

AMERICA AND COSMIC MAN

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1 INTRODUCTORY

I do not see how England and America as nations can ever have a very close understanding, the incompatibilities are too numerous. Both have what might be called the champion-complex. Bossiness is not extinct in the English, and the average little American derives much satisfaction, still, from the bigness of the U.S.A. Purely as competing nations, and until that type of relationship is superseded by something more intelligent, it is a waste of time to "explain" them to each other with a view to establishing an *entente*. I commit myself to this expression of opinion lest people at the start suppose I am engaged upon some good-will mission, which is not the case.

I am not here to sell America to you. But I should like to sell *something* that is to be found there, and not here in Britain, that is very impressive: so much so that once you have grasped what it means, it must affect profoundly your outlook. For my own part—ensuing upon travel in "those United States" which never seemed to have an end—it will influence everything I think and write henceforth. It has tended to transform me from a good European into an excellent internationalist.

In writing of America one has of course to remind oneself how intimately the American is now known to the inhabitants of these islands. He is known in all his varieties: Hoosier, New Yorker, Texan, demi-Mexican, and high-yellow—little gentleman from "Harvard," and little thief just out of a penitentiary. But he is known in a military disguise, far from his habitat, under conditions calculated to bring out all that is most irritating in the American.

The presence of great numbers of United States troops in England for so long a period, it is better to admit, has not been politically helpful. Such contacts rarely prove to be that, especially where one set of people is so much better supplied with cash than the other and is not exactly disposed to conceal the fact, or the less fortunate inclined to be philosophic regarding his economic inferiority.

So on the more primitive levels mass-contact has left in the main antagonism, though do not let us exaggerate. The popular Press does not diminish this by its reports, in which the United States figures as an economic bully, ordering Great Britain about; when she's in Carey Street, as she is today, refusing to lend her money, and at the same time scolding British miners for not working hard enough. Politics is a melodrama for teen-aged minds: America has not *le beau rôle* over here, and the British are the invariable recipients of a bucket of dirty water or a derisive howl in the silly old

thriller as played by any American, whoever he may be. Who, for instance, were these words written by? (I take them from a book review.) "We broke away from the English and beat them and sent them back to their island; and they have never forgiven this." By Mr. Edmund Wilson. That garish jingo lining to quite a worldly little bag of tricks is typical.

In a mild way it is a case of cat and dog, for neither English nor American has a monopoly of prejudice, and I have seen Englishmen considerably more intelligent than Mr. Wilson display just as raw a chauvinism. On both sides this indicates the "big-shot" complex, which is of course a pity. It manifests the sublimest indifference to history, this applying, if anything, rather more to the English than to the American.

Toward America the English stand in a very special relationship. Its birth as a Whig baby (unnaturally large) in the eighteenth century induced in us formerly feelings of rather quizzical parenthood. But, like babies, and other things, in the pages of *Alice in Wonderland*, as we gazed at it across the Atlantic this baby changed. It was still a baby, it continued to express itself in English, but it took on a more swarthy complexion, and it became obvious it was no longer in the main our child.

The fact, however, that America and England have a common tongue, that their respective institutions derive from a common source, and that in the past they were so closely related by blood, and have innumerable ties, historically, morally, and intellectually, means that America is for us theoretically in a class all by itself among states.

In another way it has played a very profound part in our life as a nation. The influence America has exerted all along upon England is enormous; a fact that is generally forgotten. England would not be the place it is today had there been no America. Almost certainly there would be no social-democratic government at this time—no Mr. Attlee or Mr. Bevin—but some regime such as the Dutch still have, or like that obtaining in Hungary prior to World War I.

When Morley was engaged in refuting Maine's onslaught upon popular government in the 'eighties, he brought out this point very well, tracing the growth of "English Liberalism of a radical democratic type" to the influence of America. "The success of popular government across the Atlantic has been the strongest incentive to the extension of popular government here." To the example of the United States he adds that of the overseas commonwealths. "The success of popular self-government in these thriving communities is reacting on political opinion at home with a force that ... is every day increasing."

It continually increased until Lloyd George's innovations in the field of social insurance went farther along the Liberal road than America had thought of venturing; and today, in beginning the change from private ownership to public ownership of key industries, we have indeed left our great model of "multitudinous government" behind. But the first and most powerful impulses in that direction came from the United States. Without the experience of American prosperity and stability, the English would hardly

have broken away from the general belief that no government of the Many can be stable or be conducive to prosperity, or nothing like so soon.

