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THE IDEOLOGY OF THE WEST

A lecture delivered
at the Naval War College
on 23 October 1953, by
Dr. Henry M. Wriston

My topic is "The Ideology of the West." It was assigned me by Admiral Conolly, and proved to be difficult. From some points of view it might, in the current climate of opinion, be thought to be a dangerous topic.

In the present tense condition of international relations there is a marked tendency for lines of opinion to harden, for concepts to become dogmas, and for dissent to be branded as heresy or worse. That is why "neutralism" has degenerated from a description to an epithet. Many things which once would have been viewed with tolerance, or amusement, are now thought subversive. That is why, by a kind of creeping blindness, we have come to see some of our intellectual possessions in terms of exclusiveness and, even worse, to regard our potential opponent's ideas as exclusively his.

In our saner moments this sort of thing would be regarded as nonsense. Indeed, it would be recognized as very dangerous nonsense. In discussing "The Ideology of the West," I shall be forced to say that such an attitude is madness for, if persisted in, every avenue to peace would be closed.

Long acquaintance with military men has convinced me that they have as ardent a hope for peace as civilians. Neither the "A" bomb nor the "H" bomb nor any other recent weapon has altered that fact, for while civilians will be in less safe status than at some earlier times, the military will still occupy the post of acute danger. Peace, if it is ever to be more than a pious hope or an evanescent dream, depends upon finding common ground as much and as rapidly as possible.

At the outset, therefore, I shall take my stand upon an American principle so basic and so unequivocal that it cannot be misunderstood — “all men are created equal.” That is one of the key thoughts — many would say it is *the* key thought — in the Declaration of Independence. Jefferson, who wrote it, was not merely employing rhetoric for propaganda purpose, for he had said almost the same thing years before and in the last letter which he wrote before his death he put it in common terms. He saw this as the basic axiom, with moral, social, political, legal, economic and other implications.

We must, therefore, base all our thinking about “The Ideology of the West” upon that axiom. It says, to be explicit, that Russians, Indians, Chinese — the brown, the white, the black and all shades and mixtures — are equal. We know that all men have certain goals in common. Among these are life, and the pursuit of happiness and, once they have tasted it, insistence upon liberty. Whether or not they approximate equality, or to the extent that they achieve it, determines the course of history.

Some goals are so fundamental to life itself that, however crudely or however elegantly they are expressed, they are always there. We should not allow varying forms of habitual expression, whether in word or symbolic act, to conceal that reality from us. Whether, therefore, the exponent is a red Communist, a brown Nazi, a black Facist or a white democrat, there will always be among all men certain ideals, hopes, aims, and purposes — call what you will — in common. If it were not so, all hope of communication upon political questions would be at an end; all hope of any peace save a peace of exhaustion, if you regard that as peace, would expire. To my mind the greatest danger which we face today arises from a wavering faith in the fundamental tenet of the Declaration of Independence that all men are endowed with the right to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.

Let me be perfectly explicit. While there are matters of immense significance upon which we and the Communists cannot

hope to agree in any foreseeable future, there are other areas of deep significance where they are virtually as orthodox (in action, if not in words) as we ourselves. Any hope of peaceful coexistence, pending a reorientation of thought patterns, must be based upon that fact. Therefore to assert explicitly or implicitly, or by inference, that agreement at any point with stated objectives or ideas of the Communists is equivalent to being a Communist sympathizer is hostile not alone to logic but to our own fundamental faith and inimical to the cause of peace which, if we are to credit President Eisenhower, the very survival of our civilization is linked.

What I have to say this afternoon is open to questions and also to criticism. But the criticism should be directed to faults in logic or errors of data and not to any presumed affinity to Communism. For I have always opposed Communism — not just recently, but for many years. When Charles Evans Hughes' policy of non-recognition of Red Russia was under fire, as our present non-recognition of Red China is under fire in some quarters, I strongly supported the Hughes' modification of our classic *de facto* recognition policy.

But I suggest it is utterly wrong to abandon sound ground because someone you dislike agrees with you. Therefore, I have no temptation to surrender ideological points of view to which the West has long been committed merely because Communists, by word or act, accept those same points of view. There is an old saying that the devil can quote scripture. No one suggests that it makes the true Gospel false. No more does it invalidate Western Ideology to have the Soviets pay it, in certain respects, the grudging (or even the unconscious) flattery of imitation.

Perhaps this introduction is overlong, but its length is a recognition that there is a good deal of intellectual fog, and that we should navigate with more care than usual.

