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The Lukewarm Peace

THE main impression growing out of a recent trip to the crisis centers of the Far East is that a new phase in the world power struggle has opened. The Cold War seems to have passed; the period of the Lukewarm Peace now begins.

For the moment, at least, the danger of a cataclysmic military showdown has apparently receded. In its place, however, is emerging a new kind of showdown—just as important, just as demanding as the one just ended. It is a showdown for the majority. Communism aims to represent the preponderance of the world's peoples. It believes that it can put the United States in an impossible position by cutting us off from the bulk of the human race. Communism is anticipating the moment when it can ask America what we really mean by democracy, for it will call attention to its own position of leadership in speaking for the greatest good of the greatest number in the world itself.

In its quest of majority support Communism is not necessarily thinking in terms of direct political control. Indeed, such political control may now be unlikely. What Communism now seeks is wide acceptance for its leadership, especially in Asia and Africa. It hopes to do this by identifying itself with the things that are as important as life itself to the peoples of Asia and Africa. It realizes that the cause of Asia and Africa may well be the most powerful cause in history, involving as it does the struggle for freedom of nations and for self-respect of millions of individuals. That cause has been begging

for an outside champion. Communism believes that role is hers for the asking. So far there are no other contenders.

The recent Asian-African Conference at Bandung was a dramatic display case both of Communism's new world strategy and America's possible unpreparedness for the non-military showdown coming up in the world. At Bandung, Premier Chou En-lai of Communist China seemed supremely aware that a shift in the thinking of 100,000,000 people would also mean a basic shift in the world's balance of power. He tied his own nation to the common historical experience of the Asian and African peoples in tearing themselves loose from the foreign masters. He knew that the momentum of almost 200 years was stronger than any current political issues and he put that momentum to work in his own behalf.

America's unpreparedness for a showdown on the battleground of world public opinion goes deeper than our official failure to assess correctly in advance the true strength of the free nations at Bandung. Washington's moves on the international chessboard cannot be considered apart from the attitudes, habits, and approaches of the country as a whole. Real preparedness begins with this question: How much do we as a people actually know about Asia and Africa?

The answer is not obtained by a simple division of Americans into internationalists and isolationists. The fact is that our lack of preparedness is evident even among those who accept our relationship to the rest

of the world. Indeed, even in otherwise highly educated circles there is a serious shortage of working knowledge about the East. Except for a handful of colleges and universities higher education in America has never gone beyond what are largely empty generalizations about the majority of the world's peoples. There is no real depth in the comprehension of the diversity of Eastern cultures. We venerate what we call the 100 greatest books, but the titles that have the greatest meaning for more than 1,000,000,000 people are almost totally ignored.

IF A nation's language is the key to its culture, history, and outlook what do we expect to use instead of a key? Ninety-eight per cent of our foreign-language education has nothing to do with 70 per cent of the world's peoples. The spiritual beliefs of the majority seldom go beyond the survey courses. Little wonder that even among men with reputations as scholars or philosophers we find astonishing misconceptions about two-thirds of the rest of the world.

If our educational apparatus fails to provide basic preparation is it fair to place all blame on Government? We have training centers for foreign service to be sure, but these are more in the nature of a finishing school than the sources of long-range education in the vitals of foreign cultures. Thus, big decisions made on top Governmental levels about Asia and Africa are primarily concerned with strategy rather than history. Almost every day members of Congress have to pass upon measures concerned with peoples and places they have never seen and about which they have little real information.

The headlines and stories in our newspapers can stress the importance of what is happening in the East, but there is almost nothing in the way of historical background that can put the news in focus. Meanwhile we are up to our hips in the affairs of the Asian peoples, as is apparent from our involvement in the civil war in South Vietnam. We have committed ourselves to a certain result that will affect the lives of the citizens of that country, yet there is nothing but the vaguest comprehension in America of what the struggle in South Vietnam is all about.

The non-military showdown now impending will be fought not with propaganda slogans but with working knowledge and hard facts. What we know may in the end turn out to be more important than how fast we can fly or how many megatons of total destruction we can pack into a single bomb.

—N. C.

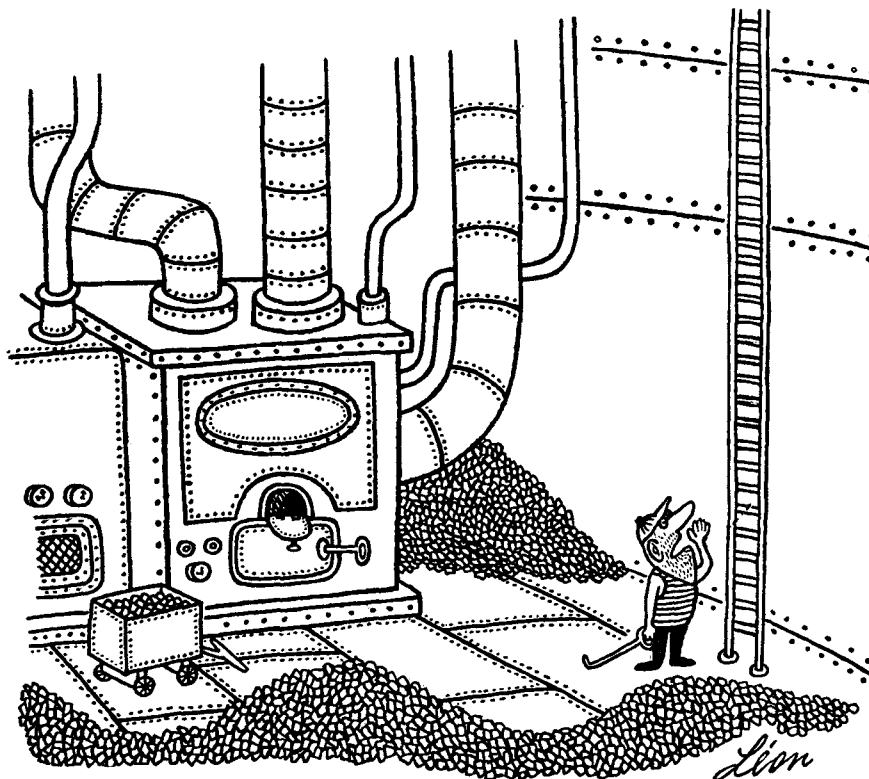
LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