In our broken world there are two great States which remain intact, namely the U.S.A. and the U.S.S.R. These two gigantic nations tower above our famished slums (one of them, paradoxically, itself a slum, almost as ill-fed and ill-clothed as any). For a considerable time to come, these two dominant Powers will, between them, exercise almost complete control over our national life. Consequently what they *are* is a matter that must invite our anxious attention. I have done my best in these pages to show what one of them, the U.S.A., is, as State and as human organism, in this connection bleakly distinct.

For Russia much less antagonism is felt in England—partly, of course, because there is no ruble problem as there is a dollar problem. Yet the popular ecstasies of the war-years are not even a memory, no trace is left at all: Russia is seen now as the perpetual obstructor in peace conferences, and even as a potential war-maker. It is considered by the average Briton that she does not observe the terms of pacts and treaties, and that she has contracted the odious habit of hanging iron curtains around those states she has politically raped and in some cases murdered, or bits of which she has lopped off.

There has been no contact, except between troops. That has had the worst possible effect. English soldiers returned from Austria and Germany, who have lived in daily touch with the Russian soldiery, have not a good word to say for them. An image remains, from the stories they tell, simple in outline, and it never varies: a dirty man at the end of a tommy-gun asking violently for something to which he has no right. (Our man with the property-complex would be just as unsympathetic as viewed by the other.) To set against such adverse pictures, a photograph of "Uncle Joe" with his mustache and his pipe still draws a kindly smile from the newspaper reader.

But what must always keep Russian-British relations on a rather artificial plane, far from passion—real sympathy, or real dislike—is the fact that Russians are too remote a species to have personal feelings about in Lancashire and Gloucestershire; they are not trade rivals as the Germans were, nor rivals in the financial field as were the Americans—in the days when we were the great "clearinghouse" and the Old Lady of Threadneedle Street richer than she is at present. As to their Communism—about which ninety per cent of Englishmen have the haziest ideas—that would have no effect one way or the other on feelings about Russians now that they have been our allies in a victorious war against a despot and aggressor.

So there is no question of powerful emotions here where Russia is concerned. The Englishman is just shocked every time he opens the paper to learn that his ally has smothered another small state. And he wishes he knew how peace-loving the Russians were! He feels uneasy—there is anything but enthusiasm or cordiality. That is all.

In any case, there, roughly, is the position; the Englishman's relations with the two mammoth States whose good will, or ill will, must mean so much to him are not very satisfactory. He is himself an ex-giant, with still some pretensions to being in the

"giant" class, which complicates the situation. He has, in fact, all the disadvantages of being "great" and none of the blessings of second-rateness. Then the white man's burden has not grown any lighter, but the white man has not as of yore a beefsteak under his belt. He becomes a poor white—with a burden, which is the remnants of an empire.

To turn now more specifically to the United States, it is unfortunate that Britain in its distressed condition—with its huge population and diminished power to make provision for it—should be so exclusively dependent upon a nation with which it has so many incompatibilities, and which it finds so difficult to understand. One thing I can say of this book is that, since it is the work of a great friend of America, it will not embitter relations with that country. If what I say could not be published in the United States by a foreigner (and indeed it is a fact that what you read has been refused on those grounds), Americans themselves are free to transgress—though no doubt each arriving at his own conclusions—and the subject matter is the merest commonplace of conversation or Press comment. You cannot build so vast a state at top speed out of a wilderness *prettily*; and the horrid building proceeds.

There is much beauty in America: of course unbelievable physical beauties, and a population with the highest percentage of physical perfection that can ever have been attained by men of European stock. Yet you could say, metaphorically, of America that what you see there is as yet perhaps an unsightly enough grub—if one thinks of its rackets, or of Hollywood, of all the Teapot Domes that never break—of "Murder Incorporated" and Sindlinger's *Workshop*.

But what you must divine is the imago that will one day burst out—at the end of these preparatory phases—the first entire cosmopolis. Whether that disastrous power which the splitting of the atom has made available will precipitate this evolutionary process, or whether things will follow a more normal course, is a matter of speculation.

It is, I believe, the destiny of America to produce the first of a new species of man. It is the first of the great "melting pots." The pots take a long time to melt. Beneath this titanic human caldron is nothing more incandescent than an old-fashioned campfire, or the ritualistic sticks brought in from a sacred wood and periodically rekindled into token flames. So the pot does not melt very fast. Americans actually are quite unconscious what a novel kind of people they are. On the one hand they wrestle reverently with a reactionary Constitution, they darkly hide away their hoarded gold underground, and aggressively practice an antiquated economy. That State structure and that fairy gold are the campfire alluded to above. To place against that, their techniques race ahead, leaping the centuries into the future. Further than that, they are, it seems to me, dedicated to the future more than any other people: and it is my argument in this book that we can read *our own* future by an imaginative scrutiny of what is occurring, and what is so plainly destined to occur there in America.

