

*Can the American Republic and the American Empire co-exist? Mr. Morley advances arguments which—the editors of Modern Age hope—may open a serious discussion in the pages of this Review. In this, as in many other matters, the editors seek to stimulate thought, rather than to express a single point of view. A reply to Mr. Morley's thesis may appear in a subsequent number.*

## *American Republic or American Empire*

FELIX MORLEY

IT HAS BEEN a long time now since I was reluctantly driven to a political conclusion that shocked me greatly when I first felt forced to accept it. I certainly hope that my readers will not merely criticize this conclusion, which is easy, but will also be able to disprove it, which I fear is more difficult.

We seem to have reached the stage, in our national evolution, where we have a vested interest in preparation for war. It has become necessary for us to have a powerful enemy. Soviet Russia is currently our target not only because its economic system is communistic and its political system tyrannical, but perhaps primarily because the Russian organism rivals ours in actual or latent physical power. Russia could revert to free enterprise, or restore an hereditary Czardom, tomorrow; and still our Secretary of State would be compelled to question her *bona fides*. Peaceful co-existence with Russia is impossible not simply because of Communist plotting but because our economy apparently needs the constant stimulus of a threat of large-scale war.

That, I greatly fear, is the fact, not less true because so ugly and unwelcome. It is a necessary part of democratic theory that facts unwelcome to the majority should be at least ignored, and if sufficiently disturbing perhaps completely suppressed. So it

is only because the United States is not yet really a democracy that I venture to present some of the evidence for my naturally unpopular thesis. It is unpleasant to be, or even to seem, critical of one's own country. But there would be mighty little progress, in any line, if the conditioned apathy of the majority were never challenged. And the glory of our federal system of government is that it not merely sanctions but—so far at least—has definitely served to encourage criticism of "the insolence of office."

The provision of "full employment" has now become part of the settled policy of our national government, accepted by both of the major political parties. There is some difference of opinion as to the role that the central government should play, in preventing any serious unemployment. But both parties accept the underlying responsibility to intervene if, as, and when private employers are unable to offer jobs. Since the Great Depression, the movement in this direction has advanced from spasmodic work-relief to the ambition of a guaranteed annual wage. There is no reason whatsoever for thinking that the effort of organized labor in behalf of stabilized employment will slacken. There is every reason for expecting that every trade union achievement in this direction will be followed by further

demands which will be made effective by political as well as by industrial pressures.

It does not follow, however, that the trade cycle has been, or can be, stabilized. An excess of production will continue to lead to heavy inventories and then to a cutting of production schedules in order to reduce surplus. We see this currently in the automobile industry, and we all know that—through a process of chain reaction—any “soft spot” in a major industry will tend to spread: backwards to the producers of raw materials, forwards to the middleman and distributors. Unless the slack is taken up, any protracted slowdown in automobile production will before long threaten the employment both of steel workers and of salesmen. Then further effects come into play. Clothing stores in Pittsburgh find they don’t need so many clerks, and advertising agencies in New York dispense with copy-writers. Grocery sales go down and newspapers fail to replace superannuated reporters. There is no end of it—until the demand again becomes effective.

So far as agricultural production is concerned, a temporarily effective—though highly dubious—remedy has been found. Through its Commodity Credit Corporation the national government simply buys the undisposable surplus, in lines ranging from peanuts through butter to wheat, and stores it up for Mr. Benson’s cogitation. But we have not yet reached the stage where Congress sets a parity price on Buicks and Studebakers, purchases those that cannot be sold on the free market, and stores them in the holds of discarded Victory ships.

We have as yet refrained from that solution for excess industrial production not because it is inherently absurd—it would be just as sensible as our agricultural policy—but because there is an *alternative* lacking in the case of food and tobacco. That alternative is what we call Defense Production. As long as the country is menaced, or thinks itself menaced, Congress will patriotically vote almost unlimited funds for armament. Such armament is for the most part what is called “hard goods”

—metal products directly stimulative to the extractive and fabricating industries.

These are the industries that absorb the greater part of our investment capital, and provide the bulk of employment. If business is good in those industries, it will be good throughout the nation as a whole. Heavy defense spending, maintained at a high level year after year, insures prosperity for basic industry. Thence it permeates, through sub-contracts and high wages, to the economy as a whole. For if the *retarding* effects of a depression spread quickly through a capitalistic economy, so do the *stimulative* consequences of inflation. Therefore, if unemployment in an area is certified by the Department of Labor as “substantial”—now defined as six per cent of the working force—the Department of Defense must channel *by administrative order* a proportion of its contracts to that area.

