

GIFT
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HAMSA

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Friends and Companions

With this issue we are beginning a series of discussions dealing with the social and cultural realities of this period of transition. What the world expects today from us is America's answer to conditions which in other lands have been met by Communism, Fascism, Nazism and their respective cultural biases. Long ago, I pointed out in an essay entitled "World-Americanism" some of the salient characteristics of the type of social order which pioneers of the great American tradition had envisioned as an answer to the old European feudalism and racial nationalism. Since that time Europe has accepted a new communistic dogmatism, has produced a renovated conception of the State as a magnified Roman "gens" in Italy and a tribal religion of nationalism which in Germany restores the worship of "pure blood." Moreover, as I write these words, France is hesitating between some form of Fascism and of syndicalism. The problem confronting America is forced upon us from all sides with challenging insistence: Must we follow one of Europe's motherly leads, or have we come sufficiently of age to create our own solution?

We are not hereby entering the realm of politics as such. But human society is greater than politics. In proportion as we assume our rightful responsibility as *creators of values*, in such a proportion the social order, its basic patterns and its collective-individual purpose, are matters for us to contemplate, study, and re-valuate. We are not interested in revolution, but tremendously intent upon revaluation. He for whom the problem of revaluation is not existing today—is spiritually dead.

As all human values include as polar opposites the collective and the individual, we shall take care to survey the problems from both sides, trying to reach mediating concepts which will permit us to think, feel and act truly as *Integraters*.

Europe has always conceived its manifestations of social order as being in opposition to something. The same is true of European cultural movements and schools. All of them were more or less overt reactions against what preceded. This led to extremism, disequilibrium, spiritual chaos. Shall America build in the way of operative wholeness and become poised in the middle path where progress is the result of the convergence and of the assimilation of the opposites? As a group of creative individuals, Hamsa must offer an answer,—for each of us to energize with our faith. Each of us can be, in his or her surroundings, a center of civilization.

PLANNING: the new key-note

The words "plan" and "planning" may well become the most characteristic terms of the maturing twentieth century; whereas the nineteenth century was fundamentally that of the doctrine of "laissez faire." We find the world still divided on the question of the relative value of collectivism and individualism *per se*; but we prophesy that there will be few, if any, advocates of *uncontrolled* individualism in the new generation. Individualism will never die, for it is one of the two poles of the state of living-together; but the type of individualism which will refuse to be subjected to a definite form of "planning" may become very soon a relic of European chaos or of American frontier days.

On the other hand collectivism, communism, the strict group-idea, and all such concepts of globular living and unanimous thinking or feeling may well prove in the long run quite detrimental to the growth of true individuals—unless this growth of true individuals, of free men and women, of creative leaders, *is also planned for.* We shall develop this significant idea in our next discussion; but first of all, at a time when Roosevelt is bending most of his energies to the task of "economic planning," when moreover Russia looks back with well-earned satisfaction to the relative success of her great adventure "the Five Year Plan" and of similar less conspicuous attempts at planning in other fields, we should discuss this matter of "planning" in itself.

Planning is characteristic in this that it is a function exercised by the intelligent few, by the *thinking elite*. The "Brain Trust" may have been largely a fiction built by clever propaganda. But it so ably represents a principle that its symbolical value is very great indeed. European democracies have failed in every country because parliaments are incapable of planning; and do not constitute the "thinking elite" which alone can plan. Dictatorships have been needed in Europe to enforce the recognition of this fact. This means that Will must back up Thought. Dictators *or* the common will of an intelligently or instinctively aroused people must back up the thinkers who can do the planning. A policy is not enough. A plan is needed. The former is largely a matter of feeling and general thinking; the latter involves precise, accurate thinking,—engineering.

Whether college professors are to be considered as the planners, or engineers, or philosophers, or wise Sages (as in old China) is a matter to be decided by the trend of the period; but there must be a plan and the few who plan—if the social order is to be an order at all, especially if it is to become an "organism." Nineteenth century "laissez faire" and "free hand to the individual up to the point he becomes a criminal" (often, after this point also!) contradict any real sense of social order. They negate the possibility of a nation or continent ever becoming a "social organism." Such a philosophy emphasizes the will and feeling elements in man—the personality as a self-contained self-sufficient whole. But now mankind is moving to a view of life from which mind comes into swift ascendancy. And mind is nothing but the *capacity for planning*.

Plato conceived his ideal State as the work of great minds who as philosophers and seers, perceived interiorly a divine archetype of social organization—then set themselves to the task of making it concrete in actual social prac-

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American life and society are being transformed under our eyes. Every thinking person should become aware of what is happening and of the deeper realities involved. This and the following issues of HAMSA have a wide message.

To enable you to spread it more easily, we will send you two copies of every issue. Will you make the extra copy work for HAMSA and bring us new friends?