Politics can only be judged by results: who, then, upon the world scene, has been

smart since 1939? That is answered by the landscape, from the Iron Curtain to the Shetlands, or from the Channel to the Bosphorus. Not many signs of foresight and acumen there! To turn from that scene to the American might incline us to suspect that that country had outsmarted us all. But Americans do not have to be smart to be prosperous—they cannot help it. It is the *lack* of smartness of which I have been speaking, rather than its aggressive presence. It would be a pity for anyone to feel they had been outsmarted— but it would be terrible (with one shirt on and one at the wash) still to feel they were smart. Domestic politics apart, wrestling hopelessly with the demoniacal conundrum of sovereignty and of racial pride, the older nations must be more and more persuasively affected by the example of America. Then although in the externals of popular government we have left the Americans far behind, they greatly excel us in what might be called the raw human material of Socialism.

2 A NEW KIND OF COUNTRY

The United States is the most aggressive national personality extant: but in a certain sense it is not a country. The fact is, it is a *new kind of country*. It is better than a country. The Greeks of antiquity only dreamed of Cosmopolis: but the European discovered an enormous continent upon which to set one up: America. It was not his conscious intention at all, but that was what happened.

"America is not a boardinghouse." So blustered Theodore (Teddy) Roosevelt. He meant, of course, that it was more than just a place to go and secure board and lodging in. It had to be taken seriously if you took up your quarters there, he meant—as a *country*.

The President's words were addressed to Americans, mainly immigrant. But by no one, native or foreign, is the United States taken otherwise than very seriously today. Very few see beyond its power, wealth, youth, and size. However, it conceals strange vistas beneath the outward trappings of twentieth-century power. In political interest it outstrips Russia (which it resembles), more especially in political possibilities. Admittedly it is in a crude and raw-material stage. Even it struggles violently against its destiny—seeks to evade the logic of fact, racial and other. The Americans who, like Henry James, have abandoned the American scene altogether are the extreme exponents of this evasion. But the extraordinary incubation proceeds, beneath the surface of the orthodox machinery of State and the panoply of Business power. As to the Russian parallel, it is important. Generally people are inclined to regard America and Russia as both *large*, but in other respects dissimilar. To give an instance of this, the following is from an article by the late Mr. J. L. Garvin: "These two gigantic societies [the U.S.A. and the U.S.S.R.] are as dissimilar as can well be conceived. They are not only contrasting, but opposite. They differ diametrically both in principle and practice. Russian 'state capitalism' that 'no less dynamic system' is the antithesis of the American system." In contrast to this view, what strikes me is their resemblances much more than their differences. Mr. Garvin was, I believe, speaking without firsthand knowledge of the Russian scene. It interested me to see Mr. Malcolm Muggeridge (who has) quoted recently as saying that the United States had reminded him more of Russia than of any other country he knew.

In the U.S.S.R. State capitalism is productive of conditions in which the individual has less liberty than anywhere. With the individual in the U.S.A., it is quite the opposite—he has more liberty than anywhere else: which applies to the socially unimportant—

the circumstance which astonishes people most about this country. So the actual political and social core of his life is in absolute contrast to the Russian. For I did not say that in everything these two nations resembled one another. That in so many respects they do is a paradox—so many, in fact, that in spite of their being poles apart in their attitude to the individual, it is curious how easy it is to think of them together.

Both are very large and very dynamic countries, as Mr. Garvin wrote; both occupy a continuous land-bloc of very great extent. But you can go on from that to other profound similarities. Both have at the base of their system, as a political rationale, man's brotherhood. Unlike the military aristocracies of Europe, which effected a transformation of themselves into bogus "democracies," the U.S.S.R. and the U.S.A. *start* from that. The life of both is involved ideologically with industry. (England, traditionally, has always regarded industry as a grimy and socially inferior partner: they think of it as a steel-limbed god.) Both are gang-minded, collectivist. America is a big club: a Women's Club and a Rotary; community life in Russia lives up to the doctrine of Communism. The "solitary" does not thrive in either system, as he has in the past par excellence in England. And both are power systems.

Were the United States to nationalize its great industries—and they are so large as already to be highly impersonal—and were it controlled by a New Deal type of bureaucracy, it would be exactly what Russia would be like, barring accidents, after a century or two of peace and technological progress, barbarism overcome. In other words, we have a Russia, only immeasurably better fed, better dressed, with car, washing-machine, refrigerator; living upon a higher plane of social evolution, as far as all material things are concerned.