Congress, which nominally controls the purse strings, seldom does much to cut the military estimates. They are presented as essential for the national security, and it is all but impossible for even the most conscientious legislator to prove that they are not essential. It is, of course, possible to find evidence of military waste. Many instances of this have been detected and publicized by the Hoover Commission. But the defense budget is not pared much by effecting economies of this sort. Moreover, there is reason to believe that this budget is customarily padded perhaps five per cent on the assumption that it will suffer that much reduction by the Congress.

In sketching this picture I do not mean to be critical of the Department of Defense, either under its present or previous managements. This department does not control the foreign policy of the United States, but does have the responsibility of providing the physical power without which our foreign policy could not even pretend to be effective. Consequently, the more grandiose the American foreign policy, the more enormous the defense estimates must be.

The pleasant, but definitely misleading, word “defense” tends to obscure that fact,

If the Secretary of State declares that our policy is one of "massive retaliation" against Russia, at times and places of our own choosing, the assertion has one meaning for the average citizen, and quite another for the responsible Secretary of Defense. He must provide the men, the guns, the tanks, the ships, the planes, the reliable services of supply, for fighting which might be in the frozen wastes of the Arctic, in the steaming jungles of southeast Asia, in the waterless deserts of Arabia, or amid the congested cities of Europe. The more extensive the foreign policy, in short, the more extravagant the military estimates necessary to give it substance.

Political scientists should give much more attention than is customary to the effect of these huge defense appropriations, continued in terms of tens of billions of dollars year after year. For while the *immediate* consequences may be primarily financial and economic, the *ultimate* consequences—which we are now beginning to witness—are political in the deepest sense of the word. Let us consider, for a moment, the results of defense spending which, since the close of the Korean War, has never fallen below thirty billions of dollars annually.

This infusion of public money, on such a gigantic scale, has given a tremendous stimulus to the entire economy of the United States. Instead of the contraction which normally afflicts a capitalistic economy when war spending is curtailed, we have had a continuous hectic prosperity, primarily because war spending has *not* been curtailed. In only one year since the close of World War II has our military expenditure been less than double what it was at the peak of World War I, and in that one year—fiscal 1950—it was almost double. We have avoided the depression that normally follows war by the simple expedient of avoiding peace. That is the explanation of the "miracle" of our prosperity.

Because of the tremendous vitality of our economy we have guns without abstaining from butter, and with a depreciation of the

dollar rather less than might have been expected from so much unproductive spending. The depreciation has nevertheless been real. The Monthly Letter of the National City Bank, for May 1956, presents some interesting evidence on this point. It shows that if you had bought a \$1,000 Savings Bond in May of 1946, for \$750, you would have received back, at its maturity in 1956, the equivalent of \$759 in 1946 purchasing power. Out of this, however, at the minimum rate of income tax, you would have had to pay the Internal Revenue \$50. Nominally, you would have gotten back \$1,000 for your \$750 investment. But in terms of what the money would buy you would have lost \$41 of your original investment in return for having lent it to the Federal Government for ten years.

Throughout those ten years, nevertheless, the Treasury Department has consistently advertised its Savings Bonds as "the safest investment in the world," a palpably fraudulent claim which would merit and receive prosecution if paralleled by a private investment trust. Those with financial acumen have during the past ten years made money by boycotting government bonds in favor of equities. But the average citizen, placing undue trust in the word of his government, has lost out where the more cynical and better-informed have gained. It is difficult for people to realize that oil stocks may be a far safer investment than so-called "Savings Bonds." And by the time the realization has painfully dawned, changing conditions may make the opposite true.

I mention the dubious investment value of savings bonds, during an inflationary period, because it illustrates the deplorable fact that one can no longer afford to believe what government officials say. In the case of the "E" bonds this can be statistically proved. But in other, far more important, cases the unreliability of official statements is equally subject to question. For this one should not blame the individual bureaucrat, who in many cases may not even himself realize that he is deceiving the public. The task for the political scientist

is first to understand, and then fearlessly to reveal, the circumstances that create such an immoral and therefore ultimately disastrous atmosphere.

As a step towards understanding I return to the effect of our enormous military expenditure on the national economy. To fill the orders for hydrogen and atom bombs, for guided missiles, flat-tops, jet planes and lesser weapons—a rapid expansion of our productive capacity has been necessary. Some annual expansion is properly to be expected, but by no means all of what we have seen in the past six years can be called healthy. Much of it—I am not in a position to say statistically just how much—is manifestly unhealthy because it is based on an armament expenditure which seemingly cannot be reduced below approximately \$100,000,000 a day.

