

worldview

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TO THE SUMMIT — RELUCTANTLY

With the birth of thermonuclear weapons, Hannah Arendt once observed, the old alternative between liberty and death lost its plausibility: a man may choose between liberty and death for himself, but he cannot choose between them for the whole human race. In his recent open letter to Mr. Eisenhower and Mr. Khrushchev, Bertrand Russell made a similar point. "Most Potent Sirs," he wrote: "Never before has there been reason to feel that the human race was traveling along a road ending only in a bottomless precipice. Individual death we must all face, but collective death has never, hitherto, been a grim possibility."

It is the vision of this bottomless precipice, this grim possibility of collective death, that is once more pushing Western leaders toward the Summit. They will go there—most of them, at least—reluctantly, without much confidence that real settlements can be reached in the fierce light that beats about such heights. Mr. Dulles has been widely, even bitterly, criticized for making public his dim view of Summit meetings, but privately his view is widely shared. It is not hope, then, that is leading toward new negotiations among the heads of states; it is something closer to despair. Even *this* must be tried again.

The trouble with conferences at the Summit is that by seeming to promise great settlements they make even minor adjustments less likely. (The more things seemed to change at Geneva the more they remained the same.) If the Cold War were merely a propaganda war "for the minds of men," then an endless series of Summit meetings would be the answer for whichever power could develop the most persuasive public relations on an international scale. (Mr. Eisenhower's popularity in Europe soared after his Geneva appearance.) But unfortunately the Cold War is a calculated power struggle in which grand settlements à la the Congress of Vienna are impossible.

The most that can be hoped for at the present time, probably, are minor adjustments and limited disengagements. And these will more

likely be achieved through slow, almost imperceptible negotiations than through spectacular meetings among the heads of states—meetings at which each participant is bound and circumscribed by all the public positions—both wise and foolish—that his government has taken in the past.

The diplomatic art is a subtle art that must largely be practiced in secret, and one of the major fallacies of our time is to mistake the diplomat for the propagandist. The leaders of the Soviet Union have proved their genius for exploiting this fallacy for their own ends. Inevitable as a new Summit meeting may be, then, the real work of negotiation and possible agreement will likely be accomplished elsewhere. Because the brutal facts of power situations will not yield magically to personal encounter, as the Russians, for their own propaganda purposes, seem to imply.

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The power situations that will haunt any Summit meeting are seemingly intractable. And the central one remains the military problem of Germany and Eastern Europe.

In his reply to Lord Russell's open letter, Mr. Khrushchev (or perhaps Mr. Donald MacLean) wrote: "In order to, 'live with the other' . . . both sides must recognize what politicians call the *status quo* . . . Interfering in other countries' domestic affairs with the aim of changing their social structure . . . must not be permitted."

Needless to say, in these words the Communist Party chief was not renouncing Communist subversion in the remaining free nations of the world; he was refusing, in advance, to discuss Soviet control of Eastern Europe—a discussion that, from the Western point of view, is essential to any tolerable East-West "settlement" or disengagement. ("Freedom of Eastern European nations to choose their form of government" is among the items which President Eisenhower proposed to Premier Bulganin for negotiation.)

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High on Mr. Bulganin's list of items for negotiation, on the other hand, is his concern for "the reduction of foreign troops in Germany. And we must realize that, from the standpoint of their own security, this point for the Russians is also essential to any tolerable "settlement.

And here, in these two items, is a seemingly intractable power situation, one which cannot be resolved by a simple bravado or willingness to take "risks" by either side. If, as Mr. Khrushchev now clearly implies, the Soviet Union is determined to maintain the *status quo* in Eastern Europe, then we are forced to do the same in Western Europe. To weaken our military strength

there—in the hope that some great but necessarily nebulous political advantages will follow—would be for the West a folly for which history would offer no forgiveness.

Eastern Europe, Germany: these are issues about which we must negotiate, which we dare not leave to an undirected evolution that may end in disaster. But the chances for fruitful negotiations over such complexities at the Summit seem slim indeed. By attempting too much we may end with nothing. The workings of a more normal, less spectacular diplomacy should be restored by both East and West.

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In the Magazines

We are, so the cliché goes, a nation of doers, not thinkers. Like all generalizations, this one contains a certain truth, not to be invalidated by claiming the eminence of theoreticians in our past (Peirce, Gibbs, James, Veblen) or by citing our current supremacy in the theoretical sciences. It is true that "there is much theory made in the United States," but—and here the cliché finds its firmest base—"there is no unifying theory of what human life is about; there is no consensus either as to the nature of reality or of the part we are to play in it; there is no theory of the good life and not much theory of the role of government in promoting it."

Robert Oppenheimer, writing in the January issue of *Foreign Affairs*, contributes a searching commentary on the state of our national culture, the function of government, the position of the specialist. Dr. Oppenheimer discerns three grave weaknesses in our society: "in our education, in our faltering view of the future, and in our difficulties in the formulation of policy." He locates the causes of these failings most persuasively in the pressures and crises of our history which have led us to codify, to simplify our view of the world and to limit our intellectual attack to what is merely operative—an efficiency of the will. But this efficiency of ours is no longer good enough. "I believe," writes Dr. Oppenheimer, "that we are now deeply injured by the simplifications of this time." Our need for intellectual talent is critical, but are we going to respond to that need in terms of its commensurate values—values for which our national experience has ill prepared us? For first we must achieve what Dr. Oppenheimer calls "the real thing": "a vastly greater intellectual vigor and discipline; a more habitual and widespread openmindedness; and a kind of indefatigability, which is not inconsistent with fatigue but is inconsistent with surrender."

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Just as the Russians resisted all disarmament pro-

posals in the UN between 1946 and 1953 so that it could catch up with the United States in the nuclear arms race, so we must "assume that the U.S. will neither propose nor accept any plan that might freeze the present imbalance of power." While the "catch-up" policy dominates the area of nuclear weapons, might we not attempt a settlement with the Soviet Union on the latest front of the technological Cold War—that of space?

This is the suggestion of Edward A. Conway, S.J. in his article "Outer Space and Peace" (*The Commonwealth*, January 10). "The United States could call upon the nations of the world to form another international agency, similar in structure and motivation to the atomic energy agency just organized in Vienna—this one dedicated to the joint exploration and exploitation of space for peaceful purposes." Father Conway, an expert on disarmament, outlines the basic steps such a project should take, and emphasizes twin necessities: all possible speed in administration and an official distinction between missiles and satellites.

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William F. Buckley, Jr. has repudiated President Eisenhower. The reasons why should not surprise what the *National Review* is fond of calling "the forces of the Liberal left." In the January 18 issue of *NR*, Mr. Buckley contributes some highly decorative prose (he deplores the advent, among Republicans, of "ideological toothlessness") to the contention that the President has, in his own innocence, betrayed the finest ideals of the G.O.P.: "The Republican Party, under Mr. Eisenhower, is in danger of suffering the final humiliation: it is coming to resemble Mr. Eisenhower's own descriptions of his political philosophy: it is becoming, in a word, incoherent." Perhaps; but Mr. Buckley will have to learn to bite harder than that.

PAMPHILUS