As a public service,

THE LAUCKS FOUNDATION

from time to time calls attention to published material that might contribute toward clarification or understanding of issues affecting world peace. The accompanying reprints constitute Reprint Mailing No. 115.

(Mrs.) Eulah C. Laucks, President
Post Office Box 5012
Santa Barbara, CA. 93150-5012

October, 1991

The following is a transcript of Robert MacNeil's "Conversation" with George F. Kennan, Soviet Affairs Scholar, aired August 22, 1991, on the MacNEIL/LEHRER NEWSHOUR. (Permission to reprint granted by MacNEIL/LEHRER PRODUCTIONS.)

CONVERSATION

MR. MAC NEIL: Finally tonight a conversation with George Kennan. Often called the foremost scholar and analyst of U.S.-Soviet relations, Mr. Kennan first articulated the American policy of containment to respond to Soviet expansionism after World War II. Mr. Kennan capped a long career in the foreign service with ambassadorial appointments to the Soviet Union and Yugoslavia. He has devoted years since to improving U.S. scholarship of Russian studies. His own contribution to that scholarship includes 18 books, among them 2 Pulitzer Prize winners. I talked with him this afternoon and asked him to reflect as a student of Russian history on the significance of this moment.

MR. KENNAN: I think it's of tremendous significance. I don't mean to underestimate the difficulties that Russia is going to have in the immediate future, but I do think that this is a turning point of the most momentous historical significance. I find it difficult to find any other turning point of modern Russian history that I think is so significant as this one.

MR. MAC NEIL: Why? I mean there have been plenty of turning points.

MR. KENNAN: Plenty of turning points, but by what happened on those streets of Moscow and Leningrad in these last three or four days the Russian people for the first time in their history have turned their back on the manner in which they've been ruled not just in the Soviet period but in centuries before. They have demanded a voice in the designing of their own society, their own future, and they have done so successfully. And I can't think of any precedent for this in Russian history, even 1917 had nothing quite like this. It's the most hopeful turning point that I've ever seen in Russian affairs and I think it's a very basic one. I think the fact that from now on Russia is going to be in its political composition, its political habits, its political way it's run, it is going to be a different Russia than it's ever been before.

MR. MAC NEIL: How do you explain it, how this could happen in this way?

MR. KENNAN: Yes. Part of it, of course, is the communications revolution. Part of it is the fact that you now have a far higher proportion of the people of Russia who are educated people, who do read, who do listen to what comes out over the media, but part of it also is the revulsion after the seven decades of mistreatment that they have had at the hands of a Communist regime and I think you see they did realize in 1917 that the czar's government was not a very good government anymore, that the czar was not an impressive person, in fact, that he was a rather foolish man, and they lost their confidence in that sort of a government. Many of them naively thought this one would be a better one, a Communist one, but there was never a greater disillusionment of any people than that. And I think again as I say that it is partly the revulsion of what they've just been through that gave them the courage and the determination not to accept it anymore.

MR. MAC NEIL: Many people have worried that after centuries of repressive or paternalistic government that the habits, the psychological habits would be so strong that when things became messy and uncertain as they have been with this perestroika that the temptation to go back to something secure and strong just for stability would be irresistible. Why do you think that hasn't happened?

MR. KENNAN: Well, I've worried about --

MR. MAC NEIL: Excuse me interrupting, but plenty of Soviet people have been telling reporters that on the street, well, we'd rather go back to the strong stuff than put up with this chaos.

MR. KENNAN: That was a little bit -- it could delude you, hearing these things from them, because every time there has come a showdown, at least in the great cities, they have come out in favor of an attempt to have a democratic development. I am not sure how all this proceeds out in the countryside. I think there is much less understanding in large parts of the countryside far from the great cities for what democracy has to offer than there is in Moscow or Leningrad. On the other hand, these places are the center of the political vitality of the country and there's no doubt about it now, that there's no doubt about the way that public opinion, Russian opinion, inclines. There's been test after test of it, but none ever as complete as this and none where the answer was ever made as dramatically evident as it has been in these last days.

MR. MAC NEIL: So do you think that six years of experimenting with glasnost, freedom, has really changed the political psychology of the Soviet people?

