

Triumph

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all "not the real America"; and Fitzpatrick *qua* playing around with Hegel must know that.

Ergo the more I read Fitzpatrick's complaint, the fishier it gets; and so I come to a hypothesis. You recall the language analysts who claim that "God-talk" is a surrogate for self-exhortation? Well, I'll take money that throughout F.'s argument the talk about "America" is a front. I suspect it has very little to do with the (extramental) country, the people, the ideal or the national *Geist*. I suspect that F. is as dubious about the world-historical credentials of the real America—the country that tipped the scales against civilization in World War I and has muffed and squandered great-power hegemony since World War II—as I am. I suspect, therefore, that "America" in his text is a stand-in, and that what it stands in for is "the Conservative Movement."

Think about it: 1) this is the Movement which, if *NR* defines, TRIUMPH has deserted. In fact, TRIUMPH was never in it, but the fact was not clear to many people until "Letter to Yourselves." 2) This is the Movement whose gloss on "Duty, Honor, Country" might indeed create problems for a serious Catholic. In fact, in the case of abortion and Countervalue, it already has. 3) This is the Movement, and the only movement, that explicitly excludes all the things F. says are not America from itself and from its constituency. And let me add 4): this is the Movement that claims, in a sense, to *be* America. It is, simultaneously, the remnant of the patriots, the champion of liberty (hence guardian of the national *raison d'être*), the true exponent of the Constitution (hence keeper of the national myth). . . .

In demythologizing the Movement, I stress first that I do not make this case lightly or unfeelingly. For ten years in college and graduate school I ate, drank, slept and breathed the Conservative Movement. During the same period I formally professed Christianity and even converted to the Catholic Church; but affectively and practically my heart belonged to the Movement. When I gave it up (or rather, gave up on it), I did so with much confusion, with many misgivings, but not, I insist, with sadness, not with a sense of loss, because I gave it up in order to embrace the

social doctrine of Christ.

It is almost superfluous to argue the point that the Conservative Movement is washed up. Nixon has got it in a bind that not Strom, not Jim Buckley, not Phil Crane, nobody, can undo. Meanwhile TRIUMPH is under fire in many Movement organs, and the reason, just possibly, is that right now the little magazine is dangerous because one knows—a lot of people know—that TRIUMPH was just insufferably right about Nixon, while the Movement was catastrophically wrong. So the game to win the Republican Party is lost. For the Movement-people, it is 1952 all over again, except that this time the country is bleaker, the left is stronger, the missile gap is real, and the credibility gap is theirs.

And let's face it, the thing was ineffectual all along. The Movement never sold the country on a single proposition that it believes in; and in twenty years give-or-take of valiant trying, its cumulative impact on the American people is less than that of Ed Sullivan.

So it isn't as though we were walking away from immense power and hearty temptation. Willy-nilly, we are back to something small; and we may as well start, this time, with something true—an idea which seems to rule the Movement out.

Actually, it is like pulling teeth to get the Movement committed to any proposition coherent enough to be judged as true or not. When one complains about the vagueness, one is told that the Movement stands for first principles and that it is an application, in and for America, of the timeless conservative tradition, for the details of which see Frank Meyer, *passim*, and Peter Witonski, *The Wisdom of Omniumgatherum*. But when one tries to pin down clearly what these "first principles" are, then one is told that the Movement is not an ideology and so, apparently, can't state any principles. To make matters worse, everybody in the Movement thinks it is the instrument of what he himself believes in. Thus McSloy thinks it is the last hope for more liberty, and Burnham thinks it is the last hope for less.

A simpler way to come by information is to read "Letter to Yourselves" and the published responses. Bozell accused the Movement of believing,

Effectus Odit Quorum Amat Causas

W. H. MARSHNER

Three things I take for granted. J. Fitzpatrick is 1) intelligent, 2) educated in Catholic matters, and 3) playing around with Hegel. Therefore, the following judgments seem in order.

1) The idea that TRIUMPH magazine has deserted a country called America, like Tokyo Rose, shall we say, is too unreal to be taken seriously; and Fitzpatrick *qua* intelligent must know that.

2) Duty, honor and country are natural pieties not rejected but presupposed by Catholic politics, whether as conceived by Constantine, Philip II or L. Brent Bozell; and Fitzpatrick *qua* educated in Catholic matters must know that.

3) If you assert the existence of a national spirit that gets into the blood and unfolds itself in the whole life of a people, then you cannot arbitrarily lop off vast cultural complexes (TV, movies, books) plus the whole articulate stratum of society (academics, writers, artists) plus the whole dominant class (liberal establishment) plus the great urban centers and call them

besides good things, a number of very crucial *theses liberalismi* condemned by Pius IX, Leo XIII, Pius X and the whole Catholic tradition. None of the respondents challenged the accusation, as if, really, they didn't *care* whether "conservatism" were naturalistic, rationalistic and heretical. They said only that Nixon would do great things, or that Catholic principles were interesting but incredible, or that TRIUMPH fatuously hoped for government by angels. The last remark was NR's, and to the historically conscious it told much: it buttressed, in fact, Bozell's charge of liberalism. NR said what Montalembert, Dupanloup, Ireland, Sagnier—the whole liberal Catholic crew—always used to say when confronted with the politics of the *Syllabus*. They said the Church's teaching was lovely, so true, so ideally true, so ideal in fact that maybe in sweet Eternity things might be that way. But *hic et nunc*, of course, what was needed was another concession to classical liberalism. When in 1863 the *thesis-hypothesis* dodge was invented, there were most of the American bishops, down on their knees praising God for that kindly *hypothesis*, when they should have been mounting the housetops to defend the *thesis*! And there, a hundred years later, is *National Review* in the same posture, singing with Methodist fervor, "It was good enough for Gibbon, and it's good enough for me." Too bad, too bad it wasn't good enough for Leo XIII.

Well, Fitzpatrick should make up his mind: is he serious or isn't he? And if he is, what is he doing betting his marbles on a Movement whose central tenets have been condemned, anathematized and condemned again? He may say, "Yes, but TRIUMPH is nowhere, and its principles are dusty with neglect, whereas 25 million Americans voted for Goldwater." How true; but 40 million pledge allegiance to the Pope. So come on, Fitzpatrick, think Big!