I have used the expression power systems; by that I mean that both these rival giants are States about which the adjective "dynamic" is apt to be used (as we have seen it used above): both are skyscrapers, as it were, among State structures, still building. And a skyscraper is a form of architecture designed to dominate neighbors and to impose by its towering volume. It is sometimes an almost demented impulse to power which projects such monsters.

All governments, it can be argued, of course, are power systems, and so they are; and "law" is legalized force. But these two vibrate with the dynamism of growth—they are the only places where our world is in that vibrant condition. (No one could say of Great Britain that it vibrates.) In the case of the United States, its short history has been that of an aggressive body charging itself with more and more power, until one almost feels it lives for power alone. It is one immense powerhouse, to which has now been added atomic power.

If you look at North America on the map of the world, you see a very uniform mass. It is more concentrated and uniform than any other land mass. You see an immense area full of people speaking one tongue: not a checkerboard of "united states" at all, but one huge State. "United States" is today a misnomer. And since plural sovereignty anyway—now that the earth has become one big village, with telephones laid on from one

end to the other, and air transport, both speedy and safe—must be a little farcical, the plurality implied in that title could be removed as a good example to the rest of the world, and the U.S.A. become the American Union.

Not only one tongue, but one standard thought about almost everything is the sort of unity you find there. The British Isles, even, that small, ragged shape broken off from Europe, insignificant as it is in extent, is much more differentiated. One does not have to point to the Welsh, still jabbering a foreign tongue, or mention Gaelic or Erse: you need go no farther than the Yorkshireman and he from Dorset, and note how differently these two men speak, look, and think. No such starkly differing types exist inside that Union, which Lincoln died for, known as "America." This spectacular unity is spiritual, produced out of the most diverse stocks. It is still a union of men gathered together to be free. And this particular collection of men do keep reminding each other that they are there for that purpose.

Standing on America (one feels greatly magnified while there gazing out at other lands), one sees nothing but *disunity*. No "united states"—only "disunited states." So gazing out of America, one realizes one day that what this nation stands for is unity, just that, as no other does—even to the point of uniformity; with all the irresistible power that oneness bestows. And its very name conduces to that understanding and makes one see how lesser Union may, snowball-like, lead to a greater Union, until there is no disunion any more on earth. The term "United Nations," however tentatively, is symbolic of that future: so American Union would perhaps not be so good. That it is "American" is not important; that it is so United is.

Lincoln did not die for Yankee capitalism, but to preserve the Union. Why did he so object to secession: was it for the reasons Webster clothed in such flamboyant language, in 1850, a decade before the Civil War?

"Sir, he who sees these states, now revolving in harmony around a common center, and expects to see them quit their places and fly off without convulsion, may look the next hour to see the heavenly bodies rush from their spheres, and jostle against each other in the realms of space, without producing the crash of the universe. . . .

"Peaceable secession! Peaceable secession! The concurrent agreement of all the members of this great Republic to separate ! A voluntary separation, with alimony on one side and on the other. Why, what would be the result? Where is the line to be drawn? What states are to secede? What is to remain American? What am I to be? An American no longer? Where is the flag of the Republic to remain? Where is the eagle

to tower—or is it to cower, and shrink, and fall to the ground?"

The cultivation of that eagle—the breeding of larger and larger birds, for today the bird has become a bomber—has been the sentimental aim of most Americans, with such notable exceptions as Jefferson: the eagle being the symbol of ferocity and power. "What am I to be? An American no longer?" is a *cri de coeur* that would find echoes in Lincoln's heart, of course: "the supreme American of our history," according to Woodrow Wilson. A model American could only be dedicated to one thing; to building America, and building it big.

It may be fanciful, but I think that Lincoln was a man of sufficient imagination to see that *union* was a political principle of universal worthiness, and universal application. He secured peace forever upon the North American continent. Even were Lincoln—a statesman, after all, a man of government—unconscious of anything but the problems of force and power, uniquely American: and even if no American, past or present, had ever been aware of it, yet America's greatness as a state is in the interest of everybody; its continued union, and even peaceful expansion, everybody's affair.

Were Lincoln alive today he would be gazing across at us— at our slums and ruins— with astonishment. The terrible fruits of the insane opposite of Unity he would note: States, going concerns in 1939—"great nations" and all that—today bankrupt dumps, infested by the black-marketeer, with the usual three political factions squabbling for control of the site. He would not have been prepared for so tremendous a collapse.

Actually Lincoln's successors are now addressing themselves to the austere, if eccentric, task of taking over the world (as an American friend of mine puts it) and running it as a sort of poorhouse, disciplined by atomic fission. Their great predecessor would only have agreed to that proceeding in so far as it offered the possibility of the various inmates abandoning their pauper pride and becoming part of the American Union: which is to say he would not have agreed, for he would have known they would never have been so sensible.

