's "The End of Progress" (*Worldview*, April) brings to mind the story about the private tutor who tried to teach her wealthy charge about the life of the poor. The little rich girl sat down to write a story, which began: "Once upon a time there was a very poor family. Everybody was poor. The Papa was poor, the Mama was poor, the children were poor, the cook was poor, the maid was poor, the butler was poor, the gardener was poor—Everybody was poor." Members of one class cannot help judging members of other classes in terms of their own class expectations and values. Of all forms of ethnocentrism, class ethnocentrism is one of the most difficult to restrain.

The only two qualitative changes in social living that man has ever known are the agricultural and the industrial-scientific revolutions. Neither has attracted much or very favorable attention from literary intel-

lectuals or pure scientists. . . .

Although Perrin cautions that he doesn't feel confident of his abilities as prophet, he assures his readers that he thinks he can see correctly "the assumptions that Americans, and people of the developed world in general, have lumped together under the name of progress." He maintains that we are at a transitional state in our history that will be noted as the "end of the age of linear movement known as progress, and the beginning of a new age of that universal recycling known as process." This new period will be a time when people recognize their animal instincts and enjoy the process of living from day to day rather than pursue material goals that have proven to be hollow victories, once attained. . . . A bucolic utopia like that enjoyed by the British poet of nature William Cowper and his American counterpart Henry David Thoreau awaits those willing to drop out of the race for material success. Cowper and Thoreau, however, made the choice voluntarily. . . . The world's underprivileged would also appreciate a choice.

If Perrin, as a matter of personal choice, goes into the White Mountains and exists the way much of the world's lower class does—half-starved, frequently sick and diseased, illiterate and prone to die prematurely—then he can use the editorial "we" and claim to be speaking for mankind. What he does, however, is to propose that the choice be imposed upon others who are not free to choose. . . . Almost

unanimously, in any country where they have had the chance, the poor have chosen to move from farm to factory.

Instead of losing freedom to industrialization, the common man has gained it through this process, as witness Western Europe, the United States and Japan. The case of the rural-Southern Negro can hardly be a better illustration. Although the Bostonian and the New Yorker may lament overcrowding and wish for a return to nature, he could hardly be forced to live in rural areas in the South and Midwest that have consistently lost population to urban-industrial areas.

The historian Carl Becker once derided the proclivity of some of the younger members of his profession to predict "without fear—and without research." . . . I, too, lack confidence in my ability as a prophet. My suggestion, nonetheless, is to look at the situation of the entire world population at present in terms of health, education, wealth and general well-being and compare it with any other period in our history. One cannot escape the indisputable truth that the situation as a whole, rather than being catastrophic, is better than ever and that there still exists a great deal of room to expand. My estimation is that people looking back will see our day as one of a rapid increase in the well-being of the world's dispossessed in spite of admonitions from the established classes that man has already acquired so much power, knowledge, freedom, life expectancy and refine-