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Letters from Readers

Truman’s Speech & Noam Chomsky

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

There are familiar forms of self-righteousness in which people become so suffused with the virtue of their cause that they cease to care about intellectual honesty. Dr. Chomsky, I fear, has succumbed to this malady of moralism. “It is the responsibility of intellectuals,” he wrote in his most celebrated essay, “to speak the truth and to expose lies.” Having said this, he seems to feel licensed to forget or distort the truth whenever it suits his polemical convenience. He begins as a preacher to the world and ends as an intellectual crook.

Since Dr. Chomsky unwisely continues to labor the point, let us go on with the example he raised in his sermon in the October COMMENTARY ("Vietnam, the Cold War & Other Matters"); the nature of the speech Harry S. Truman gave at Baylor University in Texas on March 6, 1947. In American Power and the New Mandarins Dr. Chomsky twice (pp. 268, 319) printed a series of what he represented as direct quotations from what he called this “famous and important” speech: “All freedom is dependent on freedom of enterprise. . . . The whole world should adopt the American system. . . . The American system can survive in America only if it becomes a world system.” The purpose of these Truman “quotations” was to prove that the United States had long been “using its awesome resources of violence and devastation to impose its passionately held ideology and its approved form of social organization on large areas of the world” (p. 518).

Of course President Truman never spoke the words thus attributed to him, and reviewers quickly caught Dr. Chomsky out in his scholarly fakery. But this exposure has evidently not perturbed Dr. Chomsky in the slightest. He now concedes that he lifted his “quotations” from D. F. Fleming and J. P. Warburg; but he still insists that they are “accurate and perceptive” paraphrases of the Baylor speech, that they “convey the essence of Truman’s remarks.” The Baylor speech still seems to him dramatic proof of the American drive for world economic empire.

What, in fact, did President Truman say at Baylor? The speech is readily available in the volume of his Public Papers for 1947, pages 167-172. Anyone interested in testing Dr. Chomsky’s capacity for intellectual honesty should examine the full text. Far from a Presidential response to the expansionist demands of American capitalism, the speech is an earnest plea to the American business community not to return to its economic nationalism of the days before the Second World War. Its specific objective is to persuade American businessmen that they will not suffer from the reduction of trade barriers and, in particular, that they should support American membership in the International Trade Organization, then in process of formation. It is all quite conventional and even routine argument in the spirit of Cordell Hull, Will Clayton, and the Reciprocal Trade Agreements Act for economic multilateralism and a freely trading world.

Truman began with a statement of his theme:

The three—peace, freedom, and world trade—are inseparable. The grave lessons of the past have proved it. . . . We know today that we cannot find security in isolation. If we are to live at peace, we must join with other nations in a continuing effort to organize the world for peace. . . . Our foreign relations, political and economic, are indivisible. We cannot say that we are willing to cooperate in the one field and are unwilling to cooperate in the other.

He reminded his audience of the dangers of economic nationalism and of consequent economic conflict:

One nation may take action in behalf of its own producers, without notifying other nations, or consulting them, or even considering how they may be affected. It may cut down its purchases of another country’s goods, by raising its tariffs or imposing an embargo or a system of quota on imports. And when
Grand simplicity
Artisans of Western Europe
are the skillful creators of these
candlesticks, which are heavily
leaded ... that is most conducive to
freedom of enterprise is one in
which the major decisions are
made, not by governments, but
it does this, some producer, in
the other country, will find the
door to his market suddenly
slammed and bolted in his face.
Or a nation may subsidize its
exports, selling its goods abroad
below their cost. When this is
done, a producer in some other
country will find his market
flooded with goods that have
been dumped. In either case, the
producer gets angry. . . .

He appeals to his government
for action. His government re-
talates, and another round of
tariff boosts, embargoes, quotas,
and subsidies is under way. This
is economic war. In such a war
nobody wins . . . . As each battle
of the economic war of the thir-
ties was fought, the inevitable
tragic result became more and
more apparent. From the tariff
policy of Hawley and Smoot, the
world went on to Ottawa and
the system of imperial prefer-
ences, from Ottawa to the kind
of elaborate and detailed restric-
tions adopted by Nazi Germany.

Truman then contended that
the world had reached another
turning-point like 1920, when it
could move either toward eco-
omic nationalism or toward economic
internationalism.

In this atmosphere of doubt and
hesitation, the decisive factor
will be the type of leadership
that the United States gives the
world. We are the giant of the
economic world. Whether we
like it or not, the future pattern
of economic relations depends
upon us. The world is waiting
and watching to see what we
shall do. The choice is ours. We
can lead the nations to economic
peace or we can plunge them
into economic war. There must
be no question as to our course.
We must not go through the
thirties again.