Of all the downcast powers, England is in a way the worst off of any, because she is so great a war victim but does not know it. The spectacular activity of Labor, profound alterations in the economic structure of society, the confidence and gusto of Ministers, the sense of liberation displayed by the English working class, all conspire— unconsciously of course— to mask the true situation of the country, which must constantly deteriorate unless recognized and provided for. This bulging population, swarming upon its insufficiently spacious island coal mine, has priority as a problem, of those swamped in the exuberance of our austerity.

England's position has changed with such suddenness that for a while it will be possible for ambitious public men to behave as if it had not changed. Yet common sense dictates the halving now of the number of its inhabitants—for rather than fifty million people to be reduced to permanent undernourishment, would it not be better for half of them to go and form self-supporting colonies (such as the Germans founded in Brazil, Uruguay, Chile) or (always keeping together, which is best for the English as

settlers) establish new towns and communities in Africa, Australia, or even Canada? Or perhaps— why not—the United States of America? England's position after World War II—Socialist or whatever it may be—is nowhere clearly presented to the people; from neither Press nor Radio does one ever hear a whisper of it.

The fact is that, if you cannot win a war without the help of some other country richer and stronger than yourself, you cannot win it. The country which helps you wins it, if anybody does: although you may have been most gallant, bled much more than she, and even have expended all your patrimony in the effort. The Germans had not the power to secure the empire they coveted, no more in 1939 than in 1914, but they always had the power to ruin England unless that country was very smart indeed. All people with eyes in their heads could see that.

3 THE AMERICAN AND THE OLD WORLD

The position upon the planet of the different countries determines something about their outlook, as it does about the picture we have of them. Russia's position, for instance, high up toward the top of our world: Asia and Europe merging at their summits, from which elevation Russia looks down into both. In thinking of Russia one always has this geographic page in the foreground of one's consciousness, just as anyone whose mind turns to England sees an *island*. Contrariwise, from the English consciousness the same physical fact is never absent.

With people it is much the same thing. I can never read an anecdote about Napoleon without seeing, mistily, in the background of the mind, a diminutive and corpulent figure, nor could Napoleon fail to be intellectually conscious of this external self that I indistinctly discern: though obviously it would be of far less significance to Napoleon that he was diminutive in stature than it is to England that it is an island. This question of the degree-of-the-significance is quite distinct.

These facts belong to psychology: bearing them in mind, America may be regarded as a solitary. Stuck out there in the midst of the oceans, between two worlds, for all its immense size it is uniquely insular. The earth-view which I felt I was acquiring is American. A President of the United States, for example, is possessed of this politically: just as America is a good place for observation of the eclipses of the sun, the White House is a kind of political observatory.

Such geographically imposed isolation may lead to too abstract a temper. There was something chilly and unearthly about President Wilson's approach, or that is what other nationals felt at the time. But the occupant of the White House during the second of the world wars—as a good and typical American, calmly surveying mankind from China to Peru—was more human. The immense convulsion—which it was his destiny, more than that of any other single person, to direct—was guaranteed, however, before it was done, to melt an iceberg.

With Americans in general, though detachment, if not aloofness, characterizes them, that does not at all prevent them from displaying a feverish interest in the affairs of Europe. They are apt to take a change of government in England, if it is the sort of change they do not like, as a personal affront. They are very much more interested in

the affairs of Asia than is any British empire-builder. Theirs is the spirit of the spectator: one who has paid a great deal for his seat and brought with him a profuse supply of rotten eggs and bouquets large and small.

Except as a very privileged spectator, Americans really want to have nothing to do, more than they can help, with Europe. For all serious practical purposes America seems to have its back turned to Europe. It faces west: a permanent return to the lands overseas—the lands *behind* them—from which all Americans come, is impossible. For the American, this seems to have the force of a biological law. After all, mankind, regarded as a migratory horde, started in Asia and followed the sun. "Go West!" something whispered within the first man to start the ball rolling—where was it? Perhaps in the Caucasus or Pamir. Wherever it started, it wound up on the Pacific Coast of the U.S.A.—America is the end of the road. There is nowhere else to go to—that you could possibly call a "new" world, at least.

There is something final about America. For an American to move eastward, in reverse, is like swimming against the tide or cutting against the grain: like putting back the hands of a clock (which is said to be bad for the clock), revisiting scenes of your childhood, and thinking back to that barbarous epoch of knee pants and yo-yos. I always feel sorry for an American friend settled in Europe or in England: and if they are women it is worse. They never reconcile themselves to it, however beautiful their surroundings. They go around all the time hungrily looking for other American exiles of their own sex to talk to: to get back to America with for an hour or so. For "America" is wherever Americans are: America is much more a psychological something than a territorial something. That is the first thing, of major importance, to realize about it.