The first positive statement that I made about Western Ideology was that it is founded upon the concept of equality. The

second point to stress that Western Ideology is structurally different from the Communist creed. The Soviets have a kind of bible with official commentaries upon it. Marx wrote their gospel, and it has been incessantly and definitely interpreted and expounded by Lenin and Stalin.

The fact that the interpretations and expositions have not always been the same, or even consistent, does not mean that they were — or are — heretical. As the late Chief Justice Charles Evans Hughes remarked with classic clarity, the Constitution is what the Judges say it is (at any given moment), so Marxism was — and is — at any given moment what the supreme interpreter and expositor says it is.

That should not disconcert us, any more than the variant interpretations of our Constitution by successive Supreme Court decisions upsets us. We know that a document now one hundred and sixty-six years old and in constant operation, which is appealed to every day in many thousands of different circumstances, will mean different things to different men at different times. At any given moment it is held to mean what the final arbiters — nine Justices or, rather, a majority of those who hear the particular cause — say it means.

Communism has this, then, in common with our Constitution: It is based upon a writing and a conclusive official interpretation of that writing. Western Ideology, however, contrasts sharply in this respect, that it has a much broader foundation than has Communism. So far as Western ideological structure is concerned, the British constitution furnishes a closer analogy than our own. For the British constitution consists of many legislative enactments and other documents (like the Magna Carta), a vast number of judicial decisions, and an indefinite number of political habits. There is no one place to which you can turn to find a manageable resume'.

So it is with Western Ideology. You must seek knowledge of its growth in a host of writers, but also in an even larger number of expressions arising from moments of action. Moreover, there is no final arbiter who can distinguish orthodoxy from heterodoxy. There is nothing remotely resembling the Pope, or our Supreme Court, or Parliament, or the Politburo. Western Ideology is a "consensus," and that is an extremely vague word.

So far as it is expressed in action, or is inferred from action, the variety in Western belief is even more striking. The governments of the United States, Britain and France (to mention only three out of a much larger number) are widely different in form, method and procedure. Yet they are each and all manifestations of Western Ideology in action.

Our government is one of limited powers, distributed among the Executive, Legislative and Judicial branches. It is far from monolithic. Checks and balances are of essential importance. Moreover, the component States of the Union retain large areas of sovereignty and are jealous of Federal encroachment. All these governments within the United States are subject to written constitutions, definitively interpreted by the courts. The energy to run this vast and complicated machinery is supplied by the rivalry, the competition for public favor, of two political parties.

By contrast, the British government has unlimited power. There is no system of checks and balances. The Executive is located in the Legislative body; the supreme Judicial function is performed by a Legislative body. Local government draws all its authority from the central government. The more completely one describes the British system of government, the more striking are the contrasts between that system and our own.

The French government is different from both the British and our own. It has, indeed, a written constitution, as we do, but it has the Executive within and responsible to the Legislative,

as do the British. And it has multiple-party government rather than the two-party system. There is no orderly alternation between the two parties in response to direct popular mandate through elections. Instead, there is incessant grouping and regrouping of splinter parties. The upshot is incoherence within the cabinets of successive governments and a wearisome procession of cabinets, and a seemingly endless shuffling of personnel.

If we were to run through the whole list of governments attached to the Western Ideology, the sharp differences in philosophy, the marked contrasts in procedure, the extraordinary variants in rhythm would become ever more and more bewildering. Action, *as such*, shows no *outward* consistency. When one seeks to describe the Ideology of the West, it becomes clear that some common denominator be discovered which underlies all these surface confusions. It must lie at the very center; it must be an inner quality. Moreover, it must have a vital relationship to ends rather than to means. Since the means are so different, it is obvious that unity must arise from ends and not from instrumentalities for their attainment.

There is a key to the fundamental contrasts between Communism and the West. This is our third explicit point: Communist Ideology is centered in things, the West finds reality in men. The Communists refer to the logical structure of their system as "dialectical materialism." We do not often think of Communists as candid; deception is, indeed, part of their political technique. But at the core of their theory are both candor and an apparent measure of consistency. At that focal point, their doctrine is unequivocal materialism and it is relied upon to explain the significant elements in human experience.

Karl Marx based all his arguments upon his characteristic philosophy of history. Anyone who writes or talks of past events must have some philosophical points of view, for places, names and dates constitute chronology, not history. History consists in the interpretation of what happened in terms that are meaningful.

The account must somehow fit or reflect a system of values. Karl Marx interpreted the past in materialistic terms. Conditions, he asserted, are the determining bases of the history of society; the State and all ideological conceptions are shaped by material production.