Next, in the policy section of
the speech, he advocated Ameri-
can participation in a projected
new organization to be established
within the United Nations: the In-
ternational Trade Organization.

This organization would apply
to commercial relationships the
same principle of fair dealing
that the United Nations is ap-
plying to political affairs. In-
stead of retaining unlimited
freedom to commit acts of eco-
nomic aggression, its members
would adopt a code of economic
conduct and agree to live ac-
cording to its rules. Instead of
adopting measures that might
be harmful to others, without
warning and without consulta-
tion, countries would sit down
around the table and talk things
out. In any dispute, each party
would present its case. The in-
terest of all would be consid-
ered, and a fair and just solution
would be found. . . . If the na-
tions can agree to observe a
code of good conduct in inter-
national trade, they will cooper-
ate more readily in other inter-
national affairs. Such agreement
will prevent the bitterness that
is engendered by an economic
war. It will provide an atmos-
phere congenial to the preserva-
tion of peace. As a part of this
program we have asked other
nations of the world to join
with us in reducing barriers to
trade.

With this last proposal, Tru-
man was entering the hard part
of his argument; for then, as now, the
idea of reducing trade barriers
struck terror through large seg-
ments of the American business
community. The rest of his speech
was designed to persuade business-
men that such reduction would be
in their long-term interest:

There is one thing that Ameri-
cans value even more than
peace. It is freedom. Freedom of
worship—freedom of speech—
freedom of enterprise. It must
be true that the first two of these
freedoms are related to the
third. For, throughout history,
freedom of worship and free-
dom of speech have been most
closely enjoyed in those so-
cieties that have accorded a con-
siderable measure of freedom to
individual enterprise. Freedom
has flourished where power has
been dispersed. It has lan-
guished where power has been
too highly centralized. So our
devotion to freedom of enter-
prise, in the United States, has
deeper roots than a desire to
protect the profits of ownership.

He warned the American busi-
ness community that, if the world
moved toward economic national-
ism, the United States would be
forced to intensify government
controls over business.

The pattern of international
trade that is most conducive
to freedom of enterprise is one in
which the major decisions are
made, not by governments, but
by private buyers and sellers, under conditions of active competition, and with proper safeguards against the establishment of monopolies and cartels. . . . If this trend [toward economic nationalism] is not reversed, the Government of the United States will be under pressure, sooner or later, to use these same devices to fight for markets and for raw materials. And if the Government were to yield to this pressure, it would shortly find itself in the business of allocating foreign goods among importers and foreign markets among exporters and telling every trader what he could buy or sell, and how much, and when, and where. . . .

Fortunately, an alternative has been offered to the world in the Charter of the International Trade Organization that is to be considered at Geneva in the coming month. . . . This program is designed to restore and preserve a trading system that is consistent with continuing freedom of enterprise in every country that chooses freedom for its own economy.

He went on to explain that American business would have to make certain sacrifices if it hopes to enjoy the benefits of a freely trading world.

If these negotiations are to be successful, we ourselves must make the same commitments that we ask all other nations of the world to make. We must be prepared to make concessions if we are to obtain concessions from others in return. . . . The program . . . means that exports will be larger. It also means that imports will be larger. Many people, it is true, are afraid of imports. . . . I said to the Congress, when it last considered the extension of the Trade Agreements Act, and I now reiterate, that domestic interests will be safeguarded in this process of expanding trade. But there still are those who sincerely fear that the trade agreement negotiations will prove disastrous to the interests of particular producing groups. I am sure that their misgivings are not well founded.

He concluded with a summation:

The policy of reducing barriers to trade is a settled policy of this Government. It is embodied in the Reciprocal Trade Agreements Act, fathered and administered for many years by Cordell Hull. It is reflected in the Charter of the International Trade Organization. . . . [To] those among us—and there are still a few—who would seek to undermine this policy for partisan advantage and go back to the period of high tariffs and economic isolation, I can only say this: Times have changed. Our position in the world has changed. . . . Isolationism, after two world wars, is a confession of mental and moral bankruptcy.

Several things can be said about this speech. It embodies, of course, a shallow interpretation of world events. Few today accept the Cordell Hull theory that economic nationalism was the main cause of the Second World War, or that economic internationalism offers a sure way to peace. Many of us have come to doubt the automatic value of the reduction of trade barriers in all places and all circumstances. The special needs of economic development, for example, may well argue for non-reciprocal tariff concessions to developing countries in order to give their manufactures preferential treatment as well as for controls by such countries to regulate the use of their own foreign-exchange earnings and to limit the repatriation of profits to other countries.