Along with the spurious prosperity produced by this cold-war spending has come acceptance of the New Deal theory that it is a duty of the national government to find a well-paid job for everyone. Indeed, I think it fair to say that the majority of people now insist that the national government provide full employment. If one Administration fails to do so, we'll simply elect another that will. Full employment, moreover, is only the basis of what is euphoniously called the "liberal" political position. On top of the guaranteed job is a whole superstructure of further expectation—pensions, hospitalization, minimum wages, vacation pay, free meals and heaven knows what other "fringe benefits." If private enterprise can provide all these social benefits and subsidies, all right. But if private enterprise fails to provide them it is certainly now the general expectation that Washington will.

So far, the various benefits are being provided, and as I have said with less actual depreciation of the currency than one might reasonably expect. But they rest to a very large extent on the basis of a huge defense expenditure. And if that type of spending were cut from one hundred million dollars a day to one million dollars a

day—which in a peaceful world would still seem a sizeable amount to spend on armament—the economic consequences would be profound. They would be so profound that such reduction—or anything approaching it—is simply not a matter of practical politics.

In other words, our whole economy now is geared to preparation for war, and if we stopped preparing for war the effect on the economy would be disastrous. Instead of plenty of work at high wages, there would be, for a time at least, much less work at much lower wages. The situation would tend to rectify itself in time. Taxes could be cut to one-quarter of the present scale. The money saved thereby would lower production costs in lines of peaceful production, thereby stimulating sales and giving employment to the cold-war workers who would have lost their jobs. But the transition could not be made overnight and it would be accompanied by great hardship and suffering in every industrial community throughout the country. Americans are no longer conditioned for such endurance. They have been led to expect continuous prosperity and they would probably rebel if it came to a sudden, if only temporary, end.

There are, of course, alternative forms of government spending which might be expanded to offset a curtailment of defense expenditure. Foreign aid might be boosted even higher than the record \$4.9 billion requested for fiscal 1957. Federal spending in very substantial amounts could theoretically be channeled into roadbuilding, school construction, irrigation, flood-control and other domestic purposes. But for none of these other projects is it as easy to obtain Congressional authorization as for defense. Only in that one form of heavy outlay is it possible to assume the need, to ignore economy arguments and to get money in huge quantities appropriated on the mere pretext of necessity. Also, defense is the clear prerogative of the central government. Construction of schools, with a provision that they must be racially integrated, is not.

Congress will appropriate \$100,000,000 a day for defense only so long as people believe that the national security is actively menaced by a foreign power which seems to make such outlay necessary. And since Americans are not naturally a belligerent people, a constant propaganda must be exercised to make it appear that the potential foe is the personification of evil, and a dire threat to everything that we traditionally hold dear. Just as it is impossible to sell Savings Bonds without advertising them as a perfect investment, so it is impossible to spend a hundred million a day on defense without picturing a perfect enemy. The Communist regime has certainly done a lot to make this portrayal of Soviet Russia plausible. But, as happened with the Savings Bonds, a good hand can be very badly overplayed.

This became clear when the Moscow Government, on May 14, 1956, announced its decision to carry out substantial, unilateral disarmament, efforts to achieve this end by cooperative action with the United States having proved fruitless. The immediate result was a sharp downward turn in the stock market. In the words of the Associated Press: "The declines were attributed by brokers to a fear that defense spending in America might be curtailed." Secretary of Defense Wilson, therefore, promptly let it be known that the United States is not going to cancel any military contracts merely because Russia proposes to disarm. Secretary of State Dulles gave his customary moral gloss to the picture and added that what needs control is weapons rather than manpower. Had occasion demanded, this argument could quickly have been reversed. The New York *Times*, in one of its less successful editorial efforts, said that "we of the free world" should have "sympathy for the Soviet people," but not for those who "boast of their prowess with respect to hydrogen bombs and intercontinental ballistic missiles."

Since this type of boasting is not infrequently heard in the United States, one may hope that French, Italian, and German read-

ers of the *Times* did not misunderstand its somewhat turgid English. There is a tendency in Western Europe to regard us as a highly militaristic power, and to surmise that we do not dare to cut military spending because our whole economy is now geared into it. Certainly there is plenty of material in our business publications to confirm this belief. For instance, two days before the Russian disarmament announcement, by which time it was anticipated, the Kiplinger Washington Letter reported "a new undercurrent anxiety about the business future." But, it hastened to add, "defense spending is now moving gradually higher. . . . New orders will be going out in the next few months, making activity . . . in advance of the money later." And those who follow the excellent financial column by "The Trader," in *Barron's Weekly*, are well aware of the importance he attaches to defense spending as the basis of a buoyant stock market.