MR. KENNAN: Yes. I think it has. And I think we do owe this in very large measure to Gorbachev and that should not be forgotten. He has had his faults, his weaknesses, his blind spots too, but this is his -- has been his great service to Russia. This is partly the result of it. He was the one, after all, who made all this possible by making glasnost possible, by permitting the press to speak again, by permitting people to speak, all this by throwing open the contacts with the outside world. That all is part of the background of what has now happened.

MR. MAC NEIL: It's really ironic in a way, isn't it, that -- I mean, as he admitted in his press conference today was in some ways the author of his own -- of this misfortune by putting so much trust in so many hardliners close to him, and yet, in another way the author of his salvation by having created or permitted some of the freedoms -- freedom of expression -- that saved him.

MR. KENNAN: That's quite true. And I'm sure that he will hear many accusations that he has a measure of responsibility for these events that happened because of his indulgence of these people. After all, he did appoint several of them and the most important ones to the positions they occupied. But one can be too tough on him here. He was well aware that the party and the police still had great power in large parts of the country, perhaps not as I say in the big cities, but way out in the provincial areas, and I think he wanted, if he could, to keep them aboard and not to push them off into a position where this short of thing would occur. He may have gone too far in acting with them, in giving them positions, in talking with them, and he may suffer for it now, but I think we have to realize that it was not easy for him and also because he still clung for a long time to his belief that the party could be made a suitable instrument of change.

MR. MAC NEIL: I don't know whether you heard that part of the press conference, but he reiterated that today, that he would stay in the party and that he thought that those -- that those forces that were in favor of democratic reform could be encouraged and that the party it sought could be reformed and made an instrument of change.

MR. KENNAN: Robin, here too I would not like to be too hard on him. Loyalty is the only absolute human virtue which is always respected. It's better to be loyal in a way to your shabbiest friends than the opposite. And I know that he parts with great difficulty from his belief in the party. It was in the party that he grew up. It was there that he got his position, and in a way I respect him for his fidelity to it. But I think he's wrong.

MR. MAC NEIL: But could he miss? If this is the historic turning point you've said, could he miss that turning point and be left behind because of that loyalty?

MR. KENNAN: Yes. Partly because of that. Mind you, I think that his contribution to the development of Russia was largely exhausted before these recent events occurred. He had -- what I mean by that is that he had done pretty much, what was his historic mission, which was to break the hold of the party over all of Russian life and to throw open freedom of speech, and the other things that he did open up. That was an historic contribution and I'm sure that he will be given credit and good perspective of history for what he's done, but he did, as I say, have one of these blind spots. One of them was his belief that the party could be an adequate means of change and another was of course his hope and belief that the -- the country could be kept together, that the empire could be kept together, that the other republicans -- republics could be held in, I think that too was a failure of insight and judgment on his part. The day for that has passed. The day for the great empires is gone. The day in particular for the unilateral -- the unilingual and the uni-national empires is gone. But that I mean the ones that embrace a number of nations and a number of languages. The others have gone, the old Turkish empire, the old Austria-Hungarian empire, the British empire; they have all yielded to the forces of modern nationalism and the -- it was clear that the Russian-Soviet empire was going to have to yield to these forces too eventually.

MR. MAC NEIL: Do you think what happened in the last few days accelerates that?

MR. KENNAN: Yes, I do indeed. I do, indeed, I think is going to affect his position because he had hitched his wagon to the star of the central authority in the Soviet Union. Now what has happened in these last few days is going to increase the authority of the individual republics. And by that same token, it is bound to decrease the importance and the scope of power of the central, of central governmental apparatus. And to the extent that that is diminished, so will be diminished his role in Russian affairs, his influence.

MR. MAC NEIL: Some of the new republics, including Boris Yeltsin's Russian Federation, have talked about having their own armies, their own security forces. Since the United States was so anxious to see the Soviet Union stay together so that it would have one military super power to deal with, does this disintegration or de-centralization you're predicting pose security problems for the West? I mean, you have that massive number of nuclear weapons and everything.

MR. KENNAN: So far as the nuclear weapons are concerned, this union treaty which was to have been thrown open for signature by the republics three or four days ago and that incidentally is probably the crucial fact that caused the timing of this effort to overthrow the regime, this union treaty did, it seemed to me, in its provisions take care of the danger that -- of nuclear weapons getting into the wrong hands. As far as that is concerned, I think we can be relieved, and otherwise, I think that we should recognize the inevitability of the decentralization of this state and not put ourselves in opposition to it.