Yet saying these things hardly makes the Truman speech, as Dr. Chomsky implies, the great war cry of a rampant American imperialism mobilizing its resources of violence and devastation to impose its ideology and its economic organization on large areas of the world. The ideological passage, for example, is hardly so ferocious as Dr. Chomsky claims. Indeed, it is characteristic of Dr. Chomsky's unbeatable instinct for distortion that he can write in the October COMMENTARY: "Truman argued that freedom of enterprise is one of those freedoms to be valued 'even more than peace.'" What Truman actually said, as the reader will have observed, was that Americans valued freedom even more than peace, and he made it clear that he meant above all intellectual and religious freedom. His sentence relating freedom of speech and freedom of worship to freedom of enterprise is moderately stated and historically defensi-
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ble. Does Dr. Chomsky really quarrel with such platitudes as "Freedom has flourished where power has been dispersed. It has languished where power has been too highly centralized"?

But the most perplexing thing of all is why Dr. Chomsky gets so excited over the prospect of America's joining the International Trade Organization, which after all was the point of the Truman speech. Why does he regard the Reciprocal Trade Agreements Act as so sinister and vicious an arrangement? (This extravagant reaction to innocuous phenomena is typical of Dr. Chomsky; recall his statement in American Power and the New Mandarins that Senator Mike Mansfield--Mike Mansfield!--is "the kind of man who is the terror of our age.") And why does he suppose that the ITO and the Trade Agreements Act express the imperialist will of the American business system?

He does all these things, I guess, because he is an ignorant man who has read superficially in American history and has taken from Professor William Appleman Williams and his disciples the notion that the policy of the open door--i.e., of economic multilateralism--has been the chosen instrument of American business in its presumed quest for world economic domination. Of course, as any freshman knows, American business and its political representatives have been characteristically protectionist rather than multilateralist on questions of international trade. Herbert Hoover condemned the reciprocal trade idea in 1932 as "a violation of American principles." When the trade agreements bill passed the Congress in 1934, only two representatives of the party of business voted for it in the House and only three in the Senate. Dr. Chomsky's uncritical adoption of the Williams thesis requires him to believe (as his footnote on the Far Eastern policy of the 30's makes evident) that, in his conduct of foreign policy, Franklin Roosevelt was striving to serve the very moneyed interests who were fighting him so savagely in domestic politics. Does not this proposition strain even Dr. Chomsky's limitless credulity?

I continue to believe that Dr. Chomsky is putting us on. If he really regards the Trade Agreements Act and the ITO as so iniquitous--as expressions of an American determination to use "its awesome resources of violence and devastation," etc.--how does he propose that international trade should be organized? Does he want the United States to repeal the Trade Agreements Act and to resign from the ITO? If economic multilateralism is so horrible, does Dr. Chomsky favor economic nationalism? If a freely trading world is such a bad thing, does he want bilateralism? managed trading? autarky?

One's suspicion is that Dr. Chomsky has no idea what he is talking about. As his persistence in the distortion of the Truman speech shows him an intellectual crook, so his refusal to confront, or even acknowledge, the serious issues involved in Truman's support of the ITO in this "famous and important" speech shows him an intellectual phoney.

ARTHUR SCHLESINGER, JR.
New York City

[Professor Chomsky's reply will appear in a future issue--Ed.]

Antigone & the New Left

To the Editor of Commentary:

In an inevitable reevaluation of the 1950's ["In Defense of the 50's," September], John Mander states: "It was the happiest, most stable, most rational period the Western world has known since 1914." Mr. Mander is writing as a white, prosperous, moderately Left Englishman. But the 50's was the decade of Little Rock and the acquittal of Emmett Till's murderers; of poverty, before Michael Harrington roused the conscience of America; of 'Communist' witch hunts. For the non-white, the poor or underprivileged, the radicals, or those stalked as radicals, it was not happy; stability meant stagnation, and the demagoguery of McCarthy was irrational.

Indeed, Mr. Mander's whole article is an attempt to cling to the spar of Western, over-thirty happiness and stability. Talking about colonial wars, Mr. Mander says: "In each case a compromise was eventually struck: unsatisfactory to the Dutch and the French, rather more satisfactory to the British." But were the compromises satisfactory to the people fighting for their freedom? Should there even be a compromise between liberation and colonialism?

John Mander accuses Fanon,
Letters from Readers

The Truman Speech (Cont’d)

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

Before I comment on the latest episode in Arthur Schlesinger’s battle against the world of fact [“Letters from Readers,” December 1969], let me fill in the relevant background.

In my American Power and the New Mandarins I cited a number of examples of fabrication in the service of government policy, among them several that appeared in Schlesinger’s Bitter Heritage. Nevertheless, I emphasized not the falsehoods, but rather the explicit statements of position: for example, Schlesinger’s willingness to applaud the “wisdom and statesmanship of the American government” if only its policy succeeds in establishing the rule of our chosen representatives in South Vietnam, at a cost that he describes quite vividly.

