

REFLECTIONS ON SEA AND SPACE



—Painting by Chesley Bonestell, from "The Conquest of Space" (Viking).

The Moon, as it will look from a space-ship 4,500 miles from its surface.

By PETER RITNER

ONE of the recent salvos of the Paperback Revolution, which makes every American a king so far as his personal library is concerned, is a reprint of Admiral Mahan's famous old book on *Realpolitik*, "The Influence of Seapower Upon History, 1660-1783" (Sagamore Press, \$1.95). Mahan picked the eighteenth century for his text because it was in these decades that Europe's two greatest powers made the decisions and fought the battles which illustrate his thesis, that control of the sea must prevail over control of the land. England, faced with the choice between maintaining an army or a navy, chose the navy; she economized on the size and frequency of her military interventions on the continent, and rode in her "wooden walls" to incomparable wealth and empire. France, confronted with the same choice, chose the army; she permitted her seamen's skills to rust and her ships to rot in their berths, and throughout the period suffered the humiliation of weighing less and less in the affairs of Europe until the Revolution extinguished the old France altogether.

Even when Mahan wrote his masterpiece (1890) he had to remind himself that to the days of steam most of the lessons learned in centuries of sail no longer applied. How much more profoundly must we qualify today, when a theorist like Sir John Slessor declares that Mach-2 aircraft

and small-scale atomic warheads render useless any kind of navy, aircraft carriers as well as battleships, or when perhaps even deeper thinkers declare that war itself is useless, in the sense that neither combatants nor countries will survive the next war to honor the victor. These points are well-taken; only a fool would pretend that Mahan's prescription of fleets of dreadnaughts and statecrafts of far-scattered coaling-stations and dependent sheikhdoms bears any relation to modern necessity. But when the Admiral commences to reflect on the internal, psychological effects of England's decision to command the seas he rubs up against a very modern issue indeed. For mankind, in 1957, stands on the brink of an adventure compared to which all the world's seas in 1660 were but a puddle, and to succeed in which we will need an inspiration and discipline fully matching the finest days of the Royal Navy. I refer, of course, to the conquest of space.

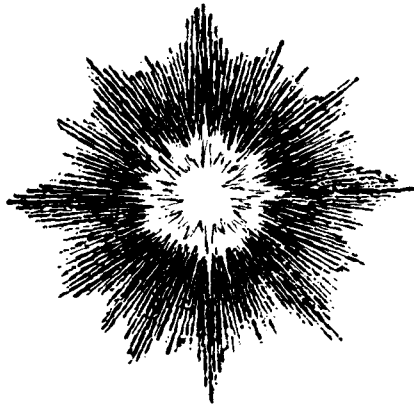
The *Saturday Review* has never published an article on space-travel that did not evoke a dozen or so letters of indignation. Many of these are of the "It can't be done" variety. But more serious objections come from people who believe in their hearts that we *should* not strive to enter space, that we have more important things to do than getting to the Moon, that since we can't handle the "progress" we already have we err in inviting the dangerous consequences of more "progress." Given the complex, exhausting political and

social obligations of our age, which at least do possess the merit of being Earth-size, why in the name of fair reason should any of us elect to take on the enormously costly project of reaching that worthless mote, our Moon?

Admiral Mahan notes that Frenchmen asked themselves why they shouldn't stay at home in 1660, and he was concerned over the similarity between that French spirit and the spirit of the comfortable middle-class America of his own time. Like America, France was notorious for her wealth. She was, and is, probably entirely self-sufficient. Like America, France had long frontiers, but (in 1660) weak neighbors. Like America, France also possessed a long sea-frontier which she mainly ignored; like us, she permitted the principal part of her overseas trade to be carried in foreign bottoms and, as we have remarked, she pampered an immense army at the expense of an adequate marine. Mahan concludes that France's decline was the direct result of this complacent and unstrategic policy of France's kings, and he warns against an American repetition of their mistakes. He preaches a powerful navy, which of course does not answer to the needs of our modern security. But his lecture on complacency is still relevant.

WE AMERICANS must realize that history never affords time for consolidation or leisure. So far as humanity is concerned, time is what history is shortest of. Innumerable rulers, often at the height of triumph and glory, have fallen into the trap: "Just let me rest for a while inside my fortress," such a ruler seems to say to himself, "relaxing with my people on the fruits of our victories and good fortune, and then, perhaps, when we are fully refreshed, we shall take the field again." Before he knows it this leader, or his unfortunate successor, is assaulted by weapons he never dreamed of, in the hands of soldiers he always had thought of as helpless tribesmen. And if he is just soft enough, or surprised enough, he is overcome and destroyed.

