

Science Will Not Save Us

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LET US suppose that America will be successful in its present quest for scientists and that the nation's laboratories and classrooms will be bulging with physicists, chemists, biologists, mathematicians, and engineers of the highest talents. Let us suppose we are able to devise not only super intercontinental ballistic missiles but a master switchboard that is the final triumph of war fought by automation.

What then?

When we succeed in doing these things, we will still have left the largest part of the problem facing America. For what the nation needs today even more than scientists is men of wisdom and vision. It urgently needs men with the clear and full view, men who understand what is happening in the world and are not continually being taken by surprise by living history and by the effects of recognizable causes. It needs men who know something about the science of world organization and the kind of structure that is required to support a peace. It needs men who can cope with Communism in terms of a hard, working knowledge of what it actually is rather than what they find it convenient to think it is. Most of all, it needs men who are not afraid to bet their public careers on big ideas and who are as much concerned about the safety and rights of the

next generation as they are about their own.

Our scientists by themselves cannot give us security. The devices and weapons they can create may help to restore the national ego but they are not enough to create a functioning peace. The only justifiable purpose of such devices is to strengthen the circumstances under which we can press forward with a great idea that can do away with the devices.

We will not have achieved security or anything remotely resembling it even if all we have to do is to flick an eyelash in front of an electronic board that would bring instantaneous destruction to every country run by Communists or that is likely to be run by Communists. For our security depends upon many things. It depends on what America means to the majority of the world's peoples—whether other peoples have a real sense of identification with us or whether they regard us as prosperous freaks who have nothing important to say or do in the making of a saner tomorrow. It depends on the nature of our ideas for peace—on how much we are willing to give of ourselves in making those ideas come to life.

Party Secretary Khrushchev beats his big drum and says he can deliver hydrogen bombs in a matter of minutes to any city in America. This kind of inflammatory nonsense is immediately imitated by American officials who say that we can "zero in" on Russian cities from our military bases in Europe. Like little boys boasting and taunting and edging closer

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to each other with firecrackers, the large nations are moving steadily from claims of strength to ultimatums.

What is most startling of all is that some people seem to take comfort from this fact, claiming that war is now so horrible that no one will dare to carry out the ultimatums. Views like these are in themselves a species of insanity. They ignore history. They assume that the same shortsightedness that produced the present crisis is all that is necessary to surmount it. They assume, too, that mistakes can become ever larger without exacting a price at some point, that action is without consequence, and that there exists somewhere a magical safety valve which, unseen and undefined, will spring into being and safeguard the future of man. This is the stuff of fantasy, readily observable at institutions for the treatment of schizophrenics but never more out of place than in a serious consideration of the means by which a design for survival can be created for human life on earth.

A man in need of lumber doesn't go running into the forest with a torch. If peace is to be made, something more powerful than nuclear explosives will have to make it. The peace will have to be made by a leadership that understands the difference between the means of peace and the means of war. Peace has its own properties and structural requirements. The fact that other countries may resist such an approach to peace should not mean that we must abandon the approach. The leaders of a community who are concerned with the need to build a

hospital for that community don't abandon their plans for a hospital because some powerful people oppose it. They proceed rather to carry the issue to the community as a whole, confident that a full debate will generate the required support.

Our job is to help create a great debate in the world. Once we define the need for a pooling of sovereignty in the creation of a design of world law—adequate to prevent aggression, stop the nuclear arms race, and provide a basis for justice in settling the disputes among nations—once we do this, we create a stage for the long-overdue great debate that the age requires. Such a debate may not automatically dispose of war or Communism or any of the other insistent problems in the world, but at least it can enable us to focus on our real problems. Whatever chance we have of solving a problem depends first on our recognition of it and second on the amount of dedicated support that can be rallied behind it.

In the meanwhile, our universities can serve the nation best not only by giving increased attention to the need for scientific knowledge but to the need for knowledge about the world itself. Education for Western civilization is not enough; beyond Europe lies the preponderance of the world's peoples. Who they are, what they believe, and what they want—rather than what the Russians alone or the Americans alone say or want—could determine the outcome of the great debate.

—NORMAN COUSINS, *editor*, *The Saturday Review*.

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