Patriotism, again, in America is structurally different, if I am not mistaken, from the more traditional varieties. It is the very opposite of *Blut und Boden*. In a sense it may be said to be abstract. The United States is rather a site for the development of an idea of political and religious freedom than a mystical terre sacree for its sons, upon the French model. They will fight for brotherhood, rather than, possessively, for a mother earth. Brotherhood is rather a good thing to fight for. And with them it is really the brotherhood of man, since they are so mixed in race.

America is a man with his back forever turned. The English should not forget this. They should recall that he is not an Englishman either—perhaps an Irishman or German, a Swede or a Swiss, but seldom an Englishman: and that, if not antagonism, at least indifference must always be expected of this man whose back is turned. A farmer in Iowa or Idaho, a workman or executive in Washington, is no more interested in England than the Britisher is in what is going on at the South Pole, or at Minsk or Mexico City. They are usually not violently hostile—unless their name is O'Brien or O'Connor. They just take no interest at all, they live in another universe. Since in their foreign relations Americans are instinctively "tough" and aggressive (and thereby they constantly antagonize their Latin neighbors to the south) one must always expect them to be "tough" and unaccommodating, except at such times as England is functioning as

an "outpost" of American capitalism: and even then they are really none too polite. There is the truth of the matter. If the average Englishman feels indignant, he should ask himself if *he* experiences a warm interest in America and the Americans. What you do not give, nor have ever given, should you, in all fairness, expect to receive?

In a *Herald Tribune* review of the Beards' book, *The American Spirit*, occurred the following passage: "The Middle West was anti-European because most Americans were anti-European in their blood. They had come to the United States because they were Europe's rejected or because, as conscious rebels, they had forsworn European values."

The past tense is quite unnecessary here. Substitute "are" for "were" in "most Americans were anti-European," and you have a true statement of the position today. (England is of course regarded as an integral part of Europe.) Many intelligent Americans are to be found today who think very differently from the Beards—and many existed before Charles and Mary R. Beard first saw the light in Indiana. But it is of the very nature of Americanism that it *should not change*. A static principle is inherent in that particular ism, for it exists that it may achieve the static.

A new nation—especially one that is not really a nation—has first of all to provide itself overnight with a Constitution. It must also have characteristics which differentiate it from other peoples. At the founding of the American Republic the leaders in the War of Independence were bewigged replicas of English polite society. No marked difference to be found there! But the farmers and storekeepers who composed Jefferson's powerful political clubs, the "democratic societies" (which transformed the new nation from a rather Tory into a sentimentally radical community), readers of Tom Paine and the literature of "rebel" Enlightenment—these people were really something *new*; it was a novel mixture, at all events.

It was a mixture of militant puritans, bog-trotters, indentured servants or "white slaves" (come as human chattels from many nations): they were charged to their bearded muzzles with libertarian uplift and fierce Hebrew mysticism: Rousseau's "natural man," replete with virtue, and dark visions of Original Sin were forced into a mad union in their consciousness.

This novel confusion took on the fixity of tradition overnight. A Constitution had been composed for all time: and an "American" had been created, for all time, likewise. You have to make a start *somehow* and with somebody, in suddenly founding a state like that.

Americanism may not have been conceived in this way: but that is the impression it conveys. America's geographical isolation from other nations would almost account for it. But there is that relentless fidelity to the State-framework bequeathed it by the eighteenth century: and the inflexibility of many American modes of feeling is the *identity complex of a new society*, it is permissible to guess.

This intense identity possessed by the American has been put to good use by the centralizers. It has assisted unification: was even a major and essential ingredient. On the other hand, when the American comes to universalize himself—as is much more his "manifest destiny" than the shoddy imperialism immortalized by that phrase—Americanism will not survive. A tendency to de-Americanization, I believe, is already present. Even in America's furious cultural eclecticism is implicit such a movement. And you hear more disobliging, even scornful, remarks about the American ethics in New York than you do in Paris or London.

4 AMERICAN CITIZENSHIP

Nationalism, as understood in Europe, or in the British Isles, would be impossible for the American. With us, the core of nationalism is invariably racial: it is not too difficult for the Irish to pretend to be all of one racial stock, and even the Germans succeeded—to the satisfaction of their own people, though of no other—in basing their nationalism upon a blood-tie, uniting the entire *Volk*. The Russians have the Slavic rallying-cry, the South American republics the Latin. Only the Americans are debarred from such emotional delights. Even religion offers them no foothold, for they are committed to the protection of every sect on earth; and all are there, in a flourishing condition. In this dilemma, is it to be wondered at that, as a nation, they should have cast around for something to fill the void?

