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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. 318).

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 a 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:

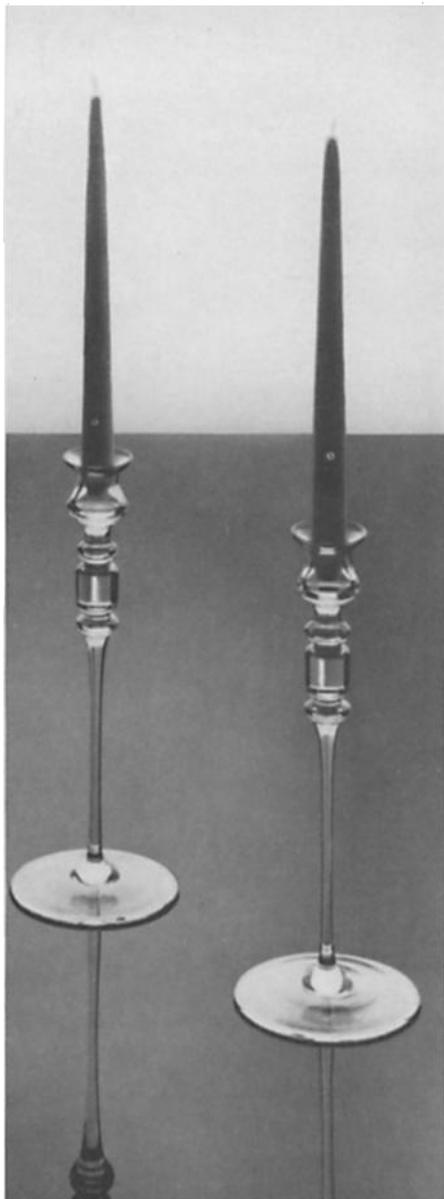
The three—peace, freedom, and world trade—are inseparable. The grave lessons of the past have proved it. . . . We know today that we cannot find security in isolation. If we are to live at peace, we must join with other nations in a continuing effort to organize the world for peace. . . . Our foreign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

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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 retaliates, 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 thirties 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 preferences, from Ottawa to the kind of elaborate and detailed restrictions adopted by Nazi Germany.

Truman then contended that the world had reached another turning-point like 1920, when it could move either toward economic 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 American participation in a projected new organization to be established within the United Nations: the International Trade Organization.

This organization would apply to commercial relationships the same principle of fair dealing that the United Nations is applying to political affairs. Instead of retaining unlimited freedom to commit acts of economic aggression, its members would adopt a code of economic conduct and agree to live ac-

ording to its rules. Instead of adopting measures that might be harmful to others, without warning and without consultation, countries would sit down around the table and talk things out. In any dispute, each party would present its case. The interest of all would be considered, and a fair and just solution would be found. . . . If the nations can agree to observe a code of good conduct in international trade, they will cooperate more readily in other international affairs. Such agreement will prevent the bitterness that is engendered by an economic war. It will provide an atmosphere congenial to the preservation 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, Truman was entering the hard part of his argument; for then, as now, the idea of reducing trade barriers struck terror through large segments of the American business community. The rest of his speech was designed to persuade businessmen that such reduction would be in their long-term interest:

There is one thing that Americans 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 freedom of speech have been most frequently enjoyed in those societies that have accorded a considerable measure of freedom to individual enterprise. Freedom has flourished where power has been dispersed. It has languished where power has been too highly centralized. So our devotion to freedom of enterprise, in the United States, has deeper roots than a desire to protect the profits of ownership.

He warned the American business community that, if the world moved toward economic nationalism, 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

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◀ UNDER



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by private buyers and sellers, un-
der conditions of active compe-
tition, and with proper safe-
guards against the establishment
of monopolies and cartels. . . . If
this trend [toward economic na-
tionalism] 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 it-
self in the business of allocating
foreign goods among importers
and foreign markets among ex-
porters 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 pro-
gram is designed to restore and
preserve a trading system that is
consistent with continuing free-
dom of enterprise in every coun-
try 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 Con-
gress, when it last considered the
extension of the Trade Agree-
ments 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 negotia-
tions will prove disastrous to the
interests of particular producing
groups. I am sure that their mis-
givings are not well founded.