MR. MAC NEIL: You said a moment ago that loyalty is prized often above everything in politicians. But so also in successful politicians is a degree of opportunism. Is Mr. Gorbachev nimble enough and adroit enough and opportunistic enough to seize this moment and revitalize his leadership, or is he really on the wave of the past do you think?

MR. KENNAN: In my opinion he will not be able to do that. I can't really go into all the reasons why not. They're partly ones of personality, partly ones of what has happened. But everyone, as you know, in public life has his hour and his period. You can't expect to have really many more than one. And I think Gorbachev for whom I have high respect, I think that he, as I say, has pretty well exhausted what he had to give to the Russian situation. We're going on now to another generation, to another group of problems. And I doubt that he can expect to exercise a kind of leadership with relation to them that he has exercised in recent years.

MR. MAC NEIL: Where does Mr. Yeltsin fit into that picture?

MR. KENNAN: He comes out, of course, as "the" great personality of the hour in Russia and in the Soviet Union. He too is a man for whom I have respect. He has qualities quite different from those of, of Gorbachev. Gorbachev was not good really with the contact with the people. Yeltsin, just the opposite, and he has, of course, increased his stature in the public eye enormously by his behavior in recent days. He's shown himself to be a courageous and strong man in a difficult situation. And they all appreciate that. But more important than that too is the fact that he was popularly elected and those who elected him are all aware of that and they are reluctant to be deprived of the choice they made when they came to that decision.

MR. MAC NEIL: Finally, as the man often credited with being the author of the policy that the West adopted which succeeded in the containment policy, brought the Soviet Union to change, internal change, what do you think the posture of the United States should be now towards the new realities in the Soviet Union?

MR. KENNAN: I think that it should be the posture that John Quincy Adams outlined in a Fourth of July speech in Washington a great many years ago when he said that America is the guardian of the liberties of all the world -- or she is, no, she is the friend of the liberties of all the world, she is the guardian only of her own. I think we have to give all the encouragement we can to the Russians in this situation, but in doing so, we cannot regard it as one great undivided country. We have to take account of the decentralization which is in progress and we have to address our efforts, our help, our attention partly to the individual republics whose needs vary, vary greatly among them, and not all to the central government.

MR. MAC NEIL: Well, Professor Kennan, thank you very much for joining us.

MR. KENNAN: Thank you.

The following is quoted from "Why the Gulf War Was Not in the National Interest," by Christopher Layne. (The Atlantic Monthly, July 1991, pp.70-71.)

"There is in fact nothing new about the Bush Administration's new world order. Its rhetoric and assumptions have a familiar ring. The same kind of thinking led the United States into Vietnam. As the former Secretary of State Dean Rusk stated in his memoirs, As I Saw It, the belief that America was responsible for stopping aggression everywhere and upholding international law underlay U.S. policy in Vietnam—another Wilsonian crusade fought primarily by the United States (as the Gulf War was) in the name of collective security. True, the Gulf War differed from Vietnam geopolitically, topographically, and in its outcome. But in one crucial respect the two wars were identical: both were fought in behalf of, as Bush put it, the 'vital issues of principle' associated with world-order politics. In neither instance did concrete U.S. national interests necessitate fighting a war."

The following is a transcript of a conversation of Robert MacNeil with Zbigniew Brzezinski, National Security Adviser in the Carter administration, aired September 5, 1991, on the MacNEIL/LEHRER NEWSHOUR. (Permission to reprint granted by MacNEIL/LEHRER PRODUCTIONS.)

SERIES - THE LIGHT THAT FAILED

MR. MAC NEIL: On the day that historians may well record the old Soviet Union ended a new union began taking shape. We begin a series of occasional conversations on the question of why Communism failed. Our conversations will include those who fought Communism and those who've been sympathetic to the ideology.

MR. MAC NEIL: We turn now to Zbigniew Brzezinski, who was national security adviser during the Carter administration and is currently a counselor at the Center for Strategic & International Studies in Washington. He's the author of many books about foreign policy, the latest being "The Grand Failure, the Birth and Death of Communism in the 20th Century." Dr. Brzezinski, welcome.

DR. BRZEZINSKI: It's nice to be with you.

MR. MAC NEIL: We heard one deputy say just then that what happened today, this event, was the most significant in hundreds of years of Russian history. What do you make of the day they apparently undid the Soviet Union?

