

The American

CHRISTOPHER NORTH

WITHIN the chapel I had found that inner peace which I had been seeking — away from the tempest.

I had been sitting in a rear pew for a long time — alone. Just how long I did not know — for Time had ceased to exist — seemingly dissolved into that from which it is made — into eternity as it emerges out of the future and lingers, for a fleeting moment, on its journey into the past.

There was no sound save the soft whisper of beauty which came from the stained glass windows depicting memorable events in our history of Freedom — now long since forgotten.

Suddenly it seemed as if the figures came to life, as one by one they stepped down. I recognized General Washington, the Marquis de Lafayette, Anthony Wayne, Count Casimir Pulaski, Baron Frederick von Steuben and many others, as they filed past and with

Mr. North is a free-lance writer on social, economic, and political subjects. This essay, inspired by the Washington Memorial Chapel at Valley Forge, has been published many times, but today's unpeaceful world demands its further consideration.

great dignity strode up to the choir where they halted under the massed flags hanging limply from the walls.

I felt a cold gust of wind chilling the air as the doors opened to admit a host of ragged, frostbitten soldiers. Their faces were deadly pale. They looked haggard and hungry but in their eyes burned the eternal light of sacrifice and selflessness.

They were the Liberators who had fought and died for that Freedom which was handed down to be held in trust by the People of America for all the People of the World.

It seemed natural and fitting that these brave men should return to attend services in the chapel erected in honor of their great leader.

The chapel now became enshrouded in semidarkness.

All eyes turned toward the pulpit which had suddenly become illuminated by a ray of light from above.

In the pulpit now appeared a Man in a shimmering white robe. He was looking out over the strange and distinguished congregation with a grave expression.

The silence became intense.

A feeling of awe and exultation came over me as this Man raised his right arm and spoke:

"I bid you all welcome to my house, for I am the peacemaker. You have spoken of freedom and you have fought for it — but I say unto you that there can be no freedom without peace, and there can be no peace as long as men seek freedom through force of arms."

There was a pause.

Then this Man looked directly at me and said:

"My heart bleeds for all of you who came after them — for you are not worthy of this greater freedom. You know not how to cherish it because you do not understand the real meaning of freedom. To you it means release from fear of tyranny and want. You have made of your freedom a goal to be attained for your pleasure and your security. You should know that is not the fulfillment of your desires and whenever you think of freedom or seek it for these reasons, you become enslaved to it as, indeed, you are slave to your greed and ambition. Your brass bands play, your flags wave and your oratory flows freely — but I say unto you, that this is no way to serve freedom."

I cringed under the penetrating gaze — but then I rose and heard myself saying:

"But, Master, how then may I best serve freedom?"

And then, once more He spoke:

"Freedom, first of all, is the

privilege of choice — and when you choose freedom, it behooves you to live by it in reality. By so doing you will set an example to others who live in ignorance of its real meaning. Freedom gives you the choice between good and evil. This nation was created from among men of all races in order to demonstrate that peace among men is attainable. The brave men here assembled bequeathed a sacred trust, the terms of which call for this nation to dedicate itself to the fulfillment of its divine destiny which is to demonstrate the significance of the living spirit of freedom and thereby inspire all men to choose freedom through peace."

I felt a hand on my shoulder, opened my eyes, and found an old man with white hair and a black skull cap leaning over asking permission to sit by my side. I nodded and he sat down.

I looked around — the chapel was again empty — the Man in White was no longer in the pulpit. The great men of the past had returned to their places in the stained glass windows and the ragged soldiers had returned to their resting places under the green sod on the hillside.

The rays of the afternoon sun — now illuminating the stained

the soft whisper of beauty into a hymn of truth and faith.

The old man beside me was on his knees mumbling in a foreign tongue. When I inquired what he was doing and why he was here in the George Washington Chapel at Valley Forge, he replied:

"I am a refugee — one of the millions who pray that they be admitted to your country. I am doubly fortunate in that this day I received a certificate accepting me as a Citizen of the United States. You ask why I am here. I am here to thank God for having heard my prayers."

Perhaps the expression on my face indicated to him that I doubted his word for he handed me a crisp piece of paper which, indeed, certified that Josef Kolinsky of Poland had been admitted to citizenship of the United States of America.

"But, tell me, Mr. Kolinsky, how come that you — a Jew — chose to worship in this Christian Chapel of George Washington?"

The old man looked at me with an expression that I shall never forget. With tears trickling down his wrinkled cheeks, he barely managed to reply:

"I wish you could understand, Mister, that I came here because now I am an American."

Then I got up and left the chapel.

The battlefields of Valley Forge stretched out before me — with the dogwoods abloom on a distant hill — and beyond lay America — MY country.

Inside the chapel, on his knees

before God, I had left behind a real American — an American by choice — one who had chosen Freedom and knew how to cherish it.

That spring day, at Valley Forge, I too became an American — through my choice of Freedom as a Divine Spirit within me.

IDEAS ON LIBERTY

Democratic Despotism

I HAVE ALWAYS THOUGHT that servitude of the regular, quiet, and gentle kind...might be combined more easily than is commonly believed with some of the outward forms of freedom; and that it might even establish itself under the wing of the sovereignty of the people.

Our contemporaries are constantly excited by two conflicting passions; they want to be led, and they wish to remain free; as they cannot destroy either one or the other of these contrary propensities, they strive to satisfy them both at once. They devise a sole, tutelary, and all-powerful form of government, but elected by the people. They combine the principle of centralization and that of popular sovereignty; this gives them a respite: they console themselves for

being in tutelage by the reflection that they have chosen their own guardians. Every man allows himself to be put in leading-strings, because he sees that it is not a person or a class of persons, but the people at large that holds the end of his chain.

By this system the people shake off their state of dependence, just long enough to select their master, and then relapse into it again. A great many persons at the present day are quite contented with this sort of compromise between administrative despotism and the sovereignty of the people; and they think they have done enough for the protection of individual freedom when they have surrendered it to the power of the nation at large.

ALEXIS DE TOCQUEVILLE,
Democracy in America, 1835

THE NATURE OF SOCIALISTIC DISASTER

*"... until then will we hesitate to do anything worth-while toward keeping our country free from hyperinflation and disaster."**

LEONARD E. READ

OUR COUNTRY has stumbled into socialism during the past half century; by now — 1958 — we have adopted nearly all the things socialists stand for. Those of us who are aware of socialism's built-in destructiveness have watched this process with apprehension and are forever predicting, or warning against, the impending catastrophe which we think we see hanging over our society. Under socialism, some men are put at the disposal of other men, deliberately, legally, and on principle. Socialism, in other words, is premised on an immoral extension of political power.

But this is not all; socialism introduces disorder into the economic realm as well. Its economic reasoning is shot through with fallacies — which is why it has to rely on force to transact the business of production and exchange. This universe, we believe, is an orderly af-

fair, and therefore intolerant of disorder. It follows that while we are free to embody uneconomic and immoral practices in our society, we are not free to escape their inevitable consequences. Our malpractices will catch up with us and bear their fruits in eventual collapse and disaster. Thus runs our reasoning.

Socialism, as formal, legal American policy, was given its significant impetus 45 years ago with the adoption of the Sixteenth Amendment. With that law we proclaimed that taxation would become progressive. We adopted as principle something even worse and less idealistic than communism's "from each according to ability, to each according to need." The principle we adopted was, "from each according to ability, to each according to political expediency." That this principle — once accepted — even though moderately applied initially, would be increasingly practiced throughout the whole

*From *The Police Power* by Leonard E. Read in *THE FREEMAN*, June 1958.