The application of this philosophy to the discussion of political, social and economic life Marx himself called dialectical materialism. The motives of men, the springs of action were material, rather than moral, ethical, ideal or spiritual. From that central Marxian hypothesis the Communists have never wavered. Without fixing that fact in our minds, we make nonsense of what seems to them like wisdom.

In one of those definitive, expository interpretations of which I have spoken, Stalin reduced this philosophic concept to a compact and easily remembered dogma. These are his words: "The material life of society . . . is primary, and its spiritual life secondary, derivative," i.e., "one must look for the source of social ideas, social theories, political views and political institutions . . . in the conditions of the material life of society," of which the ideas and institutions are a "reflection."

Nothing could exceed that in candor or, for that matter, in clarity. Nothing could high-light more sharply the contrast with basic Western Ideology. For the core of Western thought has to do with persons; its dominant philosophy of history turns about the influence, aims, hopes and deeds of men. Whether you go back to the Magna Carta, or read the writings of the most influential political philosophers of France and Britain, or turn to documents like the French Declaration of the Rights of Man (in 1789), or our Declaration of Independence and our Bill of Rights, all have this one quality in common: the human factor is central; material considerations are secondary. The mind and spirit of man are held to be the dominant force in history. There is, of course, no denial of the importance of economic forces, of geographical

and climatological influence. But the emphasis is upon man's mastery of his environment, his power to shape institutions to his own ends, and his will to freedom.

I wish it were possible to assert that there is no cloud whatever upon that statement of Western Ideology, that it could stand as naked, explicit and clear as Stalin's materialistic dictum. But it is one of the prices of freedom that contrary voices can be raised, and it is an undeniable fact that many non-Marxists have nonetheless leaned toward — if they have not fully accepted — economic determinism: the idea that among all the forces that play upon human history the economic motive is dominant.

Economic determinism, it is true, is not exactly the same as dialectical materialism, but it bears a close affinity. Forty years ago there was a spate of books such as Edwin R. A. Seligman's "The Economic Interpretation of History," and Charles A. Beard's "An Economic Interpretation of the Constitution" and "The Economic Origins of Jeffersonian Democracy." Those books were written when I was in graduate school and every graduate student read them. They are out of fashion today, but they are illustrations of a line of thinking, and they and other such works have left residues of thought which have entered into the views of many others, sometimes unconsciously. It should be noted that while this development was not unconnected with the Marxian philosophy of history, it long antedated the Russian Revolution and had no connection with Soviet Communism.

An even more serious factor which introduces confusion about the focal personal tenets of Western Ideology is to be found in the views of politicians and businessmen. In these instances, the economic determinism is not as reasoned as among academic thinkers. Indeed, it is often an unanalyzed — even an unconscious — attitude. As long ago as 1896, the first Presidential election that I can remember, the slogan was: "A full dinner pail." The inference is clear enough: the people would vote as their stomachs suggested. Since that time there have been many other manifestations

of a temptation to accept, unconsciously, Stalin's dictum as a truthful expression. If you read the analyses of the recent special election for Congress in the State of Wisconsin, you will find economic determinism in four out of five. As the Farm Program is put together today, tomorrow, and in the days to come, you will find that in the minds of many politicians economic determinism is dominant. This represents a subtle, but very dangerous, erosion of our ideology.

Moreover, every appeal to a "class" interest, every subsidy of a special group, is a concession that economic influences are, if not dominant, at least singularly persuasive. It would be folly, it seems to me, to deny that these presumptions have been growing stronger. The last Presidential campaign was one of the first evidences of any reaction toward a more spiritual interpretation of men's motives. The reaction was not sufficiently violent to still appeals to economic self-interest, and analysts of the results continually made interpretations based primarily upon economic factors.

But if politicians have sometimes clouded the issue of the centrality of the human rather than the material factors, businessmen have tended to do so even more. Their labors are in the economic field, and it is not surprising that this induces a tendency to overestimate economic forces in relation to others. Moreover, the forte of the businessman is action. His philosophical presuppositions are often unsystematic, not clearly reasoned; they are felt rather than thought out. It is not surprising, therefore, that businessmen have frequently seemed to accept the materialistic point of view.

The best illustration that I can give in brief compass is the National Recovery Act of 1933. It was depression-born; it was launched under circumstances which seemed to demonstrate men were the victims of economic forces rather than captains of their souls. Nevertheless the codes, the effort to reduce competition, the quasi-governmental powers assigned economic groups—

these and many other characteristics of the N. R. A. — were far more akin to Fascist philosophy than to the dominant Western ideal. In short, it would be folly to deny that the great depression was a profound shock to some of the basic beliefs of Western Ideology. It gave economic determinism a new lease on life. Only slowly have we recovered from the mental and moral setbacks caused by the depression. They have survived long after the strictly economic consequences have passed away.