DR. BRZEZINSKI: Well, there is something to what he said because I assumed what he had in mind was the fact that this decision in many respects means the end of the Russian empire in addition to the end of the Soviet Union. The Russian empire came into being hundreds of years ago and, in effect, what the legislators today approved is the dissolution of that empire, the non-Russian nations have come into life. They have reached political maturity. And most Americans I don't think fully realize that one-half of the population of the Soviet Union represents non-Russian nations. And this is now the new reality.

MR. MAC NEIL: Let's turn not to the Russian empire but look back at the Soviet empire for a time. Your book title turned out to be very prescient. Why did Communism fail?

DR. BRZEZINSKI: That's a very, very good question and there are many reasons for it, but I would point to the following three or four as perhaps the most important. One, I think there was a fundamental misunderstanding inherent in Communism or Marxism of the nature of the human being. It underestimated the importance of the connection between creativity and acquisition of goods, in other words, a drive against property and trying to deprive people of their own property produced lethargy, passivity. It also underestimated the human being's need for something spiritual, its emphasis on atheism, deprived people of some transcendental believe. So one, psychology; two, I think Marxism misunderstood the nature of modern economics. It really was, after all, born in the 19th century in the early phases of the industrial revolution. It couldn't assimilate the need for complex integration but also a great deal of de-centralization inherent in the post-industrial society of mass communications and so forth. Thirdly, it underestimated the importance of nationalism, nationalism as a way for people to identify themselves in terms of larger collectivities, and, therefore, much of the resistance to Communism was also rooted in nationalism. And then finally I would place high on the list the historical accident of the connection between Communism and Russian despotism, the fact that the first Communist society in 1917 was planted on Russian soil with a strong autocratic tradition which was then reflected in Leninism and particularly in murderous Stalinism, all of which discredited Communism and ultimately led to what I call the grand failure.

MR. MAC NEIL: If it misunderstood human nature, it also appealed to another aspect of human nature, did it not, while it denied them the transcendental kind of idealism, it also appealed to a different kind of idealism, for instance, which early Christianity tried to perform or to live to, the sharing of goods, the working for the common good, and so on. If -- if Marxism-Leninism had been applied benignly and without the despotism, without the terror that Stalin brought, might it have had a chance?

DR. BRZEZINSKI: Yes. And, in effect, it has had a chance, because that is what social democracy's about. But it was pushing the idealism to an extreme and translating it into institutionalized coercive utopia, if you will, that produced the aberrations that we saw in the Soviet Union. It was, in fact, in my judgment, the strange linkage between idealism pushed in extreme and alleged Russianality pushed to irrational extremes the notion that you could build a perfect society according to a blueprint and in the process you were then justified to eliminate anyone from society who disagreed with you. I think all of that produced the tragedy and the crimes and ultimately the failure that we have seen.

MR. MAC NEIL: Since democratic socialism and Marxism shared some common tenets, at least early in the development of both, does the collapse of the Communist version discredit socialism, or does it give a fresh, give it a fresh legitimacy now that the taint with Communism is going to be removed?

DR. BRZEZINSKI: I think it emphasizes the importance of the connection between socialism and democracy which is, yes, socialism in the sense of some emphasis on the welfare, on minimum standards of well being, some collective responses to injustices, but in a setting of free choice, of democratic alternatives, and therefore also of the acceptance of the notion that a society ultimately to some extent has to be imperfect because imperfection is inherent in the human condition. If we eliminate the Manichean, the utopian elements in Communism, we have social democracy and that I think is a viable alternative.

MR. MAC NEIL: Is it likely to make socialism any more respectable in the United States, where it has never had -- it's -- at least after the 19th century grown very strong roots?

DR. BRZEZINSKI: I would think not in the short run because in the short run, inevitably, the failures of Communism rub off negatively against even social democracy. In the longer run, I do suspect that we also come to realize that the failure of Communism doesn't mean sanctifying the notion of capitalism, pure and simple, that social responsibility, that concern for the poor, that joint collective, democratic action by society to alleviate injustice and inequality has some justification.

MR. MAC NEIL: When you look around the world, can you say that for all the terror and the perversions of practice in his name that Carl Marx has done humanity some positive service?

DR. BRZEZINSKI: Well, that's very hard to answer without running the risk of being misquoted and distorted. I do think that in some respects Marx in a limited sense, but in a significant respect, focused attention on the need of modern society to address the problems of inequality, of poverty, of exploitation, of the unfair distribution of wealth. And in that sense, it was a positive contribution, but it wasn't his alone. But then his followers pushed it to the extremes that you and I have just talked about.