RICHARDSON'S FOLLY

SELDOM HAS SR treated its readers to a more amazing "comedy of errors" than "The Day After We Land on Mars" [SR May 28]. It is hard to classify this article as comedy. It is equally difficult to regard the paper as serious writing; the writer, Dr. Robert S. Richardson, astronomer, has a most limited and warped grasp of the realities by which men live.

He declares, "In my opinion, the only valid reason for journeying to Mars is pure scientific investigation . . . For instance, we would like very much to know about magnetic conditions on Mars, or any planet for that matter . . . There are many other problems that would be crying for study. The difficulty would be in trying to decide which ones to do first. Whether the taxpayers would be willing to foot a bill of \$10,000,000,000 to learn that the magnetic axis of Mars is inclined seven degrees to its axis of rotation is a question." Perhaps my imagination is in need of re-tooling, but that sum of money seems like "paying too much for your whistle." It may be a sporting idea to explore, as Dr. Richardson puts it, "what lies beyond one's horizon," but there is also the tragic folly of what is commonly known as "a gambler's choice." Looking about us in today's chaotic world, we don't need a telescope to bring 1,000 more pressing and challenging horizons into focus than cold space, horizons teeming with explosive factors and creative possibilities of unprecedented significance. It would seem the better part of wisdom to invest the \$10,000,000,000, if it is to be expended anywhere, in resolving human tensions on Earth and in determining the right human equations by which we can hope to fulfil the destiny and dream of the ages. It would seem to be the height of folly to exchange such a king's ransom for some bits of desirable knowledge about magnetic conditions on Mars, or for a whole catalogue of scientific data, and in the process forfeit civilization as we now know it on Earth. What profit is it, if in gaining the whole universe, we lose the world in which we live and move and have our being?

There is a second, moral consideration. It is rooted in Dr. Richardson's argument that to colonize Mars it will be necessary to scrap the moral, sexual standards that now prevail in our so-called Christian civilization. He argues: "If space travel and colonization of the planets eventually become possible on a fairly large scale, it seems probable that we may be forced into first tolerating and finally openly accepting an attitude toward sex that is taboo in our present social framework. Can we expect men to work efficiently on Mars for five years without women? . . . To put it bluntly, may it not be necessary for the success of the project to send some nice girls to Mars at regular intervals to relieve tensions and promote morale?"



"Bert! Yer shavin' water's ready!"

Dr. Richardson made one pointed statement when he concluded his article by saying, "Is it not conceivable that in an entirely alien environment survival will produce among other things a sexual culture—shocking on earth—which would be entirely 'moral' judged by extraterrestrial standards?" What he proposes is not only "shocking" but utterly absurd. If he were not a scientist of obvious repute in scientific circles we would regard what he proposes as the immature day-dreaming of a high-school sophomore still wet behind the ears. What he proposes consigns him admirably into the category General Omar Bradley had in mind when he said we as a nation were in danger of becoming "nuclear giants and moral pigmies."

The point of all this is apparent if we go back in Dr. Richardson's article to where he discusses the "wherefore" of landing on Mars. He claims that "the biologist would seem to have the biggest stake in such a trip. If the *maria* consist of vegetation he would be in much the same situation as Galileo with his first telescope—wherever he looked he would be sure to make an important discovery . . . Biologists like to think of plant succession, photosynthesis, and natural selection as fundamental principles of life. But the fact remains that they have been studied only under the conditions that prevail on the Earth, and their universal nature can only be inferred. It would be a most striking piece of

evidence if such fundamental principles were also found to hold true on Mars."

In a word, this astronomer is interested in the universality of natural law, and in his mind it would be worth the expenditure of \$10,000,000,000 to send an expedition to Mars to be sure that natural laws such as prevail on Earth rule also on Mars and by that token everywhere else in the universe. But in the same breath, as it were, he concludes that such an expedition would be impossible without scrapping moral laws and, therefore, in order to validate the universality of physical law he wants to abandon and junk moral law.

Far be it from me to attempt to preach a sermon, but one cannot help wondering where we would come out, granting success to the Mars expedition with its junked moral standards and batch of "nice girls." Surely Dr. Richardson has been "around" sufficiently to know the absurdity of improving morale by debunking morality. One of the lessons as old as history is: "Where there is no morality the people perish." It would be well for scientists, especially Dr. Richardson, if resort were made more frequently and earnestly to the wisdom of the ages, particularly to the ancient Wise Man who said, "He that is slow to anger is better than the mighty; and he that ruleth his spirit than he that taketh a city," or maketh a landing on Mars.

JOHN W. McKELVEY.

Lansdowne, Pa.