

To an Aldermaston Marcher

DEAR X,
I am delighted to hear that you have arrived safely in London from Aldermaston, and, oddly enough, I find myself in agreement with much of what you had to say about the march. Certainly, it provided impressive evidence for the existence of "progressive and idealistic youth," as Mr. Sidney Silverman put it. Certainly it might be said to prove that no sane man is in favour of nuclear weapons (personally, I had never thought that any sane man had much liking for them). No doubt, it will give Messrs. Macmillan and Gaitskell to think. Whether it will similarly affect Mr. Khrushchev and President Eisenhower is another matter; in Britain we have a tendency to think that our moral gestures are of importance to the outside world, but there is little evidence to support this belief. However this may be, the fact remains that you and your fellows of the rank and file have tried to do something about a catastrophe that threatens us all. You have protested against a coming Armageddon. I applaud your zeal, and I admire your motives.

I hope therefore (but it is probably too much to hope) that I shall not be denounced as a cynical supporter of reaction, if I say that the results of your action may not be quite what you expect. There are certain questions you have not considered, certain problems your leaders have not posed. To begin with, let me say frankly that I think you would be better off without some of those leaders. As I have said before, the devotion of such excellent men as Canon Collins, Dr. Donald Soper, and Mr. Sidney Silverman to any progressive struggle that happens to be going seems to me positively harmful to the individual causes they espouse. There may be a certain logic in being simultaneously in the forefront of the battle against Apartheid, Capital Punishment, and the Bomb, but, after all, good causes are not vitamin tablets to be joined in the same capsule and swallowed in the same gulp. Moral indignation is not to be bought in large economy packets, and those who try to dispense it in this way open themselves to the suspicion of being more concerned with the profits of the operation than with the therapeutic qualities of the preparation they are recommending. I hope your leaders are equally interested in all the campaigns they organise, but I fancy they have forfeited their amateur status.

However, all this is of minor importance, though not without significance. What is more serious (and, indeed, crucial) is a failure to clarify the aims of the campaign in which you

have been taking part. You will reply that its immediate object is to get Britain to give up its nuclear weapons, thereby saving money which might be put to better use, and also giving the world a moral example, which might lead to universal nuclear disarmament. And I should agree that there seems little point in our country possessing its own H-bomb and in pouring out money like water on missiles which are no sooner in production than obsolete. But can you stop there? We have heard a great deal about how, in the event of a nuclear war, Britain will be devastated and its population killed or sterilised, and, given its geographical position and its size, that is probably an accurate picture of what will happen. But simply giving up the bomb will not alter things one jot. If Britain is devastated, it will not be because it possesses its own nuclear deterrent, but because it is an ally of America in a war with Russia and because there are American bases here. And the question which I should like to put to the founders of the anti-nuclear campaign is: "Do they regard as one of their objectives a break with NATO and the American alliance?" For I take it that any hope that the Pentagon or the Kremlin will be suitably affected by a British renunciation of the bomb is chimerical.

Perhaps I am doing an injustice to your leaders: if Canon Collins' fiery oratory in Trafalgar Square has any meaning, it provides an answer to my question. "We in Britain are not going to have any more nuclear weapons or bases, or allies with nuclear weapons and bases." That is clear enough, and, though I shall quite understand if the Canon is disowned subsequently, I think I may take his words as some indication of what is behind the anti-nuclear campaign. What we are faced with is a campaign for the abandonment of NATO and the American alliance and for British neutrality in a possible conflict between America and Russia. That, as I have said, is clear, though it would be better were it to be stated openly. This policy means the end of present British alignments: the end of NATO, the end of close connections with the U.S.A., the end of the Western alliance in its present form.