Schlesinger had an excellent opportunity to correct the errors and, one might hope, withdraw from the positions cited, in a review of my book in Book World. He chose, instead, to add a new series of misrepresentations (though his review contained one correct and useful observation, to which I return). Some of these I enumerated in a footnote in my exchange with Lionel Abel [“Vietnam, the Cold War & Other Matters,” October 1969]. Again, Schlesinger had an opportunity to correct these mistakes. Again, he chose to try to drown this dismal record in a flood of vituperation and new falsehoods. Schlesinger refers to the footnote in question only as follows: it “makes evident” he claims, my belief that “in his conduct of foreign policy, Franklin Roosevelt was striving to serve the very moneyed interests who were fighting him so savagely in domestic politics.” The section of my footnote which he claims, “makes evident” this belief reads as follows:

Schlesinger sees a merging of the New Left and the Old Right in the conclusion, which he attributes to me, that “Confronted with such pressure from American imperialism, what else could Japan do but act in self-defense.” To support this interpretation of my views, he cites this quotation: “It is an open question whether a more conciliatory American diplomacy that took into account some of the real problems faced by Japan might have helped... It is hardly astonishing, then, that in 1987 Japan began to expand at the expense of China.” The unwary reader of his review could not know that the three dots, in this quotation, cover 13 pages of text and six years of time. The first part of the quotation refers to the impact of Stimson’s diplomacy of 1931 on the efforts by the civilian government (backed by the central army authorities) to prevail over the independent initiative of the Kwantung Army in Manchuria. The second part refers to Japanese expansion on the mainland in 1937 in response, in part, to the economic policies of “the American and British and other Western imperial systems, which abandoned their lofty liberal rhetoric as soon as the shoe began to pinch.” In both of these (independent) cases, I merely summarize standard sources and present conclusions that would not be surprising to a historian, though, evidently, they still come as a shock to the more fervent ideologues. Neither conclusion has anything to do with the “New Left” or the “Old Right,” as can be determined by checking the references in my discussion.

Comparing the text with Schlesinger’s paraphrase, we see that in this case the lie is more brazen than usual. Nowhere does the footnote “make evident” my belief that Roosevelt was serving the interests of his domestic enemies (whether it is true, when properly reformulated, is another matter); rather, the footnote documents a series of Arthur Schlesinger’s fabrications and errors.

One who thinks that this degree of falsification might suffice has a surprise in store. In the very same paragraph in which Schlesinger speaks of my “limitless credulity” in believing that American policy in the 1930’s involved a departure from economic liberalism (note that this is the content of my statement) he also deplores my failure...
to understand that "American business and its political representatives have been characteristically protectionist rather than multilateralist on questions of international trade." Thus within one paragraph Schlesinger accuses me of being wrong in believing that American policy has been protectionist, and wrong in believing that it has not been protectionist. These two accusations have one property in common: neither is documented, and as any reader of Schlesinger will immediately guess, both are distortions. I could go on at this point to restate my actual position, but it seems pointless to dignify this mendacity with a serious response.

Evidently, Schlesinger has no intention of following the usual practice of acknowledging and correcting error. Let me therefore turn to the one correct comment that he has so far made in his repeated efforts to come to grips with material which, not surprisingly, he finds outrageous. As I explained in the October issue of COMMENTARY, in my book I erroneously attributed to Truman two statements that were, in fact, paraphrases of his Baylor speech by D. F. Fleming and James Warburg. In the book I also gave a precise page reference to the source from which I took the quotes (which, to compound the error, I mistranscribed). As I stated, this was a careless and inexcusable error, which I am glad to have pointed out, and which is corrected in the second printing along with a few others that I have discovered. Schlesinger was quite justified in pointing out this error, though his elaborate pretense that he couldn't find the quotes, that I had invented them, that this is fakery, fabrication, etc., was perhaps somewhat exaggerated.

In his letter in the December COMMENTARY, Schlesinger takes issue with my statement that the remarks of Fleming and Warburg were "accurate and perceptive," and he cites as an example of my "unbeatable instinct for distortion" my statement (A):

(A) "Truman argued that freedom of enterprise is one of those freedoms to be valued 'even more than peace.'

At issue, then, is the accuracy of (A) and also the following statements by Fleming and Warburg, respectively:

(B) "He explained that freedom was more important than peace and that freedom of worship and speech were dependent on freedom of enterprise.

(C) Truman "made it quite clear that he believed that the whole world should adopt the American system . . . [which] . . . could survive in America only if it became the world system.