MR. MAC NEIL: Go back to the discussion of idealism a moment ago. If Communism suppressed, as you said, the acquisitive, competitive side of human nature and the incentives that those things carry with it, is it going to leave, and particularly among the older people of the Soviet Union, some legacy of unfulfilled idealism? After all, many of them, millions of them made enormous sacrifices in the name of this, of this ideal. What is it going to leave emotionally in the Soviet Union do you think?

DR. BRZEZINSKI: Oh, I think you have raised a very substantively important issue. I think there's going to be initially a great deal of emptiness, of feeling of purposelessness, then frustration, and then I suspect intense flights perhaps towards contradictory directions. Some might take refuge in intense religiosity. Some might turn to intense nationalism translated dangerously into chauvinism. I think there is going to be a quest for some new way of defining life's meaning beyond one's self. For that role was played for many, particularly for the two believers, by Communism, particularly during its earlier phases when people really believed in it. I think we have to take into account in the latter phases of Communism in the Soviet Union most of it was really translated into hypocrisy and mendacity and this was one of its weaknesses.

MR. MAC NEIL: Because even in Stalin's time some of the people who were executed by Stalin went to their deaths believing they were dying for something important, even though it had been perverted. Is that not true?

DR. BRZEZINSKI: That is true, but they were the true believers and they tried to endow their deaths with some meaning by convincing themselves that even though they're dying unfairly, their deaths had some utility for this ideal to which they were committed. But that in turn I think is a legacy of the 19th century. The 19th century was a century in which humanity was dominated particularly in terms of its forefront, West Europe spreading then to Russia, by the twin notions of commitment to idealism and simultaneously to utopianism. And the Russian Communists when they're building Communism in Russia, were trying to fuse the two, and that fusion then became perversion.

MR. MAC NEIL: Do you see some new ideology coming along to replace Marxism-Leninism?

DR. BRZEZINSKI: Not in the short run. I think that one of the characteristics of our age now is going to be a great deal of skepticism about anything that could be defined as an ideology, that is to say comprehensive blueprint for society based on some dramatic philosophical assumptions regarding human nature and the purpose of life. There may be, however, and I suspect that, in fact, there will be, great return towards some search for spiritual values, some form of modern religiosity, some attempt to endow our lives with a mission beyond ourselves.

MR. MAC NEIL: Did Communism -- did we defeat Communism, or did Communism defeat itself, I mean, we meaning all its opponents?

DR. BRZEZINSKI: Oh, I think we can, at the risk of being immodest, take some claim for what happened, but in a limited sense. I think what defeated Communism was essentially two things. One, we did prevent its spread by force. And that was very important, containment, and you had George Kennan here on the show not long ago, and that was important. But secondly, the fact that modern democracies more or less worked well in significant portions of the world while Communism was stagnating, increasingly failing, and eventually imploding contributed to the fate of Communism, the fact that some alternative model was really preferable and increasingly knew about it.

MR. MAC NEIL: Well, Dr. Brzezinski, thank you very much for joining us.

DR. BRZEZINSKI: Nice to be with you.

The following is reprinted from an article dated June 8, 1949, taken from the independent journal MANAS which ceased publication in 1989 following the death of Henry Geiger, the self-educated philosopher who, for over 40 years, almost single-handedly wrote and published it.

VOLUME II, No. 23 Fifteen Cents JUNE 8, 1949

THE FUTURE'S CUTTING EDGE

THE disasters which seem now to be overtaking the world are of a sort which politics is incompetent to deal with. Even politics in the best sense of constructive social theory is relatively helpless in the face of such problems as world hunger and malnutrition, the spread of mental disease, the general loss of a sense of human dignity, and the paralyzing fear of another world war. Neither the socialists nor the conservatives have shown any great prophetic insight regarding the kind of problems which will beset the world of tomorrow. The socialists predicted the downfall of capitalism, and the capitalists predicted that socialism would develop into a leviathan bureaucracy, and while we have seen some verification of the truth in both predictions, it is an empty satisfaction to be "right" about matters which may soon become irrelevant.