There is certainly strong evidence to suggest that the Administration must maintain defense spending at a high level in order to keep prosperity up to what people have learned to expect. And in an election year the political pressures operating to that end are doubly strong. The great industrial states are those with the highest number of electoral votes, and therefore those in which the political struggle for the Presidency is keenest. Precisely because the A.F.L.-C.I.O. tends to be Democratic, the Republican leaders must at this juncture be the more assiduous in maintaining "full employment." Michigan, for instance, swinging twenty electoral votes, is a politically uncertain state and a vital center of defense industry. At a time when there is already unemployment in Detroit and Flint, nobody need anticipate that any defense contracts there are going to be cancelled, regardless of what the Kremlin does. Secretary Wilson himself might want to do so, the interest of General Motors notwithstanding. But if he did so, I do not hesitate to assert that party chairman Alcorn would override him.

But if domestic economic and political

considerations make it impossible for the Administration to curtail defense spending, it is equally impossible for anyone in authority to admit the fact. Nobody can suggest that maybe in this matter of disarmament the position of Soviet Russia is more enlightened than ours. You might as well ask Secretary Humphrey to say publicly that during a period of inflation, oil stocks are a better investment than Treasury Bonds. And because it is practically impossible for these officials to tell the whole truth they get forced into overt rather than covert deception. They ignore the cost of living indices and assert that Savings Bonds are "the best investment in the world." They ignore the force and logic of the Soviet position and assert that since the Communists are congenital liars we can't ever believe a word they say. Such an attitude is barren of any promise for improvement in this international situation. If that is "world leadership," it leads only towards catastrophe.

If we merely had to confront calculated deception on the part of our officials it would be bad enough. But where there is free speech and a free press—and those assets we have not yet lost—deception must be protected against exposure. That need explains the proliferating network of information and public relations officers with which every government agency is now surrounded. They are not yet coordinated into a single Ministry of Public Enlightenment, as in Nazi Germany under Goebbels. But there is no doubt that we are on our way, to use Mr. Roosevelt's phrase. The irony is that the more we propagandize our own people, the more we fulminate about the propaganda of the Communists.

If you want specific evidence of what I am charging, I suggest you obtain the recently published hearings on "Availability of Information from Federal Departments and Agencies," held by a special sub-committee of the House Committee on Government Operations. There you may read what a number of highly reputable correspondents think of the way our Washington offi-

cialists conceal, distort, and control the facts on which the preservation of a democratic form of government depends. Particularly interesting is a statement, made on November 7 last year, by James Reston, head of the Washington Bureau of the *New York Times*. There Mr. Reston says that there is something worse than the "suppression of news" with which every Washington correspondent is now familiar. What must also be considered, says Mr. Reston, "is the growing tendency to manage the news." He gives as an illustration first the State Department's effort to play up the Summit Conference at Geneva as a great American diplomatic triumph, and subsequently to play it down as a failure, due wholly to general Russian cussedness.

I have myself experienced the pressures of this technique. In 1948, when I was broadcasting regularly on the Three Star Extra program, I developed an effective attack on the then official policy of dismantling German industry. Day after day I pointed out its general inanity. I went to Germany—a country I know well—and reported factually the stupidities I personally witnessed—the shipment of modern machine tools from Krupps to Skoda, in Czechoslovakia; the tearing down of the Ruhr steel plants, the movement of German chemists to Russia when we eliminated their means of livelihood in the West. Believe it or not, somebody in the Department of State requested the National Broadcasting Company to have me taken off the air. N.B.C.—more power to them—asked if the accuracy of my reports were challenged. "No," was the reluctant reply, "but Morley's broadcasts are contrary to public policy."

I am happy to say that it was dismantling—not my broadcasts—that was stopped. But if I should today start a series saying that German rearmament is a dubious blessing, and that perhaps dismantling made sense after all, again I feel sure the State Department would try to get me suppressed. Today, with increasingly rare exceptions, you only read or hear—in matters of for-

eign policy—what Washington wants you to read or hear.