Schlesinger denies the accuracy of (A), claiming that:

(D) when Truman said "that Americans valued freedom even more than peace . . . he made it clear that he meant above all intellectual and religious freedom."

Let us consider first whether my (A) or Schlesinger's (D) is a correct rendition of Truman's statement, which is as follows:

(E) "There is one thing that Americans value even more than peace. It is freedom. Freedom of worship—freedom of speech—and freedom of enterprise. It must be true that the first two of these freedoms are related to the third."

Comparing now (A), (D), and (E), we see at once that (A) is accurate and that (D) is inaccurate. (A) follows directly from (E) (to be absolutely precise, we must add the premise that in Truman's view, what "Americans value" is what is "to be valued"); nowhere in the speech is there anything to support (D). So much for Schlesinger's charge concerning my "unbeatable instinct for distortion."

It simply provides one additional example of his difficulties with fact and logic.

Let us now turn to the accuracy of (B) and (C). As far as (B) is concerned, the quotation (E) is enough to show its accuracy. Let us turn then to (C). Here the matter is slightly more complex, in that to see its accuracy one must be able to follow a rather trivial argument.

After stating (E), Truman explains that "our devotion to freedom of enterprise, in the United States, has deeper roots than a desire to protect the profits of ownership. It is part and parcel of what we call American." He then describes "the pattern of the 17th and 18th centuries," in which "Governments make all the important choices," and warns that: "Unless we act, and act decisively, it will be the pattern of the next century." The danger is that Governments will be "curtailing the freedom of traders . . . [or] . . . raising tariffs," or will rely on even more drastic measures of control, determined by a central plan, as "countries that were devastated by the war are seeking to reconstruct their industries . . . [and] . . . countries that have lagged in their development are seeking to industrialize." But such methods, says Truman, are "regimentation." Unfortunately, "this is the direction in which much of the world is headed at the present time."

Furthermore, "If this trend is not reversed the Government of the United States will be under pressure, sooner or later, to use these same devices to fight for markets and for raw materials . . . It is not the American way. It is not the way to peace."

Rather, the American way, the way to peace, is by international agreements that "limit the present freedom of Governments to impose detailed administrative regulations on their foreign trade." "This program is designed to restore and preserve a trading system that is consistent with continuing freedom of enterprise in every country that chooses freedom for its own economy. It is a program that will serve the interests of other nations as well as those of the United States." We will thus move toward "an international order in which peace and freedom shall endure."

Now consider Warburg's comments in his Put Yourself in Marshall's Place (1948):

Briefly, what the President said was this: Political freedom is bound up with freedom of individual enterprise; that pattern of international trade which promotes individual enterprise and leaves the direction of the international movement of goods and services to private individual initiative is the pattern which leads to peace; that pattern of international trade in which governments direct or control the flow of goods and services between nations is the pattern which leads to war.

Therefore, we, the economic giant, are going to use our power to set a world pattern of free-enterprise capitalism. Mr. Truman was not merely reaffirming the American belief in the American system as the best system for America. He made it
quite clear that he believed that the whole world should adopt the American system, first, because it was the best system and second, because the American system could survive in America only if it survived in the world system. This was an unequivocal challenge not merely to those governments or peoples who believed in the Marxist doctrine but also to the far greater number of nations which had come either to believe in or to accept as necessary some form of national economic planning and some degree of government control over their respective economies. The challenge—though little noticed or understood at the time in this country—was very much noted abroad and formed an important part of the background against which the Truman doctrine of March 12 was interpreted. [(C) is italicized.]

Observe that Warburg's paraphrase is quite accurate. Truman makes clear his belief that the American way should be adopted by all countries, and, further, asserts that if other countries adopt "regimentation" they will be under pressure to do so as well, leading to a breakdown of the American way and turning the world away from the way to peace. Unless we act decisively, this will be the pattern of the next century. Warburg's statement (C) follows from these claims, which also buttress still further Fleming's remark (B) (to be precise, it is necessary to add one premise to reach Warburg's conclusion: i.e., that we will yield to the pressure and adapt ourselves to the pattern of the next century). Hence (C) too is accurate.

I have been discussing the accuracy of (B) and (C) with Schlesinger, who has made a serious effort to resolve a debatable issue. The assumption that Schlesinger has made is questionable, however. Consider the rhetoric in which he couches his denial of my assertion that Fleming and Warburg were accurate: "intellectual crook," "phony," etc. This has been stated that two eminent commentators were accurate in their rendition of Truman's remarks. Suppose, contrary to fact, that Schlesinger were correct in denying this. Would such rhetoric be a sane response? I hardly think so.