The fact is that there is no substantial difference between the concepts of value held by the radicals and the conservatives of modern industrial society, for both contend that material well-being is the highest good, or at least the essential foundation of the good life for human beings. It probably should be admitted that there is in one sense a great ethical difference, although this is arguable. The radicals insist upon a mechanical equalitarianism in the distribution of material well-being, while the conservatives maintain that equalitarianism in economics is a defiance of the partiality of Nature. Men are rich and poor, the conservatives say, by reason of *natural* law, and an attempt to alter the organic relationships of a "natural" economic system can only impoverish everybody while doing no one good.

But so far as we have any explanations at all of the symptoms of the disaster that seems to be approaching on the "wave of the future," they are non-political explanations. The famine and near-famine conditions existing in many parts of the world have no solution in political manipulations. Soil fertility and food are the roots of social existence and prior to its form of organization. Soil depletion and food shortages seem to be caused by basic human attitudes toward nature, and by the exhausting wars to which all the political systems of our time contribute impartially. Mental disorders and the pandemic spread of degenerative disease are characteristic of concentrated industrial and urban populations, wherever found—again, a development to which politics has been relatively indifferent. The modern radical movement is as much a product of the factory system as modern capitalism, and both depend upon the present organization of industrial society for their existence. Neither extreme of political opinion contemplates rejection of the assumptions and the technological program of industrialism. The labor movement, for example, is not averse to bigness in industry, but welcomes it. The bigger an industry, the easier it is to organize. Big industry stereotypes human beings by occupational conditioning, and stereotyped men function best as members of mass organizations. *Power* is the fundamental objective of all the political and social formations of industrial society, for the good that men seek is supposed to become easily available after power has been attained. Every politician, whatever his party or program, promises the voters the goods they want in return for the power he wants. Men in business seek profits because they think that with those profits they can buy power. As the requirements of the rise to power become more evident and more exacting, there is a corresponding decline in the human estimate of all other values. Eventually, when men arrive at the view that all good things in life result from the possession of power, even the common traditions of morality give way—or are "suspended"—to be restored after the necessary power has been obtained. But usually, they are forgotten rather than restored.

Political parties, then, are alike in their valuation of material well-being and in their common objective of power. They are also alike in the cultural resources upon which they draw. Physics, biology and psychology are politically colorless in their technology. The atom bomb, if they have one, will explode for the Russians just as it exploded for the Americans. There is not much difference in modern medicine, wherever it is practiced—not much difference, that is, in basic assumptions and techniques. And propaganda, which is modern psychology at work, is the same East and West. These sciences are all in feudal servitude to the ideal of "objectivity," which means, in practical terms, that nothing can happen in nature without a mechanical cause. Getting things done, scientifically, means doing things *to* people. It is this theory of matter, life and man, ruling out all spontaneity, which makes the practice of science safe and "regular"

and dependable. And when practical politicians turn to the sciences for ways and means to carry out their plans, they welcome these dependable methods.

Because the *means* afforded by our civilization—by our scientists and technologists—are regarded as having no moral content or implications, ethics has become a matter of the sentiments. Both social and personal philosophy must be erected upon the shifting sands of unmeaning natural phenomena. Meaning begins only with man, and responsibility, therefore, begins only with man. This view of man's relationships with nature leads to dwarfed and artificial conceptions of morality and to a compensating egotism which sees in nature only "things"—objects without meaning except to be used and thrown away by man. The psychology is that of a self-justifying usurper who recognizes no other logic except that of usurpation. To ravage and exploit the earth, endlessly, and without thought of the future, now seems "natural" to man.

It took some time for the habit of ethical thinking founded on transcendental conceptions to die away. Kropotkin, for example, in the nineteenth century, was still able to read in animal behavior the text of social ethics. He wrote his *Mutual Aid* to prove that the basis of a cooperative society of human beings already existed among animals and that a proper interpretation of evolution would supply all necessary ethical theory. But in the twentieth century, when the moral neutrality of science was more clearly recognized, another sort of credo became the typical expression. It may be represented by an often quoted passage from Bertrand Russell:

> That Man is the product of causes which had no prevision of the end they were achieving; that his origin, his growth, his hopes and fears, his loves and his beliefs, are but the outcome of accidental collocations of atoms; that no fire, no heroism, no intensity of thought and feeling, can preserve an individual life beyond the grave; that all the labor of the ages, all the devotion, all the inspiration, all the noonday brightness of human genius, are destined to extinction in the vast death of the solar system, and that the whole temple of Man's achievement must inevitably be buried beneath the debris of a universe in ruins—all these things, if not quite beyond dispute, are yet so nearly certain, that no philosophy which rejects them can hope to stand. Only within the scaffolding of these truths, only on the firm foundation of unyielding despair, can the soul's habitation henceforth be safely built.