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Today our less idealistic generation is shy of "archetypes" and "philosophers." It rather trusts itself to science and to engineers, economists, and trained experts in various fields of research. Russia deified officially science, more successful in this than Robespierre and the French Revolution in worshipping Reason." America has not yet deified officially science; but we live by science and our New Deal is planned by scientists for the most part. Scientists and professors constitute our "thinking aristocracy." They do not rule, perhaps; but they plan. The will rules; the mind plans. But the latter determines the former; unless both become servants to a *dominant emotion*—as in Germany.

A planned society is not necessarily a collectivistic society—still less a communistic society. Collectivism, or communism, or fascism, are the results of basic social emotions. In fact beyond these forms of society you can always sense a sort of religious movement. Russian communism is indeed a religion with dogmas aplenty. Fascism, and much more so Nazism, are rooted in emotional group-impulses. While these types of society set themselves to the task of planning, their planning is of the nature of a man's mind when swayed by a controlling passion. Especially in the initial stages of such movements.

It is the glory of the New Deal that relatively little emotionalism has gone into its making—even though it runs counter to the basic philosophy of our nation, the famous "rugged individualism" of the last centuries. America is using its planning mind without being driven to it by some relentless mass-emotion: a unique phenomenon perhaps. Even if the planning does not go yet far enough and has not gotten hold as yet of the consciousness of the people at large (and above all of the upper class), the fact remains that the record is impressive for ten months of activity against formidable obstacles. This would not have been possible without the compelling quality of Roosevelt's personality. But, this personality does not compel by emotional drives. Thus we are closer to a government by mental excellence or inherent wisdom, than the Western world has been for centuries. Both qualities are the essence and prerequisites of efficient planning; certainly of *wise* planning. Without them planning is ruled by emotional impulses, by group-emotions and group-fanaticism. It may be efficient from the point of view of collectivism; but it neglects to take individualism into consideration.

What we need today is not a collectivistic over-emphasis, but one on *efficient functioning*. We must plan with a mind unbiased by group-emotions or religious upheavals. For, thus only, shall we be true to the higher implications of this age of ours, in which mind has won the right to build the foundations of a new order—nay, even more, the structure of a social organism.

A social organism is a living entity; not because it is made up of myriads of men and women who are alive, but because it has established between these men and women *vital relationship*. A great and somewhat mysterious problem, this establishing vital relationships between the human entities that are to become cells of the organism, but which are at first distracted bundles of molecules craving for self-preservation and self-aggrandizement! Still the problem must be faced. No pattern of order, however intelligently drawn and photostated upon the collectivity, can vitally affect the internal human relationships within the collectivity, unless something vital is aroused, a glow, an urge that makes the whole vibrant—and thus only, organic.

When planning is performed under the compelling drive of a mass-emotion, this mass-emotion supplies the vital power and urge necessary to give a vibrant significance to the planning, to the labor and sacrifices nearly always involved in this planning. But this mass-emotion excludes automatically those groups or classes which are not touched by it, or against which it is directed. There is fire; but half of its energy is turned to destruction, obliteration. Not only whole groups are annihilated, in spirit if not in body; but the rights and growth of the individual are equally destroyed.

In America, because planning has not been forced by mass-emotion, even though it was conditioned by mass-dissatisfaction, we may not have to fear the destruction of groups or of individualism as a social factor; but we are confronted with the problem of putting real warmth and vitality into the structures and relationships formed by the new planning. A very serious problem. Human happiness and all the beautiful things of which the preamble of the Constitution speak, are fine indeed. But do they really provide a warmth of social inter-relationship? What gave to our forefathers the fire of living-together was at first, a certain religious fervor, misguided as it may seem to some of us; then, a driving ambition for expansion, conquest:—the lure of the West, of the frontier: lure of adventure, lure of gold.

Where is the adventure and where is the gold in our planned social order? Both safely locked in a land without frontier, with no possibility of further expansion *outward*. And where, the religious fervor? Can the desire for human welfare, for the happiness of the many and even of the all be strong enough to give a somewhat epic quality to our work of planning? The fight against old man Depression had at least a bit of chivalry in it. The fight against bankers and privileges provides some slight stimulation to a large number. But the rest is so puzzling, so involved, so intellectual. How can we warm it up with something that will cheer and vitalize us? As long as prosperity is yet to be won, there is an urge. But with prosperity in and gangsters out, money circulating and no kick about going anywhere—will happiness and a well-functioning social balance of production and consumption take the place of a gold-rush, a new territory opened, or millions to be made in Wall Street? A Wall Street is a socially dangerous place for a nation to get emotionally stirred. Yet it has been the place for the last generation. It has been the last frontier.

Expansion is an emotional process; but concentration, contraction, organization, planning are all mental. Shall we need a war to give us the illusion of expansion—or a crusade against atheistic Communism? Is there no way for a society, which has reached the stage of continental organization, to re-energize forces of expansion, of emotional expression?

There is a way; but this way has to be entirely reevaluated, entirely thought out anew to fit the new conditions of human society. It is the way of Art, in the most inclusive and most creative sense of this most abused term.

(next issue: *Cultural Planning in America*)