And what Washington wants one month may be, and often is, the exact opposite of what Washington wants the next month. That is why the American people are so bewildered trying to follow the contortions of a foreign policy which first disarms and then rearms the Germans; which first prohibits and then insists upon Japanese conscription; which gives tanks to the French in Algeria and then chides the French for using them; which encourages the Chinese Communists to take over the mainland but then says touch Formosa at your peril; which first arms Israel against the Arabs and then the Arabs against Israel; which denounces the Russians for refusing to disarm and then denounces them for offering to disarm. The net effort of these and many other contradictions is that, while we are undeniably feared, we are no longer either respected or admired abroad. And, which is more to the point, we are certainly both confused and uneasy here at home.

The fundamental difficulty that gives rise to this painful and dangerous confusion is, I think, clear. We are trying to make a federal republic do an imperial job, without honestly confronting the fact that our traditional institutions are specifically designed to prevent centralization of power. With this direct contradiction between the traditional form of our government and the current purposes of our government, a sort of political schizophrenia is inevitable. It is revealed in wavering, wobbling, and wasteful policies. The wealth of this country is so great, and its power so enormous, that we can stagger around for a long time, like a drunken giant, with relative immunity. At some time and at some point, however, this fundamental conflict between our institutions and our policies will have to be resolved.

Clearly, there are two diametrically opposite ways by which the contradiction could be eliminated. We can adapt our policies to our institutions, or we can adapt our institutions to our policies. But neither

of those theoretically plausible solutions is at all likely to be attempted.

To make our policies conform to our institutions is to revert to isolationism. It would mean the termination of our alliances; withdrawal of all troops to our own shores; reduction of military expenditure to a truly defensive level; complete indifference to political developments abroad, regardless of whether these help or hinder the advance of Communism. It means a return to the philosophy expressed by Charles Pinckney, of South Carolina, on June 25, 1787, when he told the Constitutional Convention:

“We mistake the object of our Government if we hope or wish that it is to make us respectable abroad. Conquest of superiority among other Powers is not, or ought not ever to be, the object of republican systems. If they are sufficiently active and energetic to rescue us from contempt, and preserve our domestic happiness and security, it is all we can expect from them—it is more than almost any other government ensures to its citizens.”

Those wise and temperate words seem wholly out of date today. They are completely out of harmony with the doctrine of world leadership and all that this entails in the form of conscription, grinding taxation, bureaucratic labyrinths, manipulated public opinion, stock-piling of hydrogen bombs, and world-wide, hush-hush espionage. Yet Pinckney's political philosophy is that on which our system of government is based and it is one for which millions of Americans still retain a nostalgic longing.

It is that tenacity of tradition that makes the alternative solution—adaptation of institutions to policy—seem equally impossible. If we are going to remake the world in our image it is most irritating to have some hick Congressman raising questions about the costs involved, yet the theory of our government is that the gentleman from Podunk actually has that right. A Supreme Court decree to end segregation in our public schools is clearly the simple answer to

irritating Communist jibes about our racial discrimination. But then we meet the archaic doctrine of States' Rights, and the obscurantism of reactionary Southerners who brazenly maintain that the Constitution ought to be taken seriously. The upshot is that when we might be driving straight towards some well-planned world government goal, the whole business is bolo-axed by people with no real respect for Harvard Law School training.

I might note that I am not trying to be sarcastic. I am quoting verbatim remarks that I often hear from officials who deeply resent the fact that what they like to call the democratic will—meaning their per-

sonal will—is so often thwarted by our political system.

In this dilemma—between policies that demand centralization of authority and institutions that prevent it—the catchword “democracy” does seem to offer a solution. It implies that the people as a whole want those policies which the planners in their wisdom deem to be good. And if sufficient governmental pressure can be brought to bear on radio commentators and newspaper writers it isn't difficult to make it appear that people *do* want what the planners prescribe. The natural instinct of the good citizen is to believe what his government tells him. The natural instinct of the pub-

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licist is to report governmental policies in a favorable light. And if these decent tendencies can be systematically exploited, and strengthened by constant reference to the aggressive designs of a powerful and unscrupulous enemy, then opposition is gradually reduced to a minimum.

Unfortunately, this procedure tends to create a vested interest in the theory that Soviet Russia is our permanent and undeviating foe. Possibly that is the truth. I have no intention of denying the validity of the contention. I merely want to point out that, true or false, that idea has been implanted in the minds of the great majority, as fifteen years ago the idea of a peace-loving, democratic Soviet Russia was also carefully implanted.

