

Letters

DISSENT AND COUNTER DISSENT

TO THE EDITOR:

John Lukacs's undocumented and supercilious article, "A Dissenting View of the Day That Shook the World," Oct. 22, is an unfortunate exception to the generally careful and conscientious level of contributions to the magazine.

It is likely that any revolution or massive national change can be described in precisely the derogatory fashion used for the events in Russia, 1917. The American Revolution in such case could be reduced to a matter of "taxes and tea."

The fact remains that the events did occur and have radically changed the face of national and political power since then. Mr. Lukacs appears to consider this change for the worse; he forgets that no modern dictatorship can conceivably match the misery of centuries of Czarist rule.

ALEXANDRA M. SHAPIRO.
Ithaca, N. Y.

TO THE EDITOR:

I find it astonishing that John Lukacs can write of the period following the triumph of the Bolsheviks as one marked by "four years of civil war" without once mentioning the Allied intervention—including intervention by the United States—on behalf of the anti-Bolshevik forces in Russia. It is well known that Allied manpower, money and supplies were furnished the counterrevolutionary forces. By the end of the summer of

1918, there were at least 18 counterrevolutionary governments, most of them set up and supplied by the Allied powers, throughout Russia.

Again, in noting the fact that the Bolsheviks emerged victorious from the civil war, Mr. Lukacs comments that it was at the expense of a terrible cost in Russian lives. True! But Mr. Lukacs might have mentioned the fact that the Allied blockade of Russia, which lasted until 1920, caused widespread suffering in Russia and accounted for quite a few of the lives lost.

PHILIP S. FONER,
Professor of History, Lincoln
University,
Lincoln University, Pa.

The author replies: "Conceivably it may be argued that a modern dictatorship, such as Stalin's, was better than the regime of Nicholas II—just as it may be argued that Hitler represented a great improvement over William II. It is only that I have nothing but contempt for that kind of argument, no matter how well it may be 'documented.'

"I have no sympathy for the Czars; I wrote in my article that the Russian people survived the worst features of their regime, and that they show every sign of surviving Communism, too. I do not think that this is a very supercilious statement.

"I have more sympathy for Professor Foner's remarks, since I, too, think that the Allied intervention in Russia

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INTERVENTION—American troops of the 31st Infantry near Vladivostok in 1918.

in 1918 was a bad mistake. But, as he himself suggests, this intervention took place on a rather limited scale, and there is every kind of evidence that the civil war in Russia would have developed even if the Allies had not intervened at that time. Also, the Allied blockade was rather ineffective; its direct effects on the alimentary situation in 1918-20 were probably less than those of the American famine relief in Russia in 1921-23."

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TO THE EDITOR:

John Lukacs tries to minimize the meaning of the Bolshevik Revolution by stressing the small scale of events on Nov. 7, 1917. Historical events derive their significance from the context in which they take place and the symbolic power they exert upon public consciousness. How else explain the process by which a skirmish at Lexington in 1775 results in the "shot heard round the world?"

The same spirit of historiographical brush-off leads Mr. Lukacs to rate Wilson over Lenin as the greater world revolutionary. Few historians would take seriously such a contention; certainly, I know of no revolutionary who shares that opinion. Ho, Che and Mao read Lenin, not Wilson; their part in contemporary history suggests that the Bolshevik Revolution went even further than what Mr. Lukacs grudgingly concedes to be its undeniable achievement—the reconstruction of Russian national power.

LOUIS MENASHE,
Assistant Professor of History,
Polytechnic Institute of
Brooklyn
Brooklyn.

**KEEP THE CITY
IN CITY HOSPITALS**

TO THE EDITOR:

The machinery of New York City's government is outmoded and creaky. Therefore, says Dr. Martin Cherkasky, "The City Should Get Out of the Hospital Business" (Oct. 8). Should the city also turn over its Welfare Department to the private agencies and its schools to the parochial and private schools, divest itself of responsibility for the health, welfare and education of its citizens, and become a sort of tax collector, turning over a large share of the revenue to the private

sector? If the city gave all its hospitals to the voluntary sector, would it be strong enough to demand high standards of quality? What leverage would the city have in controlling the cost of hospital care paid for by tax dollars?

Dr. Cherkasky assumes that one system of care would mean one level of care. Under the affiliation contracts this has not been uniformly true. The wealthier patients and those with interesting diseases continue to fill the beds of the teaching hospitals, while the lower-middle class, the poor and patients with run-of-the-mill illnesses are all too often sent to municipal hospitals, which, though greatly improved, are still inferior and do not furnish the same level of hospital care. Would a complete takeover change this trend? I doubt it.

The answer is not to give away, wholesale, the responsibilities of municipal government but to restructure and modernize it so that all departments function well. There is no substitute for well-run departments if City Hall is to discharge its responsibility for the education, protection, welfare and health of all our citizens. **Mrs. MAX ASCOLI,**
Chairman, Health Section,
Citizens' Committee for
Children of New York, Inc.
New York.

