

*THE HUMAN USE OF HUMAN BEINGS*

I have indicated that freedom of opinion at the present time is being crushed between the two rigidities of the Church and the Communist Party. In the United States we are in the process of developing a new rigidity which combines the methods of both while partaking of the emotional fervour of neither. Our Conservatives of all shades of opinion have somehow got together to make American capitalism and the fifth freedom of the businessman supreme throughout all the world.

Our military men and our great merchant princes have looked upon the propaganda technique of the Russians, and have found that it is good. They have found a worthy counterpart for the GPU in the FBI, in its new rôle of political censor. They have not considered that these weapons form something fundamentally distasteful to humanity, and that they need the full force of an overwhelming faith and belief to make them even tolerable. This faith and belief they have nowhere striven to replace. Thus they have been false to the dearest part of our American traditions, without offering us any principles for which we may die, except a merely negative hatred of Communism. They have succeeded in being un-American without being radical. To this end we have invented a new inquisition: the Inquisition of Teachers' Oaths and of Congressional Committees. We have synthesized a new propaganda, lacking only one element which is common to the Church and to the Communist Party, and that is the element of Belief. We have accepted the methods, not the ideals of our possible antagonists, little realizing that it is the ideals which have given the methods whatever cogency they possess. Ourselves without faith, we presume to punish heresy. May the absurdity of our position soon perish amidst the Homeric laughter that it deserves.

It is this triple attack on our liberties which we must resist, if communication is to have the scope that it properly deserves as the central phenomenon of society, and if the human individual is to reach and to maintain his full stature.

It is again the American worship of know-how as opposed to know-what that hampers us. We rightly see great dangers in the totalitarian system of Communism. On the one hand, we have called in to combat these the assistance of a totalitarian Church which is in no respect ready to accept, in support of its standards, milder means than those to which Communism appeals. On the other hand, we have attempted to synthesize a rigid system to fight fire by fire, and to oppose Communism by institutions which bear more than a fortuitous resemblance to Communistic institutions. In this we have failed to realize that the element in Communism which essentially deserves our respect consists in its loyalties and in its insistence on the dignity and the rights of the worker. What is bad consists chiefly in the ruthless techniques to which the present phase of the Communist revolution has resorted. Our leaders show a disquieting complacency in their acceptance of the ruthlessness and a disquieting unwillingness to refer their acts to any guiding principles. Fundamentally, behind our counter-ruthlessness there is no adequate basis of real heartfelt assent. Let us hope that it is still possible to reverse the tide of the moment and to create a future America in which man can live and can grow to be a human being in the fullest and richest sense of the word.