It would be possible to pile one illustration upon another, and I call attention to these facts, not in a spirit of criticism, but in order to make clear how difficult it is to be precise about Western Ideology. There is no “dialectic,” there is no formal logical structure, there is no close-knit body of doctrine from which one must not deviate. On the contrary, our ideology has many historical and philosophical roots. It cannot have any such rigid, logical structure — every part of which is dependent upon every other part — as dialectical materialism has always had since the days of Marx.

Moreover, variety is inherent for quite another reason. If human personality is the key, if the infinite value of the individual is at the center, there are bound to be variations, for individuals are not alike in body, mind or will. Therefore, if personality is the center, there must be freedom; and if freedom, then dissent — conscious or unconscious — from the values the ideology expresses. And if there is dissent, then some expressions of that dissent may accord more or less closely with the central philosophic assumptions of Communism. Nevertheless, it is clear that economic determinism — the notion that man is ultimately governed by his stomach — weakens the concept of man as an individual of infinite worth who is master of, or who *can* master, most of his environment.

There is another factor which has blurred the sharpness of our central article of our faith. In the Declaration of Independence, Jefferson attributed the fundamental rights of man to an

endowment by his Creator. Jefferson was regarded as a free thinker, certainly not a devoutly religious man. Nonetheless even before the Declaration of Independence he had said: "The God who gave us life, gave us liberty at the same time."

By no means all the political philosophers of the Eighteenth Century were as sure of that origin of our liberties as Jefferson seemed to be. The Social Contract of Hobbes, Locke and Rousseau, for example, which was an extremely fashionable idea, surely laid more emphasis upon voluntary human associations than upon a Divine endowment. Since that time science in general, biology, anthropology, and sociology have all brought in variant interpretations of the source, the meaning and the value of freedom.

From the start of modern times, therefore, this core ideal has suffered in authority and in cogency by lack of unanimity regarding its roots. There were, and there still are, partisans of humanistic as well as religious origins of the rights of man. It seems clear that Divine sanctions would be stronger than mere arrangements arising out of convenience. But it is equally clear that in a "scientific" age agreement upon Divine origin of freedom is not to be expected. That being so, we might as well concede that so far as clarity and logical structure are concerned, the Communists are in a stronger position.

That conclusion, you will observe, relates to the form of the ideology, not to its substance. It is still true that life is more than logic and the Ideology of the West is full of vitality. Despite all the deviations I have been forced to note, the central fact remains that Communism makes materialism the determining factor and the West makes personality the cornerstone of its somewhat rambling ideological structure.

The statement in the Declaration of Independence that all men are created equal leads to the next — the fourth — central fact in Western Ideology; that is, its democratic character. You cannot have a person-centered philosophy without being driven

to the assertion of equality. Heaven knows, the ineluctable logic of that conclusion has been resisted long enough and tenaciously enough so that its ultimate triumph was hardwon.

The Greeks had great philosophers who wrestled with this problem, but they never mastered it. Always their democratic thesis had a fundamental flaw. The free men who constituted the democratic state in Greece lived in a superstructure. The foundation was a faceless population of slaves. Sometimes this was explicitly conceded; sometimes it was left in a conspicuous place so that no one would notice it in search for something that was thought to be hidden; it was made inconspicuous by its very obviousness.

Christian doctrine destroyed even that place of concealment. The equality of men before God — Scribes, Pharisees, publicans, sinners, taxgatherers and saints — could lead only to their equality before the law. This inescapable conclusion was denied for centuries. Every conceivable argument was brought forward. The manifest differences in physical endowments were stressed. The clear contrasts in mental ability were used to reinforce the thesis.

The long persistence of slavery — treating human beings as chattels — was an explicit defiance of the Christian inference. Serfdom — the bondage of man to the land — was another, slightly milder, refusal to admit the inescapable character of the logic. On a still higher level were orders of nobility, social classes with special privilege, like the caste system in India.

Every kind of casuistry, every refusal to surrender privilege, every brand of ignorance, every failure of the will have served, historically, to retard the acceptance of equality as a fundamental fact. Progress has been far from steady. Setbacks have been many and some of them have been very serious. Fascism and Naziism were two such setbacks, and though they have been defeated and suppressed in the countries which supplied their names, the spirit still lives on in Spain and Argentina, for example.