The way in which this *something* manifests itself is in the rite of citizenship. Citizenship is, of course, so much taken for granted by the American-born that I doubt if the curious importance of this instrument of identification is fully grasped.

>U.S. citizenship is something as unique as it is extraordinary; it differs radically from what in Europe is understood by "nationality." The United States is a fragmentary, most imperfect, and in some respects grotesque advance copy of a future world order, as I have already indicated. It is a Brotherhood rather than a "People." Americans have something *more* than nationality. In its place they have what amounts almost to a religion; a "way of life." It is one of the most important spiritual phenomena in the world today. If you match it with Russian Communism you will find it held to with just as impressive a tenacity, by a people almost equal in numbers. To Shintoism, or any State-cult, it is not inferior in quality. And the present condition of the planet does not weaken it, but quite the reverse.

Without running too great a risk of confutation, the American might claim that in his case "citizenship" exists, theoretically, upon a more intelligent plane than that of older models. The man of these new lands is traditionally suspicious of anything too rooted. Living as he does in a country that is too big for him, he tends to rocket about in it as a foot does in a shoe that is too large. But in any case, attachment to one place—or, for that matter, to one person—he indulges in with a certain misgiving.

American citizenship takes with it, of course, a whole system of ethics and politics: of

puritan ethics and revolutionary politics. Both the ethics and the revolutionary principles are a little archaic and also dilute. However, today this particular citizenship's major interest for everybody lies in the fact that America stands out as the one great community in which race has been thrown out, and the priests of many cults have been brought together, in relative harmony—in a world in which obstinate bottlenecks of racial and religious passion, whether in Europe, Asia, or Africa, are in process of being overcome, or at least have reached the showdown stage. The United States is for Europe as well as for India, for instance, not to mention Palestine, an object lesson in how to make the lion lie down with the lamb.

Let us compare American citizenship, however, with some other kind: the classic method of analysis. There are only two sorts of citizenship of *universalist* character, as one might call it: British and American. These two orders of citizenship may be readily grouped together.

British citizenship is hard-boiled: pseudo-Roman. You could become, until the start of the late war, a British subject for ten pounds. It was as simple as that. You neither had to be able to read or write, nor to speak the English language particularly well. Just make yourself understood. Like Rome, Great Britain in the past spread its great tolerant wing over all those, irrespective of color, creed, or tongue, who possessed forty bucks and a clean collar.

In its abstractness, or at all events in its freedom from racial bigotry (for the Englishman, like the American, sets his face against that), British citizenship is analogous to that of the United States. But there the resemblance ends. There is nothing of that hard-boiled matter-of-fact British quality about the American variety.

In considering what is peculiar to America—its quite extraordinary contribution to the problem of human identification—it must be remembered that the U.S.A. is not a dispersed colonial empire, but a mammoth expanse of territory with no territorial ambitions outside itself. Consequently it is unable to confer so abstract a national status as Rome, or as nineteenth-century Britain, which aimed at being universal systems.

American universality is of a different kind. The universe comes to it, and is gathered into it, instead of America going out to absorb other species. Itself a conglomerate of many nations, there is no metropolitan race as such. So it does not merely hand you something like a luggage label, but, rather, an authentic soul. Naturally, if you have got a soul already, you do not need this. But if you come from somewhere where you haven't been able to call your soul your own, it must be enormously welcome.

John Bull's problem has been a very different one, necessarily, from that of Uncle Sam. People never crowded into England as they did into the States. You cannot make

yourself an Englishman really by signing a paper. You become "British." It is legally and contractually the same thing: but I am speaking realistically. What, on the other hand, you become upon receiving your citizenship papers in the U.S.A is as valid an American as if your forebears had been with Washington at Valley Forge. That is what it took me a long time to understand. No man who merely regarded America as a convenient place of residence—"a boardinghouse"—good opportunity for business, and so forth, and took out papers as he would sign a lease, would ever become an American, in the proper sense. This is the land given up to a cult, that of Demos. The mystique of America is an act of faith in tomorrow, in something vaguely millennial. Such is the nature of the revolutionary universalism of the American.

You are a Slovak shoe-factory hand, or a Welsh miner, say. The idea enters your head that you will emigrate to the States. Well, that is not just an idea like another, though you may not quite grasp this at the time. It is like "seeing the light," a little. It is even a little like death. You commit suicide, in the nationalist or tribal sense: you say good-by forever to Cambria or to Slovakia (and to all tribal or national ideas as well) and sail away into an abstract Goodness—or into something better, at all events, than the land of your birth. Even you are followed there, as a rule, by a number of your relatives. It resembles death in many respects—but death for the devout; a rebirth, and reunion, in a better world.