I should note that Truman's Baylo speech does not merit the attention it is receiving as a result of Schlesinger's insistence on publicly misinterpreting it. In my exposition it played a minor role and could have been replaced by dozens of other references cited by Williams, Warburg, and numerous other serious historians who, in recent years, have been systematically demolishing the interpretation of modern history for which Schlesinger has been one of the chief apologists. Furthermore, there is a tinge of the absurd in this meticulous analysis of the accuracy of (A), (B), and (C). We can concede at once that by the standards of mathematical proof, it is possible to fault these paraphrases because of hidden premises (two of which I have already mentioned), assumptions about the precise interpretation of such words as "dependent," etc. Of course, these standards would quickly empty the shelves of the library. The remarks at issue are not theorems deduced from Truman's text; rather, they are efforts to formulate concisely the essence of his remarks. By any reasonable standards, their accuracy seems to me undeniable.

When we go on to consider whether Warburg and Fleming were not only accurate but perceptive as well, the criteria are of course less clear and there are grounds for honest disagreement. To me it seems that the remarks are, indeed, perceptive. Truman's words recall those of Palmerston, who denounced protectionism as "a principle of fatal injury to the country and inimical to the prosperity of every country to whose affairs it may be applied." The analogy is apt in other ways. It was during its period of economic dominance that Britain espoused liberalism, by and large, just as the United States tends to adhere to this doctrine (highly selectively, to be sure), insofar as it guarantees our ascendancy. In the special circumstances of 1947, it was not surprising that the world-dominant power should oppose "regimentation" of the sort that Truman describes. Consider the historical context. American industrial production had quadrupled during World War II while every other industrial society was devastated or severely crippled. Gabriel Kolko, in his The Politics of War, shows in detail how we proceeded, during the war, to lay the groundwork for a postwar economic empire. Similarly, postwar loans were used to compel the British to dismantle the Im-
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PERMANENT PREFERENCE SYSTEM AND RESTRICT NATIONALIZATION (Clayton: “We loaded the British loan negotiations with all the conditions that the traffic would bear”—see LaFeber’s America, Russia and the Cold War). LaFeber formulates the general outlines of America’s European policy, as advocated by the Executive Department, as follows:

Then, a rejuvenated Europe could offer many advantages to the United States: eradicate the threat of continued nationalization and spreading socialism by releasing and stimulating the investment of private capital, maintain demand for American exports, encourage Europeans to produce strategic goods which the United States could buy and stockpile, preserve European and American control over Middle Eastern oil supplies from militant nationalism which might endanger the weakened European holdings, and free Europeans from economic problems so they could help the U.S. militarily.

Meanwhile, “The economic relationship with Latin America and Canada could be assumed; none had to be developed.” As Stimson put it rather nicely, in trying to work out a strategy for breaking down European regressive systems while preserving our own: “I think that it’s not asking too much to have our little region over here [i.e., South America] which never has bothered anybody” (Kolko, op. cit., p. 471). Where we could, we imposed unequal treaties, as in the Philippines, thus perpetuating what the Philippine UN Ambassador refers to as a “colonial economy of the classical type.” The meaning of Truman-style economic liberalism under these circumstances is sufficiently clear. It was a prescription for the economic dominance over Europe which has since been proceeding apace, and for the perpetuation of underdevelopment in the “Third World.”

Schlesinger states that “Many of us have come to doubt the automatic value of the reduction of trade barriers...” and have come to understand the value, for developing nations, of what Truman describes as “regimentation.” It is a bit late in the game for this discovery to be made by “many of us.” As Schlesinger is fully aware, such “regimentation” was a principle of American economic development since Hamilton. Indeed, the American experience was a primary model for such theoreticians as Friedrich List, who, well over a century ago, pointed out what “many of us” are now belatedly discovering. Alfred Marshall, for one, observed that “The brilliant genius and national enthusiasm of List stand in contrast to the insular narrowness and self-confidence of the Ricardian school...” (for) he showed that in Germany and still more in America, many of its indirect effects [Free Trade] were evils. . . .” (cited in Frederic Clairmonte, Economic Liberalism and Underdevelopment—one of the numerous studies from which “many of us” could have learned these lessons, had “we” wished). Furthermore, the point has surely been clear to those who set American policy. In The Political Economy of American Foreign Policy (study group of the Woodrow Wilson Foundation and National Planning Association), some of the effects of economic liberalism on the underdeveloped countries are noted, with this comment: “However, as the example of the U.S. suggests, this is probably not the way their resources would have been used had these countries been fully independent and had local enterprise existed capable of managing its own development.”

The impact of such policies in India, the Caribbean and South America, the Philippines, and elsewhere, has been discussed at great length in scholarly works. Given such facts as these, Schlesinger’s observation strikes me as rather disingenuous, particularly when it appears in a tirade against those who are reiterating these familiar facts.