Nor is the acceptance of the implications of equality complete everywhere. The existence of racial, religious and other forms of prejudice is clear enough manifestation of the fact that even when there is equality in law there is not always equality in fact. Extra-legal social sanctions may be as frustrating to modern individuals as legal disabilities used to be.

I am bound, in fairness, to concede all that. Nonetheless, progress toward the goal is great. The Ghetto is gone; disability statutes against Catholics are gone; indentured servants have disappeared; serfdom has gone, along with slavery; peonage is in its twilight; hundreds of forms of economic exploitation have been rooted out. Viewed in long, historical perspective the progress is enormous and, despite the occasional setbacks, is proceeding apace even now.

We should recall that the American version of the phrase "all men are created equal" bears the date 1776. Its utterance at that time was certainly more in the nature of prophecy than assertion of historical fact. That is clear enough from the fact that the author of that deathless phrase himself owned human beings as chattel slaves. In that respect, and at that moment, he had not advanced beyond the thinking of the Greek philosophers who accepted a sub-human status for some in order to achieve real equality for others. Time and struggle, of which the War Between the States was one phase, have cured us of that particular moral blindness. When we say today that all men are equal there are no such wholesale intellectual reservations as the existence of slavery required. As we progress toward attainment of Jefferson's prophetic phrase, we will refine the ideal still more and face the challenge of yet higher and higher human goals.

It was in the course of that simultaneous advance toward and polishing of the ideal of equality that we established universal free public education. Similarly, programs of welfare have multiplied more rapidly in the last half-century than in the ten previous centuries put together.

Before following the logic of our ideology in its relationship to democracy and welfare, however, we should make at least one comparison with Communism. It also proclaims equality of a sort; it speaks, as we do, of a classless society. But the common phrases denote very different things. With followers of the Western Ideology it means the absence of rigid, stratified barriers which hold men in established places, denying them outlets for talent, will and energy as their individual skill, inclination and ambition may suggest. Every man in our gospel is to seek his own level. The farmer's son may become a chemist; the tenant's son may become a capitalist; no barrier prohibits equality of opportunity. The dramatic symbol of that in American history, of course, has been the progress of men from the log cabin to the Presidency.

The Soviets start with a different premise taken directly from Karl Marx. He saw society as already stratified into two groups: the laborers and the exploiters. Progress consisted in the class struggle in which the proletariat triumphed and the exploiters were liquidated. Classlessness was to be attained by elimination, not by social fluidity. We know this process has been pursued as a matter of history. The murder of the Czar's family, the liquidation of the nobility, the war on the kulaks — all these should be fresh in our memory.

We observe, too, the Russian version of progress from obscure poverty to leadership of the State. Lenin, Stalin, Malenkov, each in his turn displays that phenomenon. They rose on the strength of ability and struggle — and by the process of liquidating their rivals, who could be denounced for bourgeois, imperialist or other "tendencies" which made them the "enemies of the people." This has reduced balloting to the status of a farce. It has centered power in the Party, a minuscule portion of the whole people. It has created an aristocracy of office; it has created a new social stratification.

Despite superficial similarities to Western Ideology, therefore, the Communist idea is, in substance and reality, very dif-

ferent. Marx and his successors raised class consciousness to levels which it had never in fact attained. They assumed that class was more important than nationality. The Communist manifesto declared, for example: "Modern industrial labor, modern subjection to capital, the same in England as in France, in America as in Germany, has stripped him (the worker) of every trace of national character." This was the foundation, by the way, for the slogan, "Workers of the world unite, you have nothing to lose but your chains."

Historically, this dogma has been proved sheer nonsense. Its economic determinism was smashed to bits by the nationalism the workers displayed when war broke out in 1914. And there is no evidence that Humpty Dumpty has ever been put together again, or ever can be put together.

It should not need elaborate argument to prove that a dialectical system based upon a radically false premise is bound to have a fatal flaw in its entire structure. It is a house built upon sand, and every great crisis since its proclamation has shown that it will not stand. There are indeed group interests, which at times approximate class interests. However, there are not two classes, sharply divided; instead there are a vast number of groups, the divisions between which are blurred and indistinct.

Moreover, those groups do not coalesce along economic lines, alone, or even dominantly. They form about all sorts of common interests, traditions and ideals. They may well be in tension, but they need not be in conflict. The resolution of the issues between them and among them does not call for violence or liquidation. On the contrary, peaceful solutions are both more profitable to all concerned and more permanent.