Governments, of course, are not moral instrumentalities. Self-preservation is not merely the first but the only law of their nature. As individuals, officials—or soldiers—are of course no less moral than other men. But in the service of the State, especially if the existence of the State seems to be called in question, there are no standards of morality but merely of expediency. Those who ordered the atom bomb dropped on Hiroshima were wholly decent men. I expect many of them would willingly have laid down their lives to save an imperilled child. Yet they decided to incinerate ten thousand Japanese children because the welfare of the United States seemed to demand that horrible act. An American President defined Pearl Harbor as “a day that will live in infamy.” But Hiroshima—from our viewpoint—was somehow different. From the viewpoint of the State, no action that it commits can be infamous, and no action committed by an enemy state can be glorious. No objective standard of morality to which both are equally subject has as yet been developed.

This undeniable truth explains why, in our present stage of political evolution, there can be no such thing as political democracy. If the phrase has any meaning at all, it describes a political system that encourages the triumph of the majority will in

any particular political organism, that will be exercised by freely-elected representatives of whom a majority must, by definition, have plenipotentiary power.

That is certainly not our system of government. And even if it were, the system would not endure in any nation aspiring to world leadership. Such leadership necessitates frequent and often rapid changes of policy, determined not by the will of the allegedly democratic country, but much more by the uncontrollable and often unforeseeable actions of foreign governments. Those changes must be swiftly countered by the government that calls itself democratic. After the wholly undemocratic action has been taken it can of course be asserted that this was what the people really wanted. But if democracy is no more than apathetic acquiescence in the *fait accompli*, then poor Juliet was on the right track after all.

Moreover, it is to be remembered that people are moral, if governments are not. Morality, meaning the general observance of fixed standards, must be the rule rather than the exception in individual lives. Otherwise there could be no generally reliable community life; and society, instead of advancing, would slip backwards to become nasty and brutish. It does this, far too frequently, as a result of the dealings of governments with one another. But the general morality of individuals has so far been able effectively to repair the damage done by the general amorality of governments.

Precisely because individuals are moral, and because governments are not, the latter cannot afford to be democratic, or at least not in the case of any government that is seeking “superiority among other Powers,” to quote Charles Pinckney again. Any government with that ambition must constantly adapt its foreign policy to the exigencies of the moment. It cannot, as the word democracy implies, await a popular plebiscite before far-reaching action is taken. But, in order to appear democratic, the action when taken must be justified to the electorate.

That justification requires management of public opinion, which in turn requires something that is in fact if not in name a Ministry of Propaganda. To be effective, propaganda must above all else be decisive. It must depict the chosen course as "good" and all the many possible alternatives as "bad." If an advertiser did this he would immediately run afoul of the Fair Trade Practices Act. But governments, being amoral, do not apply to themselves the standards which moral individuals demand. It is the case of the Savings Bonds—"safest investment in the world"—all over again.

Government propaganda must be decisive, which is to say it must be dictatorial. But if a government is pretending to be democratic, it must also maintain that the line it is following is most carefully chosen in the national interest. If the policy is a complete gamble it must be described as a "calculated risk." If it is aggressive it must be called defensive. If it is pusillanimous, it must be labelled "masterful."

The more effective public opinion is, in other words, the more necessary it is that public opinion be cozened and deceived. And that is the essential reason why you cannot have democracy in a country pursuing an active and complicated foreign policy. It is a contradiction in terms to say that a government subject to public opinion can run an Empire. It is no mere coincidence that as Great Britain has become more democratic the British Empire has progressively withered away. And it is not in the least surprising that Soviet Russia, where public opinion is completely repressed, is so successful in its diplomacy.

Can it be called healthy that as our government embarks on policies which cannot possibly be democratic, our officials simultaneously become more fervent and insistent in calling this Federal Republic a democracy? When the Soviet Government refers to its various satellite states as "People's Democracies" we comment caustically on this deceitful use of words. But if the problem is viewed objectively it is difficult to conclude that the foreign policy of the

United States is any more democratically directed than is that of Soviet Russia.

The people of this country were not consulted in any way when the Truman Administration acted to resist Communist aggression across the Thirty-eighth Parallel in Korea. Nor was the ensuing "police action" ever approved, even retroactively, by the Congress. The argument of the Executive was that under the Charter of the United Nations we were committed by treaty to resist the Red encroachment, and that this treaty obligation took precedence over the Constitutional provision that only Congress can declare war. However good or poor the argument from a narrowly legalistic viewpoint, nobody could possibly attempt to justify it on the basis of democracy. As a matter of established fact, it was not the Council of the United Nations that urged the Government of the United States to instigate this "police action." The White House made the decision and then prevailed upon the U.N. Council to justify and support it.