The United States is not a substitute for other states. Russia will go on being Russia: England persists in itself, with a great release of energies, formerly bottled up in class, to be effected by Socialism, but otherwise true to the pattern: France goes its intelligent way, among its vines and sunlit factories: even Germany will survive, dismembered and penniless. America, rather, is a new sort of state altogether, entirely unlike those in a fundamental manner.

A group of chapters which now follow are concerned with the kind of State-religion which underlies everywhere the noisy pagan crust of American life. It is the crude emotional makeshift, provided by American nationalism, attempting to rise to the occasion, but with no understanding of what the occasion is: namely, the birth-throes of a new type of society.

The core, as it were, of this group of chapters is a study of three great figures in the State-religion. I do not take them " chronologically, but start with that fascinating political conjuror, Franklin Delano Roosevelt. Next I turn to his namesake and relative, Theodore Roosevelt. Last comes Woodrow Wilson. In these three men I shall be able to display the mechanism of this political idolatry in action. In the chapter you have just read, the sacramentalism evidenced in the act of becoming an American has been described. And we now pass to the high priests, the hierarchical summit of this politico-religious order—the occupants of a magistracy comparable with that of the Dalai Lama and nothing else extant.

But before we can reach these great figureheads, we have to pass through a tropical

undergrowth, for which I must really apologize, but there is no other way of getting there. Their function is complex. They are the exponents of an extraordinary parliamentary Party-game—something like poker champions, whose poker faces and power of fooling their adversary are greatly admired and relished—as well as semi-divine officers and pontiffs. It has become their habit to run with the hare and hunt with the hounds: or, rather, loudly announcing themselves on the side of the hare, to tag along pretty consistently with the hounds. This applies even to the best of them, and my first subject, according to my computation, is *very good*. The hero-cult indwelling in this spectacular office makes of them mythological figures whose cunning is almost as prominent as their valor and strength, as we find when consulting the legends of primitive people: so those habits of theirs are not reprobated except by the most class-conscious of hares. But the real difficulty is the Party-game, which has to be fairly carefully explained, since it has nothing to do, except indirectly, with the power-mysticism of which I speak. And with the Party-game goes the atmosphere this game has generated in the course of decades.

Until you know something of the medium—the political and social atmosphere—in which these great figures live and have their being, it would be useless to attempt to delineate them for you: just as no one will be able to explain Queen Victoria to future ages, without first mastering the chemistry of the stuffiness without which such a creature could not live a minute. Water is a very different medium from air: and if you had never seen water in any but minute quantities, it would not be easy to explain to you about the life of a fish. But the medium I have to re-create is rarefied rather than opaque and very unreal: it affects one sometimes like laughing gas. They are tragic gusts, it is true, which can be seen sometimes to convulse the lonely figures of the great Magistrates. Before coming to the latter, however, we have, as I said, to acquaint ourselves with "Party," as that is practiced in the U.S.A.: there is no short cut, I fear.

5 THE PARTY SYSTEM-WESTERN DEMOCRACY AND EASTERN DEMOCRACY

In the United States a President wears a Party-label, just as does a British Prime Minister. A French President is elected by the legislature; the title to power of an American President comes direct from the people—or that part of the people which approves of his Party. His great power is said to derive largely from that fact. When a U.S. President wields unusual power the fact that he is put there by the people is his moral, if not his constitutional, sanction.

In truth, however, he holds his power from the Party, rather than from the people: that is, unless he chooses to make a great point of his relationship to the people, as did the two Roosevelts and Wilson.

First of all let us ask ourselves what "Party" is: for as Anglo-Saxons, we are so accustomed to it that most of us have never stopped to ask ourselves exactly of what ideas it is composed.

"Party" is not a glorification of disagreement: but it *is* an open recognition of the fact that men do not agree and are not obliged to do so. It is also a discouragement of the view that government is an art, like playing the piano or writing an epic.

How much it is reasonable for men to disagree is another matter. They are not expected to disagree too much. This point is of the very essence of parliamentary democracy. Irreconcilable opposites have no place in a parliament.

"Party," then, is that technique of government in which the nation is invited to divide itself up into two or more sections and, in the U.S. presidential election, to cast votes for one or more politicians. The politicians may be the champions of nothing-in-particular, or just the same thing, made to look a little different. Or they may stand for opposing types of political thinking (but that gets rarer every day).