A political philosophy based upon conflict, struggle, liquidation cannot halt those destructive drives at their theoretical optimum point. Violence becomes a built-in characteristic of the polity and cannot be outground. The conclusion must be, therefore, that

our phrase "all men are created equal" embodies inferences and overtones wholly different, in producing classless society, than the consequences of the Marxian dogma.

There is a kind of footnote that deserves a word of attention. A political philosophy based upon the theory of fundamental conflicts of interest which are resolvable only by force does not lend itself any better to peaceful solutions internationally than it does domestically. Soviet politics can aptly and accurately be described as "power politics." Surely the record of the U.S.S.R. in international affairs bears the same stamp. The free world is not wholly innocent of power politics, by any means, but when it occurs it is a violation of the basic postulates for Western Ideology rather than their fulfillment, as in the case of the Russians.

The only conceivable government for citizens born equal into a classless society is democracy. It may be objected that the founders of this nation did not think so, for they spoke of a republic. But they had, as we have noted, a more limited notion of equality. Moreover, the revolution in education by which nearly all citizens became literate had not gotten underway. Nor had steam, electricity, the telegraph, the telephone, radio, television, and aeroplanes linked the nation together so tightly that at a given moment all the people can hear one voice, and a majority can see the speaker.

In the beginning, therefore, there were two barriers to democracy: *First*, a deficiency in the meaning of equality; and, *second*, lack of ready communication. But once indentured servants disappeared, slavery was abolished, literacy triumphed, and discrimination and prejudice became unfashionable, those barriers began to fall. Historically, we can follow that progress.

Jefferson became the head of one of the political parties which took shape during Washington's presidency. It was called "democratic." In other words, that term was no longer associated with mobocracy; it began to bear its more modern connotations.

Andrew Jackson gave it further impetus. Intellectual and aristocratic overtones gave way to the rough-hewn doctrine that any man was good enough for any job he was able to get.

Abraham Lincoln kept the homely character, but gave it a lofty tone. His logic was so forthright, his speech so clear, and his mood so elevated that he successfully identified the common man with self-government more effectively than any one before in history. He even hinted strongly at broader implications when he asserted that the Declaration of Independence "gave liberty not alone to the people of this country, but hope to all the world, for all future time."

It remained, however, for Woodrow Wilson to expound and emphasize the world-wide significance of democracy, already suggested by Lincoln but made much more explicit. His eloquent words more readily gained attention because they came from the head, by that time, of the most powerful nation in the world.

Finally, Franklin D. Roosevelt applied the energies of democratic government to vast areas which had theretofore been left untouched. We are too close to some of these matters to give them fair or final appraisal. Large questions remain as to whether the functions of government were expanded, if not too far, at least too fast for the democratic process to adapt itself to the new situation. The wisdom or unwisdom of specific measures will be debated for many years, and for the correct verdict we must wait upon history.

Nevertheless, however controversial may be our opinions regarding specific measures, there will be, I believe, a genuine consensus upon one point: the program of the second quarter of the twentieth century was calculated to broaden the meaning of the word "equality," and to give it more depth as well. It came to represent, without distinction of party, a determination that there should be no underprivileged people if it could be avoided, and no one should be subjected to needless hazards to his security.

Writing in the July, 1953 issue of FOREIGN AFFAIRS, one author spoke of three kinds of States: the *laissez-faire*, the *welfare* and the *unfair*. This dictum has both the virtues and defects of oversimplification.

Historically, no nation ever pursued a *laissez-faire* policy. Certainly the mercantiles of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries did not, nor the so-called "benevolent despots." The term is useful only in matters of relativity. It indicates the limited functions of government that prevailed in the United States in the nineteenth century. But remember that in the eighteenth century Alexander Hamilton was arguing for a tariff—even in Washington's administration. That is symbolic of the fact that the classic expression "*laissez-faire*" must never be used as a true description but only as a relative term, the boundaries of which are so imprecise that it will be used by one speaker as a term of approbation and the next for purposes of denunciation.

If *laissez-faire* is imprecise, *welfare* is much less subject to exact definition. Most people would classify our original government under the Constitution as tending toward *laissez-faire*, but but if you read the Constitution carefully you will find it has a general welfare clause using those precise words. A study of the political campaigns which have marked our history will make it abundantly clear that many times the people have looked to the Government for economic as well as other types of welfare. Concern of the public interest lay behind the Morrill Act of 1862, setting up the Land Grant Colleges; it lay behind the Free Silver agitation and the Sherman Anti-Trust Act. Of course in the twentieth century, and particularly since the great depression, welfare activities have been immensely broadened.