Now it may be that these consequences of the anti-nuclear campaign are highly desirable, but I feel rather strongly that it would be as well if someone were to do a little thinking about them. For what is far from clear is where we go from there. What is to succeed the American alliance as the basis of British foreign policy? The logical thing would be a closer relationship to a Europe, which in time might become a neutral third force, but, since France has nuclear weapons, this presumably falls under the Canon's ban as well. What remains? A London-

New Delhi axis? That would at least have the advantage of a division of labour; Mr Macmillan could soothe Mr. Khrushchev, while Mr. Nehru applied moral suasion to Mr. Chou En-lai. Or perhaps your mentors feel that Britain has no need of allies at all? And here, I think, we touch on one of their weaknesses. Do not some of the ideas lying behind the anti-nuclear campaign strike you as a little parochial, a little chauvinistic even? The view that Britain can quite cheerfully exist in a total isolation dictated by its disapproval of other people's possession of atomic weapons is in itself absurd and priggish, but it is something which could never have arisen even as a possibility had the anti-nuclear policy-makers had any real idea of the world outside these islands. To take one simple example, their programme implies a trust of Mr. Khrushchev's good intentions which may or may not be justified, but which contrasts very strangely with their evident unwillingness to extend even a tithe of the same indulgence to Dr. Adenauer, whose record is considerably better.

Do not misunderstand me. I feel just as strongly about the nuclear threat as anyone else. But since the way the Aldermaston marchers propose to deal with it involves a total change in present British foreign policy, I think it is fair to ask them what they are going to put in

its place and to demand that it should be something more tangible than purity of heart.

I should like to think, my dear X, that these questions had occupied you on the road from Aldermaston and that you now have some idea of what you would like this country to do (rather than of what you would like it *not* to do). But I am afraid that the camaraderie of the bivouac and the cheerful euphoria of the march are not very conducive to thought. Mass movements are as much of a drug as cocaine and every bit as destructive of independent thinking. This might not matter so much but, unfortunately, some of your companions (fellow-travellers, should I call them?) are not as naïve as you. They know only too well what they want, and I am afraid that, for them, some nuclear powers are more nuclear than others. Now that you are away from the intoxication of the skiffle groups, you might give this and other matters your consideration. It is a harsh truth that in this world sincerity gets you nowhere, and that to arrive you must have some idea of where you want to go. In this sense the Aldermaston marchers have not even set out. Their progress is towards a void.

Wishing you, my dear X, a happy and, above all, a reflective year before your next march,

Yours sincerely,

Anthony Hartley

The Question of Imperialism

IT WOULD be an ungrateful author who questioned Professor Denis Brogan's extremely generous discussion [ENCOUNTER, May] of my recent book *The End of Empire*; it was, in fact, the most adequate discussion that the book has had in the British press. I am, however, glad to accept ENCOUNTER's invitation to make a few comments on, in particular, Professor Brogan's main criticism of the book. He points out that it almost completely omits to discuss Spanish America, as the prime example of "indirect imperialism"; of imperialism, that is to say, which, while it does not annex the territories in question, dominates them to a greater or lesser extent economically and politically. Professor Brogan's delightful instance of the parable of "The Mine" in Conrad's *Nostromo* shows how the process worked in South America.

There are several reasons why I virtually omitted Spanish America.

The first is, undoubtedly, "ignorance, Madam, sheer ignorance." The second is that there was already, in the opinion of most critics, and in my own opinion, too much rather than too little in the book. The book seemed to me doomed from the start if I attempted to summarise the histories of

even the major instances of modern imperialist expansion. It seemed to me that I would only make something of it if I took one major example as an illustration and described that in some detail. For a variety of reasons, which I give, I took India.

What to leave out of a book of this kind is perplexing. For example, in an excellent review in *The Economist*, the critic ended up by saying that, as I was evidently writing a full-dress foreign policy for the Labour Party, it was outrageous that I had said almost nothing about Europe. Europe, he complained, might have been so much *tundra* so far as I was concerned. The criticism would have been fully justified had I had the slightest intention of writing a foreign policy for the Labour Party. The book's purpose was to discuss the consequences of the sudden, dramatic, and still only partially realised, revolution of our times, namely, the dissolution of the great colonial empires. Its purpose was to discuss those consequences, partly for the newly-liberated territories, but, above all (because this seemed to me the more neglected theme) for the ex-imperial powers themselves.

But, of course, it is perfectly true that our relationship with Western Europe is, in fact, bound up