Let me emphasize that my point is not in any way a criticism of Mr. Truman's action. The Communist aggression was bare-faced. If it had not been resisted, it would in all probability have been followed by other acts of aggression in Asia. And the only government in a position to resist was that of the United States. My case is not against the action taken, but merely against the sorry and wholly untenable argument that it had any relation whatsoever to democratic theory.

The reason that this misleading word is so frequently invoked must be that it gives an aura of respectability to the power politics in which we are now so deeply engaged. But there is something inherently dishonest, and distasteful from the traditional American viewpoint, in trying to gull a people in this manner. Moreover, the procedure is deeply dangerous to the security of the American system of government. That system is not a democracy; but it *is* one of self-government. First of all it is assumed that the American citizen can,

in most respects, actually govern himself—deal decently with his fellows and obey the Golden Rule of his own volition. Then it is assumed that the people of a locality can handle their local affairs for themselves, without meticulous orders from a distant point. On these two assumptions is based our whole structure of township, municipal, county and parish government. Over that is the layer of State governments, to which, and to the people, are reserved all powers not specifically delegated to the national government. The theory is that power should be kept away from Washington—not concentrated there.

Now it is very suggestive that when we talk loosely of democracy, nine times in ten we mean national rather than local democracy; we mean the majority will of the United States as a unit, rather than the majority will in each state as a sovereign entity, or the majority will in the various governmental sub-divisions of the separate states. Yet the larger the number involved, as Aristotle pointed out long since, the more difficult it is to ascertain the majority will on any specific subject. A New England town meeting can with some precision determine the community will on whether or not a street should be paved. No such precision is possible in a national plebiscite on federal aid in arterial road construction.

The larger the numbers involved, the more certain it is that the will of the majority becomes unascertainable, and is therefore interpreted in specific terms by a very small number of leaders who count on the apathy of the mass to accept their definition. We see this very clearly in the evolution of trade unions. There is little doubt that Samuel Gompers, in his early days, actually voiced the will of a majority of the cigar-makers in the United States. There is a great deal of doubt that Walter Reuther can voice the will of a majority of the automobile workers. What he can do is to say that if kept in office he will get them an ever-larger share of the products of the industry for which they work. That may be magnificent, but it is not democracy.

I have been told, and I see no reason to doubt it, that the operations of a local Soviet, in Russia, are quite democratic, so far as Communists are concerned. Elections are fair, representatives speak for their constituents, and the management of the local factory or collective farm is subject to a considerable amount of local control. But if Bulganin and Khrushchev decide to drop a hydrogen bomb, no local Soviet is consulted first.

For all our affirmation of democracy, and our feeling that the Russian use of the word is spurious, I am not at all sure that the situation is as different here as we would all like to believe. And if that anxiety is justified it is a very serious matter—far more so for us than for the Russians. It means that in grasping for the shadow of democracy we are losing the substance of self-government. In Russia, they never had much self-government to lose. This talk about democracy can be a snare. Behind the muddy thinking that the word encourages there can be building a self-perpetuating managerial elite, willing to govern in the name of democracy, so long as in fact they have their way.

Against any such development our federal system stands as a barrier, difficult for centralized planners to surmount. As long as the Constitution endures, the will of the majority remains, in many issues, subordinate to the will of the locality. And what this means is that a real democracy cannot be submerged by a pseudo-democracy, because in the town meeting the will of the majority is an ascertainable reality, while in the nation as a whole it is just a phrase, to be used by the demagogue for his advantage.

It may be that the era of our Federal Republic is drawing to its close. On July 4 we shall celebrate the one hundred and eighty-first anniversary of the Declaration of Independence. Its essence was the conclusion: "That these United Colonies are, and of Right ought to be, Free and Independent States." The theory that the States continue to be to a large extent sovereign

was implemented by the Constitution and continues as the basis of our organic law. But there is no question that the concept of State sovereignty is now repugnant to many who consider themselves good Americans.

It is repugnant to the humanitarians who are anxious to enforce their ideas of social justice uniformly, no matter how greatly conditions may vary from one section of the country to another. It is repugnant to the powerful labor unions, whose control is threatened locally if a State decides to oppose the closed shop with a "right to work" law. Federalism is similarly undermined by farm organizations dedicated to milking the national treasury through the device of rigid price supports. And until recently the theory of State sovereignty was disliked by Big Business, which found any variations in State laws an interference with the development of a national market. As business has lost its former political dominance, there has been a tendency in this quarter to defend States' Rights. But this is not a clear nor a uniform business attitude. It will scarcely stand up against the present dependence of profits on centralized military spending.