He concluded with a summa-
tion:

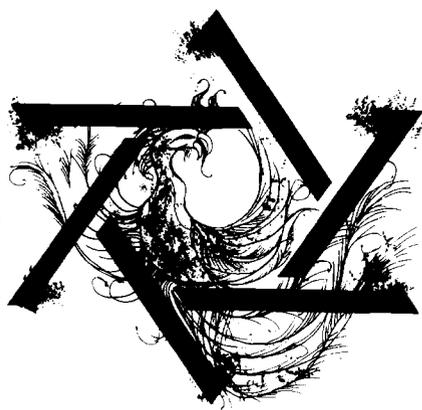
The policy of reducing barriers
to trade is a settled policy of this
Government. It is embodied in

the Reciprocal Trade Agree-
ments Act, fathered and admin-
istered for many years by Cor-
dell 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 parti-
san 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 bank-
ruptcy.

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 de-
velopment, for example, may well
argue for non-reciprocal tariff con-
cessions 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 for-
eign-exchange earnings and to lim-
it 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 im-
perialism mobilizing its resources
of violence and devastation to im-
pose 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 read-
er will have observed, was that
Americans valued *freedom* even
more than peace, and he made it
clear that he meant above all in-
tellectual and religious freedom.
His sentence relating freedom of
speech and freedom of worship to
freedom of enterprise is moderat-
ely 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 in-

iquitous—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,

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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 1937 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 deplors my failure

to understand that "American business and its political representatives have been characteristically protectionist rather than multi-lateralist 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.

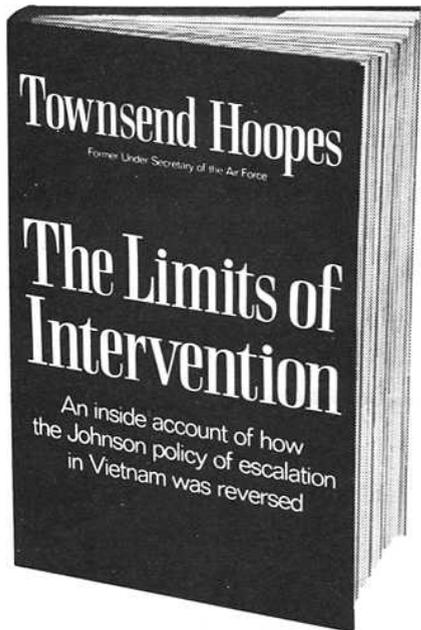
After stating (E), Truman explains that "our devotion to freedom of enterprise, in the United States, has deeper roots than a desire to protect the profits of ownership. It is part and parcel of what we call American." He then describes "the pattern of the 17th and 18th centuries," in which "Governments 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*

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McKAY

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 became 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" we 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) on the assumption that Schlesinger has made a serious effort to resolve a debatable issue. The assumption is questionable, however. Consider the rhetoric in which he couches his denial of my assertion that Fleming and Warburg were accurate: "intellectual crook," "phoney," etc. This because I 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 Baylon 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, Kolko, LaFeber, 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, when he 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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perial 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 regional 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 develop-

ment 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 Frederick 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 our age." As an example, I mentioned Mike Mansfield, who felt the need to criticize the "sense of utter irresponsibility" shown by the peaceful demonstra-



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tors of October 1965, and who felt "ashamed for the image they have portrayed of this country" and deplored their refusal to live up to our commitment to "a government of laws" (referring to a small group of militants in October 1967), 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 demolished, as millions of refugees in the South are driven from their homes by American bombardment." As a further example, I referred to the political scientists who give calm disquisitions "on just how much force will be necessary to achieve our ends, or just what form of government will be acceptable 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. Alsop 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 covered all of the points that Schlesinger has raised. His efforts have so far produced one correct observation: the confusion of quotations noted above. Apart from this, all is misrepresentation and falsehood, as I have now shown in some detail.

One final comment. When misrepresentation and falsehood appear 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 COMMENTARY, until informed by the editors that they felt the matter should be closed. The inductive evidence suggests that this further exposure of Schlesinger's remarkable record will be followed by still another outpouring of falsehoods, distortion, and plain misunderstanding 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 general defended the most extreme pro-war position that was at all tolerable 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 *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 accompanied 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 informative, 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 ideology. Perhaps it is fair to conclude that Schlesinger himself regards this ideological position as indefensible on intellectual grounds. In any event, I can only urge that readers trace through the arguments 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.

NOAM CHOMSKY
Department of Foreign Literatures
and Linguistics
Massachusetts Institute of
Technology
Cambridge, Massachusetts

[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 "ostentatiously 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 filmmaker 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

A Statement of Aims

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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 the 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-