Schlesinger asks what I would have preferred to Truman’s proposal. Again, I am disinclined to discuss the matter in the context set by his mendacity, but for a start, he might look at the book that so irritates him, e.g., p. 347. Beyond this, he might refer to the many reasonable proposals of UNCTAD, and many other sources.

There is only one other point raised in Schlesinger’s letter. He once again expresses his rage at my remark that it is the sane and reasonable and scholarly men who are the terror of mankind. For example, I mentioned Mike Mansfield, who felt the need to criticize the “sense of utter irresponsibility” shown by the peaceful demonstra-
tors of October 1965, and who felt “ashamed for the image they have portrayed of this country” and de-
ployed their refusal to live up to our commitment to “a government of laws” (referring to a small group of militants in October 1965), but who has never applied these standards to those who launched and pursue the war, to those “who stand by quietly and vote appropriations as the cities and villages of North Vietnam are demolishing, as millions of refugees in the South are driven from their homes by American bomb-
armament.” As a further example, I re-
ferred to the political scientists who give calum dispositions “on just how much force will be neces-
sary to achieve our ends, or just what form of government will be ac-
ceptable to us in Vietnam.” It is these scholarly and reasonable men, I wrote, who are the terror of our age. I would say exactly the same thing about the Soviet Union, even Nazi Germany. Other cases might be cited, for example, the historians who “pray that Mr. Al-
sop will be right” in his belief that we will win in Vietnam, and who protest only when victory seems beyond our grasp. Schlesinger, not surprisingly, finds these views shocking. To me they seem rather banal.

With this remark, I have cov-
ered all of the points that Schles-
inger has raised. His efforts have so far produced one correct obser-
vation: the confusion of quota-
tions noted above. Apart from this,
all is misrepresentation and false-
hood, as I have now shown in some
detail.

One final comment. When mis-
representation and falsehood ap-
pear in print, one is strongly tempted to try to set the record straight. Thus I fully intended to reply to Lionel Abel’s incredible piece in the October issue of COM-
MENTARY, until informed by the editors that they felt the matter should be closed. The inductive evidence suggests that this further exposure of Schlesinger’s remark-
able record will be followed by still another outpouring of falsehoods, distortion, and plain misunder-
standing of elementary facts of modern history. At this point, there is a competing temptation: to leave it as an exercise for the reader. But there is a serious issue involved. Schlesinger has in gen-
eral defended the most extreme pro-war position that was at all toler-
able among American liberals. For example, in May 1965 he urged that “if we took the Marines now in the Dominican Republic and sent them to South Vietnam, we would be a good deal better off in both countries.” And in his The Bitter Heritage his position turns out to be a shade to the hawkish side of the Pentagon, as shown in my book, cited above. Throughout, he makes clear his commitment to an American victory, if it can be achieved. For him the question is not “should we win?” but “can we win?” This stand—which seems to me totally unprincipled—is accom-
panied by a rejection of any effort at historical or political analysis that goes beyond his “politics of inadvertence.” Perhaps such a position is arguable. What is infor-
tive, however, is Schlesinger’s refusal or inability to argue it, his regression to the technique and style of the Stalinist hack attempting to shore up a discredited ideol-
ogy. Perhaps it is fair to conclude that Schlesinger himself regards this ideological position as inde-
fensible on intellectual grounds. In any event, I can only urge that readers trace through the argu-
ments and the documents point by point, tedious though this may be. At stake, ultimately, is a question of some significance for anyone concerned with American policy in Vietnam, and throughout the world.

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[Mr. Schlesinger’s reply will appear
in the March issue—Ed.]

Orson Welles as Director

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

Paul Warshow’s remark, in his review of The American Cinema: Directors and Directions by Andrew Sarris [October], that the cinematic style of Orson Welles “ostenta-
tiously calls attention to itself and often goes against the grain of the material” indicates his unfamiliarity either with Welles’s 1942 film from Booth Tarkington’s The Magnificent Ambersons, which William S. Pechter has characterized (in Sight and Sound, Winter 1963/64) as the work of “a film-
maker capable of raising style to the level at which it becomes indistinguishable from genius” as well as “one of the most mysteri-
Letters from Readers

Schlesinger, Chomsky, Abel

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

Dr. Chomsky is almost one's favorite sputterer; but does he not sputter on a little long these days? Yet, in his thousands of words of explanation ("Letters from Readers," February), he does not get round to answering two simple questions I put to him in the December 1969 COMMENTARY. Like the squid, he covers his retreat in a cloud of black ink.

