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FUTURE ROLE OF ACTION INTELLECTUALS IN AMERICAN GOVERNMENT

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I am just completing an eight-months stay in the United States, spent almost entirely at either The Rand Corporation or Harvard. I could study rather deeply there the scholars whose interests or capabilities link directly or indirectly to public policymaking. So it is convenient for me to evaluate this experience by focusing upon them.

For these people the Sixties have been a decade of triumph and tragedy: triumph because never have they been so influential in Washington from Pentagon to White House; tragedy because they could not prevent an irrational foreign policy in Southeast Asia, but raised many unsatisfied hopes in a bitter domestic area. The decade that saw the glorification of New Economics and rational decisionmaking in defense finished with inflation and the Vietnam drama.

This failure of the first real, large-scale association of non-law-trained intellectuals in government has provoked two major kinds of reaction.

The first reaction is that of the radical critic, and has some support among the so-called value intellectuals in faculties. The thesis is that the action intellectuals have destroyed the academic ideal by agreeing to prostitute their intellects to the military-industrial complex, by agreeing to help rationalize the imperialistic designs of the Establishment. According to the proponents of these accusations (Chomsky being their most brilliant speaker), the first

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thing to do is to break all links between the academic community and government, and to transform the universities simultaneously into centers of experimental research for social change and into autonomous anti-Establishment fortresses.

The second approach, contrary to the first one, holds that the failure of the Sixties was not total, and anyway was unavoidable because of the vices of American society. It attempts to analyze the mistakes and inadequacies of the decade and to discern how to do better next time. This view is shared by the majority of the now-retired "Whiz Kids" and other government scholars of the Democratic era. Many of them are now in academic or "Think Tank" refuges thinking of various ways to improve rational techniques of decisionmaking. The span of these attempts ranges from an increasing interest in the sociology of bureaucracy to new programs for training policy analysts. Still others are in Washington trying to use the pragmatic and businesslike minds of the Nixon Administration to keep promoting rational decisionmaking.

These people are "reasonably optimistic" about the future American society, hoping that with the general development of education and the increasing sophistication of policy analysis the major domestic problems will be steadily solved (there is probably no little prejudice in this attitude, it being the only one justifying their role in society).

The thesis of this paper is that these two approaches are both naive and irrelevant to the likely socio-political future of America: the first one might well provoke a triumphant and enduring "know-nothing" backlash; the second one has the traditional technocratic bias of benignly neglecting the sociological and political factors, the most important being the deeply significant emergence of the New Left and of middle-class reaction.

Let us begin the arguments by some forecasting.

A BASIC SCENARIO: MAIN SOCIO-POLITICAL TRENDS IN AMERICA

The first point is that the rise of radical attitudes is a phenomenon of the utmost importance, the beginning of which we are just seeing. The most impressive fact is the similarity of behavior of New Leftist students throughout the Western World, even though there are

considerable differences in their environments. In France it is generally assumed that the origin of the May, 1968, upheaval was the reaction of an archaic society to an accelerated modernization; and more precisely, the upheaval in the universities presumably resulted from the contradiction between mass education and rigid structures (linked to deplorable material conditions). In America, where the university system is so much better, the student troubles are replaced by specific American problems: the war and race questions, and the reaction of "too wealthy kids" to the materialistic, affluent society. In Britain, Germany, and Sweden other explanations could be proposed for similar phenomena. Obviously, there is something far deeper than these "brush-fire" theories, and psychological models would be certainly as relevant as sociological ones. It is often argued that the New groups are only a small minority and even a declining one. It is relevant to remark here that militancy demands some minimum of courage and dedication, both of which are scarce goods. And extremely important is the stimulation by these small militant kernels of a much larger radical sub-culture (marijuana, permissive attitudes, distrust of the technological society).

Another argument downgrading the importance of the New Left presumes that after graduation the radicals become rapidly integrated into the industrial society. One should remark that many of them end up teaching in high schools and colleges, and we are beginning to see (especially in France) a countersociety of radical teachers.

So, we are seeing only the beginning of student unrest and radical activity, and this constitutes the first part of our scenario. The second part concerns development of the conservative backlash of the middle classes; again what we see is only the beginning. This backlash will be especially impressive among those traditional members of the Democratic coalition, the blue-collar workers and the ethnic minorities. If the Republican party is intelligent enough to court not only the South, but these people and some of their very unprogressive unions (U.M.W. or building unions type) as well, a conservative Republican majority could develop and persist for a very long time.

Besides the activities of these two major groups (New Left and

middle class), each stimulating the other, one can expect a growing isolation and isolationism of the Black community with a behavior ranging from the protracted hatred of the whites by the Negro middle classes to the violent actions of small groups of extremists.

So now what about the role of these enemy brothers, the systems analysts and the radical academicians who have only one common feature: both live in an intellectual Utopia?