How far the democratic process can be carried we do not yet know. The growing size and complexity of the world problems we face may outrun not merely the information but the intelligence of the common man. On the other hand, new means and

modes of communication, new strides in universal education tend in the other direction.

Of one thing we may be sure: democracy, the rule of the common man, is better than rule by experts. On any given question the expert in that field is more likely to be right, but outside his limited field he is just another common man. This is well illustrated by the political nonsense that has been visited upon us by some of our atomic experts. Some of the physicists of America have said sillier things about politics than I have ever said about an atom. The conclusion must be that, whatever its faults and limitations, democracy most nearly meets the test of equality of status. I believe it also meets every other test in competition with Communism or other forms of totalitarianism, but I am not called upon to argue that point at this time. For the moment I need only to insist upon the ineluctable logic that makes democracy the fruit of equality.

Whereas history validates the inner logic of our doctrine, the exact reverse is true of Marxism. History — that is, the logic of events — has run counter to Communist theory, prophecy and expectation. Marx looked upon the government as a means used by the privileged class to control the exploited worker. It could not have a function if there were no exploiters to exploit the exploited. That became the basis of the idea that the State would “wither away.” The State would have no relevance in Communism because there would be no exploitation.

There is bitter irony in the manner in which history has treated those ideas. Far from withering away, the mechanism of the State in Communist countries has expanded enormously, far beyond its expansion in “welfare” democracies. The bureaucracy of Russia has proliferated. Every detail of life is controlled. The Secret Police are on every hand. The armed forces eat up the substance of labor’s products. The right of the workers to organize, to bargain collectively, to strike, are all denied under the fiction that they are working for themselves. History has made

the State supreme. Experience runs precisely counter to their theoretical dogma.

Moreover, there is an inescapable logic in what has happened. The Marxian system had to eventuate in a monopoly of monopolies. All ownership of production, with such exception as expediency dictated, is in the hands of the State. There is, therefore, monopoly of ownership to a degree impossible even to imagine under any form of capitalism. Contrary to modern capitalism, where ownership and management are in different hands, under Communism the State has a monopoly of management as well as of ownership.

Under capitalism production, though privately owned and managed, is still subject to governmental control. This may be very extensive. It starts, for example, with Blue Sky Laws to keep people from foolish investments; it goes on to anti-monopoly and anti-trust laws; it checks fraud with the Federal Trade Commission; it provides for fair employment practices; it promotes the organization of workers and gives them bargaining rights. These are only a sample of governmental checks and balances upon the abuse of ownership and the misbehavior of management under capitalism.

In the Communist state, on the contrary, all this is part of the same bureaucratic structure which also controls quantities, qualities, prices, profits, distribution and everything else. There are none of the dispersions of authority and power, none of the checks and balances of the democratic state, no way for public opinion to gain control of the Juggernaut that rolls over it.

There are some implications which are relevant to our topic, but not central to it. One is that under the Soviet system the level of profit and the rate of capital formation can be very high. It is not checked by competition; it is not checked by independent interest, such as the investor or the consumer; nor is it, short of near-revolt, subject to public opinion. As a consequence, the

rate of capital formation is higher in Russia than it is in the United States.

You observe also that in Russia the *rate* of production is advancing more rapidly than it is in the United States. I emphasize that I am not talking at the moment about current *volume* of production, but only about the *rate* of advance. Nonetheless it is clear that unless the rates of increase draw more closely together, in due course the Soviets will outproduce us. It is to some of these fundamental economic matters — production, profit, capital formation — that I referred earlier when I remarked that in practice they follow some economic concepts which we hold. That does not make their system “capitalism” nor ours “Communism.”

This brings me to the final point of this argument. I have said nothing about free enterprise as part of the Ideology of the West. If my topic had been limited to the United States, the phrase would have assumed importance at a much earlier stage of the discussion. But even in the United States private enterprise is definitely subsidiary to the social goal of equality. In so far as we have private enterprise, it is a permitted means to an end. For what it is worth, let me make my position clear: I believe that it is the best economic instrument to that end, but only so long as by law and regulation it is protected from abuse.

In this country vast areas are withheld from private enterprise. The postal system, one of the greatest of what we might call “businesses” if it were run differently, is wholly in the hands of the Government. The Tennessee Valley Authority and many other public power and flood control projects supply other examples. So do slum clearance, public housing projects, crop loans and price supports. When one sets out systematically to make a list of the exceptions to the application of the free enterprise principle, it proves astonishingly long. Indeed, when the task is complete, the lines of demarkation defy logical analysis.