My first question had to do with his King Charles's head, the Truman speech of March 6, 1947. In American Power and the New Mandarins, pages 318-19, Dr. Chomsky cites that speech to prove that the United States for twenty years had planned to use "its awesome resources of violence and devastation to impose its passionately held ideology and its approved form of social organization on large areas of the world." This seems an extraordinary distortion of a speech in which, so far as I can see, President Truman was pleading with American business to renounce its traditional protectionism and permit American membership in the UN's International Trade Organization.

One now notes that Dr. Chomsky's most recent explanation silently abandons the claim made in his book: we hear no more about Truman's speech as proving an American intention to impose free enterprise by fire and sword. Under his cloud of ink, Dr. Chomsky is sneaking out of his hopelessly untenable position in an effort to find a better hole. But his new hole is hardly more defensible. Rather than go on any more about this banal and unimportant speech, I would simply beg any interested bystander to read the text (it is in President Truman's Public Papers for 1947, pp. 167-72) and decide for himself the question of veracity between Dr. Chomsky and me. I cannot resist, however, pointing out that poor old Chomsky, in his current sputter, misquotes Truman yet again (in his paragraph E), Can he not get anything right?

My second question to Dr. Chomsky was to ask why he finds the International Trade Organization and the Reciprocal Trade Agreements Act such monstrous ideas and what, if he considers economic multilateralism so horrible, he would put in their place. He evades the first part of the question and answers the second by referring me to page 347 of his book. I turned eagerly to the sacred text in the hope of finding out how the prophet assesses the relative merits of multilateralism vs. bilateralism vs. autarky. So far as I can see, after prayerful reading, he does not mention the subject at all. Again I beg your readers to check for themselves. Will Professor Chomsky some time tell us straight out whether he is for or against the Reciprocal Trade Agreements Act and for or against American membership in the International Trade Organization?

In another of his sputters, Dr. Chomsky asserts that I wrote that one of his statements "makes evident (his belief that) in his conduct of foreign policy, Franklin Roosevelt was striving to serve the very moneyed interests who were fighting him so savagely at home." Can he get nothing right? What I wrote was that his view of American foreign policy "requires him to believe (as his footnote on the Far Eastern Policy of the 30's makes evident) that, in his conduct of foreign policy, Franklin Roosevelt" and so on. This is what I mean by the prophet's unbeatable instinct for distortion. Indeed, he himself almost acknowledges that his general view of American foreign policy requires him, as a matter of logic, to hold this belief about FDR; thus he writes that this thesis, "when properly reformulated," might well be true.

There is no point in trying to deal with all Dr. Chomsky's misrepresentations; it would make my letter as long and as boring as his. His comment, with regard to the exposure of his fake Truman quotations about Schlesinger's "elaborate pretense that he couldn't find the quotes, that I had invented them," is an easily demonstrable lie. In my review of Chomsky's book (Book World, March 23, 1969), I traced the quotes to Fleming and Warburg, pointing out that "the first quotation does not appear on the page cited in Fleming and may well have been invented by Chomsky."--a point he has more or less conceded. Dr. Chomsky's assertion that, in my views of Vietnam, I am to the "hawkish side of the Pentagon," not to mention his point that I...
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simultaneously remind him of a “Stalinist hack,” are amply illustrative of his qualities of observation and taste.

No doubt Dr. Chomsky, as the self-designated conscience of American academia, feels that any form of disagreement with him is a species of lèse majesté. But he really must understand that self-righteous sputter is no substitute for reasoned discussion, and that mindless invective is the usual resort of those who can’t think of sensible things to say.

ARTHUR SCHLESINGER, JR.

New York City

To the Editor of Commentary:

A friend has called my attention to the role my book, The Axis Alliance and Japanese-American Relations, 1941, played in the Chomsky-Abel controversy [“Vietnam, the Cold War & Other Matters,” October 1969]. I cannot adequately express my profound indifference to this controversy—my feeling is “a plague on both your jihads”—and to the opinions of these gentlemen on my book.

I am nevertheless intrigued by Mr. Abel’s reasons for finding my book superficial, slanted, and far from standard; they make me wonder whether he read it at all. He writes: “The author’s view is that the United States should have appeased the Japanese and have opposed them on China. He scarcely tries to foresee what would have happened in Europe if Japan and the other Axis powers had not declared war against the United States. And if Americans could regard China as expendable, why should they not have regarded the Soviet Union as expendable?” If this is an example of the objectivity and dispassion Mr. Abel calls for in discussion, I am not impressed. My view, clearly understood by all reviewers, was that some important leaders in the Japanese government were trying to appease us, and that we might have given them more encouragement in the attempt; that there were other ways of supporting China besides going to war with Japan; and that it would not help China to accept war over the China issue if, as was the case, we did not intend to fight the war in a way that could give China any immediate help. I described at considerable length how the United States moved into undeclared naval war with Germany in the Atlantic in late 1941, while Japan ignored her alliance obliga-