**TRUMAN & JOHNSON,
IKE & ADLAI**

TO THE EDITOR:

It has become fashionable to compare President Truman's prospects for re-election in 1948 with President Johnson's hopes for victory in 1968, should he decide to run again. Joseph Kraft and William S. White have suggested a number of parallels in recent columns, and now along comes Cabell Phillips with by far the most penetrating and reasoned presentation of the case ("Johnson Has the Kind of Troubles Truman Had," Oct. 22). Yet all of these knowledgeable newspaper reporters fail to take into account several critical differences between the situations in 1947-48 and 1967-68:

The images of the two Presidents in the minds of the voters seem to be strikingly different. Most important, Truman never had a credibility problem. His low points in the Gallup polls came in 1951-52,

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not 1947-48 (in fairness to Mr. Phillips, he points up significant differences in style between the two men in his conclusions).

Truman was able to campaign with great effectiveness on the theme of a "do-nothing" Republican Congress (a Congress which, incidentally, passed the Taft-Hartley Act, supported the Truman Doctrine and the Marshall Plan, and unified the armed services under a single Department of Defense); Johnson has no such option available to him. The 90th Congress is, after all, controlled by substantial Democratic majorities (246 to 187 in the House of Representatives; 64 to 36 in the Senate). All Johnson can do is appeal for more or different kinds of Democrats. Unless the Republicans nominate another Goldwater, he is unlikely to get them.

Truman had no strong Democratic potential candidate waiting in the wings at all comparable to Senator Robert Kennedy. Wallace, who had been dumped from the ticket in 1944, certainly didn't qualify. Eisenhower, as Phillips shows, never gave defecting Democrats in 1948 the slightest bit of encouragement.

Johnson is saddled with the war in Vietnam (Phillips's arguments comparing the beginnings of the cold war with casualty rates approaching 200 deaths per week in Vietnam are hardly worth debating). The more comparable situation is, of course, the Korean war in 1952. Stevenson, the Democratic nominee, was at a disadvantage from the beginning of the Presidential campaign, but Eisenhower's dramatic promise to go to Korea and, in effect, bring the boys home was a decisive turning-point in the campaign. It seems probable that by 1968 the Vietnam war will be even more unpopular than the Korean war was in 1952.

In Presidential elections, as with history in general, one can never step in the same river twice.

ROBERT L. PEABODY,
Department of

Political Science,

The Johns Hopkins University.
Baltimore.

A CRY FOR HELP

TO THE EDITOR:

I started reading the article "Methadone — Fighting Fire

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With Fire," Oct. 15, with a great deal of enthusiasm, thinking that at last I would know where to turn for help for my son. As I read on, I soon realized how wrong I was again.

According to this program, its entrance requirements and its location, an addict must be colored, Puerto Rican, a criminal or a prostitute. Unless he reaches or fulfills one of these, all doors of aid are closed to him. Unfortunately, this is the plight of the middle class in this great society. We pay all the taxes to support the very things that are denied our own. The best we can hope for is that they die young so we can lay their tormented bodies to rest. To me, the one thing more heartbreaking than seeing him like that is the fact that there is nowhere for me to turn. Turn him over to the police? Never! Because, you see, I love him too much. I have a fair idea what the police think of them and how they treat them.

NAME WITHHELD.

New York.

[Dr. Marie Nyswander, who pioneered the methadone program, says: "There are no restrictions as to race, color or creed. The age requirements merely insure that we are treating a person who is truly an addict in every sense of the word. Unfortunately, we are limited by space, hospitals and staff to accepting addicts who have severe mental or medical illness." Application can, of course, be made to other centers offering different kinds of treatment for addicts — Synanon Foundation, for example, and Daytop Lodge.—THE EDITOR.]

LITTLE BROTHER AND LITTLE SISTERS

TO THE EDITOR:

I would like to add my opinion on "Little Brother Comes to America," Oct. 29.

I say there is a difference between the male and the female. Why try to hide it? The children have to learn some day. Even my little sister, Julie, thinks there is nothing wrong with it.

If something is wrong with having sex organs on a doll,

why are they selling Barbies at such a fast rate?

LAURA WILLIAMS.

(Age 11)

Hamden, Conn.

TO THE EDITOR:

This morning's conversation in our household:

"Howard, shall we buy 'Little Brother' for Deidre?"

"No!"

"Why not?"

"Too expensive!"

So ends any tempest here—but much mirth.

LOIS CHASE BRODY.

Cherry Hill, N. J.

ALIENATION: HOUSEWIFE DEPT.

TO THE EDITOR:

Steven Kelman makes the point in "These Are Three of the 'Alienated,'" Oct. 22, that alienation today takes many forms. This corps of the alienated may be larger than he or many people suspect, because I have the feeling that many of America's most stable group, the housewives, are included.

I am the wife of a promising young businessman, the mother of two small boys and I work at home as a freelance copy editor. I have been out of college almost five years. The college was Smith. At 25, I am faced with the crisis of finding some meaning in life or, if that proves impossible, finding a satisfactory way of living and functioning despite it.