THE DANGEROUS UTOPIA: FROM THE RADICAL COUNTERCULTURE TO THE RED-NECK COUNTERREVOLUTION

The New Left thinkers are awaiting salvation, i.e., revolution from the student-workers alliance. They are right only about the fact of future interaction of the working class and the radical group, and they are wrong about the nature of the interaction: the blue-collar backlash to the rising upheaval of those "wealthy kids" can be one of the major socio-political events of the next decade in the western countries. The *Newsweek* report about "Middle America" revealed that the most violent comments about student radicalism were issued from white blue-collars. With the continuously growing importance of science and technology in our society, the Middle Americans without higher education will become more and more frustrated (in America this attitude will be essentially a psychological reaction to the emergence of a new technological culture; in Europe, especially in France, economic grievances such as those of declining, small businessmen (shopkeepers/farmers) will play an additional role). The "radical madness" (this is not pejorative, since I consider it as an unavoidable factor of contemporary social change), will constitute the best scapegoat possible for these angry reactions to over-rapid change. The success of some outspoken vice-presidential statements proves how rapidly the strength of anti-radical feeling is rising (one may perhaps argue that it is better to have the vice president express the general sentiment than to let the frustration grow silently to explode one day).

It is not surprising that the radical extremists and the first pioneers of the future red-neck reaction are using the same kind of hate propaganda and stereotyping of the supposed enemy (the "pig" or

the "Hippie") as did the real petty bourgeois fascists of the European Twenties and Thirties with their "Red" and "Jew." In all three cases we have reactions of threatened socioeconomic groups to a rapidly declining status, but in the fascist case of thirty years ago the crisis was economic (the fear of proletarianization of the lower middle classes) and in the modern structure it is mainly psychological. The upper-middle-class college kids who are the kernel of the radical movement have enough education to realize the fantastic complexity of the new technological society, but they are afraid of the tremendous amount of intellectual effort required to adequately understand it, and to compete successfully for responsibility in its management. Thanks to their privileged social origin, they gain access to higher education only to realize how much more personal effort is demanded by access to the new elite, and how difficult it is to understand the many constant and complex messages of the environment. So they react by furiously attacking the society--playing in the beginning a useful role, since this society has heretofore hidden but now emerging diseases (America with Vietnam, pollution, discrimination)--but rapidly refusing reformism (and sliding toward extremism and oversimplification). In this analysis I am relying considerably upon my European experience, since in Europe we have the pure situation of the revolt of upper-middle-class students completely unaware of their country's problems (who among the French radicals has ever been interested in the Algerian ghettos or the poverty in Central France?). The small minority of strongly radical American students is close to them. Vietnam is less an issue than a pretext.

The non-intellectual Middle Americans also will be more and more frustrated by this growing complexity of the modern world. They are constantly given through the mass media the impression that to have intellectual expertise is the necessary condition for having real responsibility in the society. But their anti-intellectualism could only, will only, find one possible scapegoat--that is the radicals, since Middle America conservatism prevents its revolt against the Establishment. So the two psychological harvests of rapid social change in technological societies nourish each other, and radicalism

and Middle-Citizen backlash will rise rapidly in the most advanced countries of the Western World.

But the imbalance of their respective forces can be easily foreseen; and there is an essential conclusion that all intellectuals waiting to transform the universities into radical fortresses should meditate upon: *The problem is not to know whether radicalism can succeed in changing the society, but when it will provoke the triumph of a violent right-wing backlash that will bring the destruction of radicalism and many other things.*

THE ANALYST'S UTOPIA OR THE PITFALLS OF SUBOPTIMIZATION

The major bias of the action-oriented academicians and other systems analysts is that they look separately at all the micro-problems and so are not enough aware of the global trends of society. So they often are not conscious enough of the gravity of the two phenomena previously mentioned. In their liberal eastern parties they delight in joking about the vice president, or express their regrets for the lack of understanding or tolerance of their radical colleagues or students; but one doubts that these are effective political or social reactions. And what really fascinates them is to build subtle econometric discrimination models, to apply operations research to urban problems, to analyze the utility (or disutility) of ABM, MIRV, and other nuclear gimmicks, to design ideal training programs in order to develop a new elite of policy analysts, as bright, if possible, as they are themselves. It is impossible not to recognize their competence and their dedication to their tasks. What they do is obviously necessary and very useful; the only difficulty is that their effect on society can be nothing more than incremental. Although they realized this from their failure in the Kennedy-Johnson era their current self-appraisals and essays on future improvements are nothing more than frivolous gimmicks: a little less analytical technique, a little more sociology, a wise manipulation of bureaucratic bargaining, and last, but not least, liberal, enlightened political leaders and everything will be right in the best of Americas. They are so busy thinking of sophisticated policy analyses that they will not even realize that they are on the point of being

crushed between the agonizing but dangerous radical left and the victorious "know-nothing" ex-silent majority.