Only the rich, victorious state thinks it can afford smugness and repose, and riches and victories constitute a fierce temptation to jealousy and cupidity, as fertile mothers of invention as necessity ever was. No one will ever love America for our success or our money or our "goodness." We will be respected, not to say liked, only so long as we pioneer, physically and politically, in the name of the whole race of man. That our own country swarms with jobs



that cry out to be taken in hand right here, right now, is self-evident. But they must be done on the move, for if we halt for long we shall lose both the power to move and the power to do the work we stopped for.

Furthermore, progress (by which I mean technological progress only) often contributes directly to settling problems. It has, in the language of the law, the power to make them moot—so to alter their terms and significance that to solve them is no longer worth anyone's while. Consider the change which must come over our Middle-Eastern policy when large-scale atomic reactors have assumed the burdens of society. Oil will then be required only for lubrication, and we possess a more-than-adequate supply for that purpose right here at home. I do not say that ceasing to need Islam's oil will free us of Islam's complaints; I only remark the obvious, that when this day comes our policy—whatever it be—must be based on entirely new premises, to meet entirely new ends.

TO GET back to the prospects of space-travel, consider how changed our relations with the Asians and Africans must become when they have the opportunity to emigrate to the planets. Not that every Asian, or even a majority of Asians, will choose to make the trip, but it is the opportunity, the choice, that counts in men's hearts. Not that conditions on the planets will be utopian, or even gracious, but a hardy, hard-pressed people will certainly prefer them to the hideous slums of Calcutta and Johannesburg, just as our American forbears preferred indentures and Sioux arrows to the hideous slums of Manchester and Rome. No Point Four program, no annual subsidy, no export of food at famine-time will be able to compete with this promise of real adventure, real achievement, and real dignity, no matter how strenuous the terms of the contract.

For, and here is the crux of the

matter, no man will live without hope. He will kill himself if he is pressed too hard, he will goosetstep to murder and ruin under a lunatic, he will meekly permit his family to be herded onto a collective farm, he will genuflect before an endless parade of follies dressed up as ideals, but he will not live without hope. The stars are man's hope. No informed man alive does not acknowledge that it is only a matter of time before men set foot on the Moon. And from the Moon to Mars and Venus is a small matter. Nothing can stop the development. We know we are close to it. Already the great nations of the world are working for it day and night.

But how are they working for it? The *wrong* way. Instead of opening man's destiny to the imaginations of everyone, instead of establishing schools and professorships to train and stimulate these imaginations, instead of dispatching ambassadors to the rest of the world to ask its advice and participation, and to invite it to general conferences—instead, in a word, of pleasuring the just and passionate appetites of men for hope, if not for themselves, then for their children or grandchildren—the governments of the big nations have been entirely transfixed by the military potentialities of the space-frontier.

The space-station, a feat equalled in importance only by the Agricultural Revolution, is being entirely dominated in America by the Department of Defense. Although, for the benefit of the International Geophysical Year, a certain amount of publicity has been permitted to seep out about the satellite, the station's precursor, the black fog of "security" obscures all the main parts of the space-conquest program. This fog is especially black over the area of research on the rockets which must power the components of the space-station into an orbit and take men up for their assembly. We do know, in fact, that there are serious disputes within the Defense Department itself about the progress of rocket research, in at least one case leading to a court-martial. And what the Department itself thinks about its duties is vitally important to our argument here, for it may be that the type of rocket to be used to construct the space-station will not be at all suitable for a missile, and *vice-versa*. But, as the situation now stands, those who have charge of the money America is spending on rocket-research are not allowed to be primarily interested in the space-station. Those scientists who are primarily interested in the space-station are not hired for the rocket-

program, at least to do what they want to do. Detailed public debate about the program by scientists not employed by the Government is impossible, because they don't have the facts. Public debate by Government scientists is impossible, because of their career commitments. Here we meet that old question, "Who watches the watchers?"—a question that the check-and-balance system, and the Constitutional freedoms of press and speech, were designed by the Founders to forestall.