There may be a despair which is "unyielding" in individuals, but there is certainly no unyielding mass despair of the sort Mr. Russell describes. A population which only suspects that this account of nature may be a true one is a population already deeply vulnerable to the naked politics of power. There is no reverence in it, no intuition of the sources of its fears and growing insecurities. These anticipations are in themselves the mark of a neurotic state of mind—of man alienated from meaning, and reduced to admitting only the undeniable reality of physical sensation, physical pleasure and pain and the hopes and fears that belong to this level of experience.

Such a population makes no qualitative distinction between lust and love, between courtship and rape. Mental health becomes the absence of self-questioning, and self-control, as the means to heightened consciousness, is seen as only a religious aberration. The martial virtues are lost in a welter of mindless slaughter—the more who are killed, the "braver" the victors.

These are only tendencies, of course, resisted half-consciously by many, and with full resolve by a few, but they are sufficiently characteristic of man in the mass to make possible such generalizations about this historical epoch. They are tendencies which represent the dregs of human attitudes and behavior, but today the dregs seem uppermost among the causes which affect human behavior in the mass. And as politics has to do with affecting the behavior of man in the mass, the politician who wants to be "successful" may find it difficult to conduct himself in ways which do not increase the power of these debasing tendencies. As for opposing them, he is practically helpless. The times call for a Savonarola, but should one arise, he would in all likelihood meet Savonarola's fate.

There is a curious analogy between the degradation of politics to a mere competition for unrationalized power and the transformation of religion from polytheism to monotheism. We commonly suppose that polytheistic religion is born of superstition and ignorance, and yet, from the viewpoint of the morality of power, there is a sense in which polytheism is far superior to monotheism. If there are many gods, many potencies or sources of causation in Nature, then there are laws to learn, processes to be understood, relationships to be defined. Or if, as some of the early Christians believed, and possibly Saint Paul himself, there is a Christos principle—a fragment or ray of the Logos—in every human being, instead of Christ being a single historical character, then a new dignity and potentiality is imparted to man, even as we know him. On this theory, democracy, or the idea of numerous political sovereigns, equal before the law, is much more consistent with polytheism or gnostic Christianity than the Jehovistic religion inherited by the West.

If one being has all the power, be he god or political leader, no philosophy, religious or social, is possible. For philosophy has to do with the disposition and regulation of power according to reason, and how men ought to use the power that is natural to them. Power as an end in itself is the destruction of philosophy, and therefore of both religious and political morality.

The infinite power of God is no more susceptible to reason than the infinite power of a political authority. The "reasonings" of a theology which postulates a God of infinite power are like the "social philosophy" of a Totalitarian State—neither can be questioned without challenging the power from which the reasoning and the philosophy flow. And this, of course, is the unpardonable crime, the sin against the Holy Ghost and the treason

against all earthly security. But it is also the eternal revolutionary act which rises in the breast of man—of every man who feels the impulse and recognizes the power within him to think for himself.

To meet the future which is already invading the present, then, we may find it necessary to revolt against the assumptions of all the political persuasions of our time, both Left and Right. It is the concept of Power which is devouring the world we live in, reducing our lives to mere mechanisms in the insane construction of a world security machine. Not only are our lives being twisted into patterns of passive conformity, but the planet itself bears the mutilations which have resulted from the struggle for power. Hills denuded of forests and plains yellow with dying fertility show on every continent where man has been, and gone. Battlefields are all about, pitting and blistering the earth's surface, as though portions of the earth, like the moon, had died away.

It seems inevitable that contemporary political ideas and controversy will soon lose their hold upon the minds of thinking people, and that new forms of the human struggle will emerge to come to grips with the problems that politics has consistently ignored. Politics, of course, has "talked about" these problems, but only in connection with the demand for absolute power. Give us *all* the power, the politicians say, and then we shall be able to establish the conditions under which there can be no famine, no neurotic disorders, no more war. But this is the one demand which human beings must reject, unless they plan to abdicate as human beings. Politics, as we know it, demands the location of power in an external authority, whereas the problems which confront us demand the relocation of power within individuals, and the development of a constructive philosophy of its use.