Interestingly, one can find some more realistic insights from two of the most prominent (but also rather maverick) members of the action-oriented academic community, J. K. Galbraith and D. P. Moynihan. But there is some chance their partial lucidity relates in some way to a common aspect of their brilliant egos: a touch of cynicism. Galbraith is right in linking the youth unrest to the changes in the structure of the industrial society, and in focusing on the key role of teaching and research institutions in the future. But he is mistaken if he thinks to sit with the winning side by being a liaison between dying liberalism and rising radicalism. He is wrong to focus his attacks on business and to ask for more bureaucratic control of the economy, like some latter-day New Dealer, since many of his managerial targets could soon be his natural allies against the emerging anti-intellectual majority.

Moynihan is right in blasting the liberal white upper middle class who, while moralizing about the race problem, hope to live comfortably in lily-white suburbs. He is right in pointing out the radical youth as a "mob of flower children, upper-middle-class kids and Radcliffe girls." But he is wrong if he thinks that in suppressing the draft and letting the wealthy kids harrass liberal deans, make love, smoke pot, and play any other campus games of their invention, without fear of being sent to Vietnamese rice fields, he will solve a problem that is a general Western one, as we insisted earlier. And he is as mistaken as Galbraith if he hopes to play at the left of the silent majority the same role of intellectual crusader that his Harvard colleague is trying to play at the right of the New Left. Brilliantly, both of them perceive the emerging forces; but if they actually pursue the roles suggested above, they can only fail.

So it seems to me that the present reactions of the action-oriented intellectuals to the challenges of American society will have, at most, incrementally positive effects. But they could have a broader, more fruitful role in the future. They could help prevent the rise of the extremes by a commitment to two lines of action, one political, the other institutional.

THE POLITICS OF CHANGE: TOWARD AN "EGGHEAD COALITION"

American liberalism in its traditional form is dead. It was seriously hurt in the Southeastern-Johnsonian battlefields and received the "coup de grace" in Chicago in August 1968. If it was necessary, Abe Ribicoff has clearly shown the hypocrisy of the (purely intellectual) carpetbaggers of the Second Reconstruction who preach desegregation in the South from their comfortable suburban cottages. The old Roosevelt coalition of minorities, blue collars and intellectuals, kernel of the liberal wing of the Democratic Party, is being steadily broken by the Middle-America backlash. So what can the intellectuals do except either try to rally radicalism (which ways we tried above to prove dangerous and inefficient), or to isolate themselves in the ivory tower of an impotent research? There is a forgotten possibility: the powerful business community is no longer headed by reactionary bankers and poorly educated self-made entrepreneurs.

There is a highly trained managerial class made up of a majority of business-school alumni and some bright engineers or economists. Below that top level there is a rising technological middle class of aerospace engineers and scientists, computer systems analysts, etc. All these people and especially those at the top are often Republicans by tradition (since they are on the side of business management). But by their education they are quite close to the intellectual elements of the Democratic Party. Already it is quite clear that there is more affinity between a young Pittsburgh executive who graduated from Harvard Business School and a liberal Harvard economist, than between the former and a southern "red-neck" member of the emerging Republican majority; there is relatively greater affinity between the latter and Cleveland ethnic blue collars of the type described by *Newsweek*.

The problems of America are complex and can't be solved by pressure but only by reflection. The alliance of academicians (rejecting the sterile radicalism) and of businessmen and corporate engineers (rejecting reactionary capitalism), can play a major role in preventing the rise of a know-nothing majority provoked by radical extremism. This is true far beyond the field of national politics; at each level where academic people are involved in community problems they should

try to obtain as allies the progressive elements of the business community. Simultaneously, the business schools should continue their present emphasis toward a more "public" orientation of their programs. But this introduces our following institutional point.

THE NECESSARY INSTITUTIONAL REVOLUTION: THE FOURTH AND FIFTH POWERS

The old Montesquieu "equilibre des pouvoirs" among the executive, legislative, and judicial is no longer relevant, since two new powers are emerging where intellectuals play a key role.

The Fourth Power is that of the universities and research centers. It is no longer the time for them to try to preserve medieval traditions, but rather to consider the duties (and not only the rights) of their new major role in society. This role consists of first assuring equal opportunity to higher education (and this should be as true for blue-collar kids as for minority ones--an important move to destroy the frustrated middle-class style of the campuses) and second, of making objective analyses of public policy problems, using the tools of social sciences, economics, natural sciences, engineering and mathematics. One of the greatest inputs of systems analysis is to make the situation "explicit." This should be the role of the academic and autonomous Think Tanks. But it is possible only if an atmosphere of freedom is preserved and if political bigotry is banned. As for the three First Powers, these are necessary conditions for the success of the Fourth Power.

But another condition is the emergence of normative rules for the Fifth Power, that is, the Media Power. Among the major reasons for the rise of both radical and reactionary extremes are the emphasis of the press on sensation and violence, and its inability to explain objectively America's problems to its citizens.

It is impressive to realize, for example, how poorly Harvard college students are informed about Latin America, which tomorrow can become a major crisis area for America (and if it is true of Ivy League dependents, what about Middle Americans?). If policy analyses can make explicit the real nature of the problems and the main choices available, the media ought to use these inputs as a major tool for political education of the American public (had Paul Samuelson or James Tobin the opportunity