The one common denominator in all these varied assaults on the principle of federalism is Bigness. Everything must be "national," although the word is not used once in the Constitution and was regarded as dubiously as was "democracy" by the Founding Fathers. The current Washington telephone directory takes ten full columns merely to list the national associations with headquarters there, running from the National Academy of Broadcasting to the National Wrecking Company.

Since our institutions are demonstrably based on home rule and local sovereignty, some formula must be found to justify the general trend towards nationalization. And that is where this weasel word "democracy" comes in. Its general use is the more invidious because it does not mean defense of majority rule at the grass roots, where the will of the people on local problems is

based on accurate knowledge. It means the creation of a vague and semi-mystical *volunté generale* for the nation as a whole, in fields where emotions may be strong but where understanding cannot possibly be thorough. Just as Rousseau's conception of an inviolable "general will" led to the excesses of the French Revolution, so our new theory of national democracy is leading to very serious trouble here. It is the clear duty of those who call themselves political scientists to confront that fact.

There is no other existing Constitution so old as that of the United States. The skill of its design is attested by the marvelous flexibility with which it has served our country through almost a hundred and seventy years of amazing development, change, and growth. But there is a limit to the elasticity of any code that is defined in words. That limit is reached when institutions established to serve one principle are twisted and distorted to serve a diametrically opposite principle.

We talk as though the assumption of world leadership by the United States were merely a matter of turning a page in history. Brief a few lecturers for women's clubs, establish some courses in "international relations," build a huge military machine, house the United Nations in New York—presto, the job is done! It's not so simple. That is the lesson so refreshingly conveyed by "The Teahouse of the August Moon." I hope you have seen that play. It contains more political science than many a doctoral dissertation in the field.

What we are really attempting is a complete change in all the mores of the American people. World leadership requires centralization of power in the capital of the nation that seeks dominance. It requires an aristocracy—an elite—that can be completely indifferent to the gusts of public opinion. It requires a socialized economy, a docile labor force, and a system of education that focusses on the training of the gifted; the intentional subordination of those who may be born equal but who find it difficult to maintain that equality in any

form of intellectual test. To make this structure effective all institutions, from schools to electoral systems, must be designed to the end of concentrating full power, at any given moment, in unquestionably competent hands.

All that is the exact opposite of the development encouraged by our Constitution and we cannot in simple honesty swear our officials to uphold that Constitution and still expect them to violate its spirit in every official act. That course is to undermine the national integrity, which already is palpably lower than it used to be. In spite of Machiavelli, no thoroughly hypocritical nation ever dominated the age for long.

It seems to me inevitable that soon or late we must make one of two definite choices. We must either change our Constitution—openly and honestly—to conform with the imperial policies we seek to follow. Or we must modify those policies to conform to the Constitution as it now stands. The Federal system was not designed to promote world leadership by the United States. Indeed, it serves to make such leadership bungling and ineffective. We cannot indefinitely both keep our cake and eat it. We must face up to the problem squarely. Decisions are difficult. But nations cannot indefinitely postpone them.

I think we must face the problem before us in its stark reality. There is a tendency, on the other hand, to obscure it by criticizing this or that individual, and on the other by continuing to talk vaguely and misleadingly about "democracy." It is this second alibi which I have been condemning, so I must say a word in defense of those officials who are caught in the swiftly-running tide of world events.

They make mistakes, of course, and should be criticized. But the fundamental problem is not of their making. Eliminate any single man—from Franklin D. Roosevelt down—or up—and if he had never lived the issue before us today would probably be essentially as it is. That issue—whether we keep the Federal Republic or go on to the course of Empire which seems to some to beckon so alluringly—that choice is inherent in the growth of this country to its present stature and power.

There are some who will say that the choice before us is foreordained: that republics have always been short-lived and that we have now gone too far towards empire to reverse our steps. There is certainly much evidence to support that view. But there is also much evidence that our traditions are too tenacious to be wholly uprooted.

What I maintain is that our political scientists, at least, should face the issue squarely. The courage to do this is certainly in the American tradition, and that much of our tradition must at all costs be maintained.

When the surgeon is faced with a tough decision—to perform an obviously dangerous operation or to let it slide—he does not deceive himself with essentially emotional words. He draws upon all his scientific background, on all his knowledge and experience, and *decides*. If political scientists are scientists, and not just dilettantes in the amusing field of politics, they too will diagnose the cancers that not infrequently affect the body politic. They will not take refuge in the use of opiates—like the word "democracy."