Decisions as to what should be publicly and what privately owned and managed have been largely empirical. According to

the Supreme Court, when a project, whatever it is, has been too heavily "infected with the public interest," it has been publicly owned and managed. But you will observe that the phrase "too heavily" is so vague as really to beg the question. Sometimes interstate complications are a vital element in the decision; that was surely the case with the Tennessee Valley Authority. But appeals to empiricism and convenience do not lay sound foundations for defining a general principle.

If these things are true in the United States, the situations in many nations that adhere to Western Ideology are quite different both in theory and in practice. Britain had a Socialist government for five years; it nationalized the coal mines, the railroads, road transport and the steel industry. How far this process would have gone toward public ownership of the principal means of production we do not know. A change in government halted and partially — but only partially — reversed the trend. In Britain the theory of private enterprise is in direct competition with Socialist dogma. But the Tories do not intend to denationalize the railroads; and the Socialists, if they had continued in power with narrow majorities, would have been chary of putting their theories to the full test of general practice.

In summary, so far as Britain is concerned, Socialist theory is more widely accepted than in the United States. In practice, however, the political balance is such, the political habits are such, and the readiness to subordinate theory to compromise is so deeply engrained that the decision in any given case is based more upon convenience and other empirical considerations than upon ideology.

In France, the more logical — not to say dogmatic — mind makes Socialism the principle. Nationalization has been carried much further and the consequences of public policy in a democratic state were revealed in devastating strikes this past summer. The logic of Socialism and the logic of Democracy there were surely in tension, if not in opposition and conflict.

Yet we have to remember that the Scandinavian countries have long been Socialist in orientation and have, generally speaking, avoided such demoralizing experiences as those of France. That indicates that some of the fault lies with imperfect governmental procedures and with the confusion or incoherence of public opinion rather than the mere clash of theoretical principles.

Such a hasty survey is comprehensive enough to validate the thesis that Free Enterprise Capitalism is not a vital part of Western Ideology. However devoted we are in America to its basic postulate, we cannot pretend that all our NATO associates — not to speak of other Western nations — share our commitments. In an analytical and dispassionate view of Western Ideology, Free Enterprise cannot be included.

It may well seem that this survey has dealt so largely with empiricisms, compromises, expedients and exceptions that there is little left. You remember that the great seal which the United States adopted so long ago carries the motto: "Novus Ordo Seclorum" (A New Order of the Ages). Does our ideology warrant the prophecy or, as some have called it, that boast? To me, the answer is perfectly clear. It does warrant both our pride in the past and our faith in the future. Despite all the errors we have made, all our deviations from our own professions, this hard fact remains: we have a citizen-centered, democratic republic. We have steadily expanded the idea of equality beyond formal equality before the law to a much wider and more vital concept. We have insisted upon equal access to education, to jobs, to opportunity of all sorts — social, economic, religious and political. Despite glaring shortcomings in performance, we have run far beyond not alone the practice but even the thoughts of our fathers. With each new approximation of earlier hopes, we have advanced the goals still further.

Liberty is a living ideal and, like other living things, has a basic metabolism. It is simultaneously burning up energy and

creating new energy. But that is the drama of history. When the energy of liberty is burned up faster than it is recreated, we slide toward despotism and tyranny, such as Fascism, Naziism or Communism. But when the energy of freedom is created at a faster rate, we have what Lincoln called — and called with precision — “a new birth of freedom.”

BIOGRAPHY

Dr. Henry M. Wriston

Dr. Henry M. Wriston received his B.A. degree from Wesleyan University, Connecticut, in 1911, and has since received three additional degrees from that University. He studied at Harvard University from 1911 to 1914, was an Austin teaching fellow for the last two years and was awarded a Ph.D. degree in 1922. He has received honorary degrees from Columbia University, Tufts College, Rutgers University, Princeton University, Harvard, Western Reserve University, New York University, University of Pennsylvania, and others.

Dr. Wriston has been well known nationally in educational work for many years. He was President of the Association of American Universities; trustee of the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, and its chairman; vice president of the American Association for Adult Education; trustee of the World Peace Foundation, and of the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace; and director and president of the Council on Foreign Relations.

From 1925 to 1937 Dr. Wriston was President of Lawrence College, and from 1929 to 1937 he was director of the Institute of Paper Chemistry of Appleton, Wisconsin. Since 1937 he has been president of Brown University.

He has written books on war, civil defense, and American foreign relations, including: *Prepare for Peace* (1941); *Challenge to Freedom* (1943); *Strategy of Peace* (1944). He is a prolific contributor of articles to journals and periodicals.