INDEED, one cannot suppress the feeling that the whole rocket-space program is regarded in high places only as the logical extension of the strategy of area-bombing and observation worked out after World War II. On May 29 *The New York Times* immediately followed the report of a news-conference by Rear-Admiral Rawson Bennett, which (as the *Times* put it) "stripped away some of the secrecy surrounding the satellite project," with the report of Representative James T. Patterson of Connecticut that the Air Forces' first intercontinental ballistics missile is now ready to be launched from Patrick Air Force Base in Florida, the same site used for trials of the satellite. The impression is irresistible that, though the Government's planners have no objections to whatever astronomical curiosities or Moon-jaunts may result from their investment, what they are really after is a perfect missile. In other words, they are trying to restore the perspectives of the past by fettering to present-day politics a weapon from the future, although we learned at Dienbienphu how difficult, if not unthinkable, it is to employ a "modern" weapon—in that case, the atomic bomb—to pursue an old-fashioned political objective. Our politics are Earth-size, and largely relics of the nineteenth-century. Our instrumentalities are of interplanetary dimension—and tokens of the future when man will range over the Solar System as effortlessly as he now sails on the Atlantic Ocean. Is any sane man actually thinking in terms of employing missiles from space—armed with thermonuclear warheads—to settle political disputes on Earth? Is any sane man actually thinking of extrapolating these disputes beyond Earth's skin, and waging political wars on battlefields of space and stars?

Admiral Mahan was neither the first nor the last philosopher to realize that new rules make a new game. We Americans are playing today with new cards and for new stakes. Only a generation of gamblers and pioneers—such as we must again become—can hope to enjoy the game. Or win it.



A bookmobile makes a stop in Prince George's County, Maryland.

THE LIBRARY IN '57

NEXT week more than 3,500 librarians from public and private libraries in cities and towns in all sections of the country will be meeting at Kansas City, Mo., for the seventy-sixth annual conference of the American Library Association, June 23 to 29.

These men and women, whose profession is so essential to the cultural welfare of the country, can look back upon an extraordinary year, one marked by great gains and filled with even greater opportunities for the future. John T. Eastlick, librarian of the Public Library at Denver, Col., and president of the Public Libraries Division of the ALA, tells what some of these accomplishments and projects are in a survey on page 15.

Almost precisely a year ago an event of incalculable importance for the future of the library and indeed the educational future of this country took place. On June 19, 1956 President Dwight D. Eisenhower signed the Library Services Act—legislation designed to promote the development of public library services in rural areas lacking adequate services. At the time, according to testimony presented to Congress, 27,000,000 children and adults in the United States had no access to books through a local public library, and 53,000,000 more had only very inadequate public library service. The act authorizes an appropriation of \$7,500,000 a year for a five-year period, and it is hoped that Congress will grant these funds in full. Through the Office of Education's Library Services Branch, these funds are being allocated to state library agencies on a matching fund basis. The record of the first year of this program and the prospects for the future are discussed in the articles on this and the following pages.

The Citizens of Shuqualak and the Library Board of Trustees

most cordially invite you to join them

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FORMAL OPENING AND DEDICATION

of the

SHUQUALAK PUBLIC LIBRARY

and to share with them their joy and pride

Saturday, June first
Three-thirty o'clock
Shuqualak, Mississippi

in having public library service
in their community for the first time

The library comes to a small Mississippi community.

Uncle Sam Befriends The Library

By Ralph M. Dunbar, *director*, and
John G. Lorenz, *associate director*,
Library Services Branch, U. S. Office
of Education.

PERRY COUNTY, Mississippi, (pop. 9,108) never had a public library within its borders until early this year. Now a bright bookmobile with well-selected books for children and adults makes regular stops at every place where the rural residents can easily gather. Every other Monday, for example, it stops at Easterling Hill on Highway 42, then goes on to the United Gas Station gate at Bethel Community, then to the crossroads at Indian Springs Grocery and, after several more stops, the schedule for the day ends at Pete Odom's Store at Whitfield Community. At every stop boys and girls, men and women from the farms and small towns eagerly wait for the first sight of the bookmobile. As one little boy exclaimed, "It's like having a birthday every two weeks!"

How did this come to pass in 1957 after Perry County had been a "library desert" for so many years? The answer: Perry County is Project No. 3 in Mississippi's "State Plan for the Further Extension of Public Library Service to Rural Areas" under the Federal Library Services Act.

With the funds made available to it under this act, the Mississippi Library Commission is now putting on a demonstration in Perry County of what good public library service can mean in a rural county.

This year many other "Perry Counties," all across America will enjoy the fruits of the Federal Library Services Act.

Since 90 per cent of the 27,000,000 Americans without access to local public libraries live in rural areas of the country, the act concentrates on developing book and information services for them. Although the children and adults in rural areas have the same requirements for intellectual growth as all other people, many rural towns, villages, and counties are unable to finance good library service because of sparse population and tax limitations. Increasing the tax base of public library support is one of the keys to better public library appropriations and more adequate public library service in many rural