No, my family is not enough. Yes, I want to make their lives as happy and problem-free as possible, and I will, no matter what, go through all the necessary motions. But I really do want to be more than a smiling zombie. The more I think, the less real enthusiasm I can muster, and unfortunately I can't stop thinking.

The question is, how do you find something to look forward to? And how do you achieve that sense of purpose in what you are doing that will end this questioning? Like Bill in Mr. Kelman's article, I wonder how you go about feeling committed. What difference does it make whether I go back to school and get more educated or just read or go to painting classes or try to make a career out of something? Basically, what good are goals of any kind in the face of death? Yet how is it possible to be happy in the

present, forgetting goals, if there is no sense of accomplishing anything?

The trouble is that I, probably like many of the other alienated, can't get out of myself. I think deeply mainly of me, and I am isolated in my thoughts. To be able to communicate in this impersonal way, that is, write a letter to *The Times*, is a pleasant relief, but still very self-oriented and of course very temporary.

What is the answer? Keep busier? See lots of people and communicate like mad? See a psychiatrist? Drugs?

CAROLINE MELINE.

Philadelphia, Pa.

TO THE EDITOR:

I used to think I was "alienated," too, until I discovered that "alienation" is a synonym for self-pity, apathy and laziness. I cannot blame my parents for my lack of values any more than I can blame them for not "treating me as an adult" when I failed to act like one. It must be difficult for somebody to want to break out of the Establishment if he has already been "alienated" out of it. As for the use of

psychedelic drugs, altitude, a poor substitute for attitude.

JEAN W. BECKER.

Albany.

LEARNING TO LEARN

TO THE EDITOR:

In the article on preschool education for the deprived, "Slum Children Must Make Up for Lost Time," Oct. 15, Maya Pines damns with innuendoes a nonexistent "Establishment" and engages in special pleading for "stimulation," which makes intensive use of drill, repetition in chanting and question-and-answer techniques. These methods have been used for hundreds of years in ancient civilizations, and are still used in underdeveloped and totalitarian countries.

Certainly repetitious drill can produce certain kinds of direct learning—as well as the secondary result of learning to be submissive to rigidly imposed directives. But children need to develop all of their equipment for life; lopsided approaches focusing on only one aspect of development incur a risk. Aren't we concerned with preventing mental illness, social alienation

ple to jump on a bandwagon which plays one tune loudly, without considering all the knowledge and experience relevant to the problem and the wise programs developed by many leaders working quietly and effectively in such settings as the Day Care Center of the DePaul Settlement House in the Halstead Street poverty area of Chicago, Ill., and the Hudson Guild in New York—both of which have stimulated intellectual and artistic development in poor children over many years.

Moreover, cognitive stimulation involves more than the capacity to use sentences. Even animal research demonstrates the effectiveness of exploration in a rich environment with sufficient variety and change. Curiosity, reflectiveness, problem-solving are a few of the cognitive functions which should be nourished. Learning to be active; to make things for oneself, to clarify observations, to develop concepts of space, size and weight are contributions of block-construction and work with plastic materials, such as clay or paints. Field trips stimulate observations, questions and discussions. Cooking demonstrates measurements and effects of heat. Growth is observed in a garden. Information is extended by calendars, thermometers, heaters. Play telephones stimulate communication. An individual relation and identification of the young child with his teacher is perhaps most basic to learning to want to learn.

It is a disservice to these children to oversimplify the problems and encourage peo-

ple to jump on a bandwagon which plays one tune loudly, without considering all the knowledge and experience relevant to the problem and the wise programs developed by many leaders working quietly and effectively in such settings as the Day Care Center of the DePaul Settlement House in the Halstead Street poverty area of Chicago, Ill., and the Hudson Guild in New York—both of which have stimulated intellectual and artistic development in poor children over many years.

LOIS BARCLAY MURPHY, Ph.D.
Director, Division of Developmental Research, Research Department, The Menninger Foundation.

Topeka, Kan.

TO THE EDITOR:

As a psychologist who has had the opportunity of working with the New York City Board of Education Head Start program from its inception in 1965, I must strongly disagree with the philosophy and outright distortions in Maya Pines's article.

Miss Pines has subtly transformed the terms "Establishment" and "Innovators." What

would normally be called the progressive or liberal approach is labeled "Establishment," with all the negative connotations that apply, and what would normally be called the traditional, structured approach is labeled "Innovators," with all the positive connotations that apply. Let us not fool ourselves. What Miss Pines is really talking about is the old-fashioned drill method, minus the ruler to slap the child's hand, and dressed up with fancy, expensive equipment which manufacturers are eagerly trying to sell (and in which children soon lose interest).

Miss Pines purports to give scientific proof in the guise of measurements and I.Q. points and neat little charts. How does one measure trust? How does one measure curiosity? How does one measure an improved self-image?

Is it not healthier—and here I make a value judgment—to base the skills needed for reading (words, language, concepts) on meaningful experiences to the child? And the legitimate business of children is play!

BARBARA CHASEN,
Bureau of Child Guidance,
New York.