Wallace: Prophet or Politician?

BY FREDA KIRCHWEY

NOTHING that has happened since Henry Wallace declared his readiness to run for the Presidency on a third-party ticket has altered The Nation's view that the move is strategically unwise. If Wallace makes a strong run, he will very likely send a reactionary Republican to the White House and throw several good progressives out of Congress. If his showing is poor, he will present the country and the world with a demonstration of weakness in progressive ranks which will be unfortunate and in some ways deceptive. For many millions of progressives will decide not to "stand up and be counted" for Henry Wallace.

The Nation still believes that the attempt to launch a third party without solid labor support is foolish, and that the refusal of most of the big unions and their leaders to back the move reflects something more profound and less conscious than an expedient desire to choose the "lesser evil." Third-party movements in America traditionally emerge from economic tensions and dislocations too painful to be endured by masses of the people. Today, an anomalous situation exists: Americans feel, as Wallace says, uneasy and insecure; they sense dangers ahead. But at the same time, the industrial worker has a job and money to spend, and the farmer is richer than he has ever been. Even inflation has so far had little effect beyond stimulating new wage demands to meet or pursue the price rises. To start a party of protest in the face of this basic obstacle is to defy all precepts of strategic timing; it is also to hand over one's movement in advance to political forces—in this case, the Communists—whose decisions are controlled by interests unrelated to the needs and desires of Henry Wallace's "common man."

All this was clear before Mr. Wallace announced his intentions and outlined his program. But his statements last week deserve examination on their own account. First of all, they indicate that Mr. Wallace recognizes the hazards ahead of him. He knows it is a bad time to launch a new party, but he dismisses as "lukewarm liberals" those who are halted by such considerations. The fact that he himself argued against the wisdom of a third party only a few months ago does not bother him. He explains that he did his best to make the Democratic Party serve the cause of peace and prosperity; since it refused to accept his terms, he has been forced to take a new tack. "When the old parties rot, the people have a right to be heard through a new party."

Gideon's army was small and courageous and equipped only with lights and noise-making machines. In these respects, it was exactly like Henry Wallace's band of followers. But Gideon routed the hosts of the enemy and ruled for forty years. Therein lies the difference between the two leaders. This is not said in malice, Mr. Wallace, in spite of the Biblical example he chose, knows he cannot defeat the major parties. But it is important for progressives to understand why he intends to make the attempt.

The leader of the third-party-to-be is more prophet than politician. One may disagree with him and oppose him. One may believe that a person who is more responsive to his inner promptings than to the practical advice of his friends should stay out of politics. What one cannot do, without sacrificing decency to partisan

A Modern Isaiah

The world is one world. We have our Amoses crying aloud over the injustices of the social system, but we need in addition our Isaabs who perceive that the Lord is Lord of all the earth and that the application of spiritual power to a system of nationalistic or class enterprises is a negation of true religion. A modern Isaiah... would cry out against international injustices. He would go to the people of the different nations with his message and call for a New Deal among nations. He would do this with vigor and immense earnestness, even though from an immediate practical point of view his message might be premature.—From "Statesmanship and Religion," by Henry A. Wallace, 1934.
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The Nation

- interest, is to question his sincerity of purpose or his devotion to the progressive cause as he defines it. For Henry Wallace must proclaim his ideas of peace and democracy whether their time has come or not. If his new party gives aid and comfort to the reactionaries or serves as an instrument of the Communists or confuses and weakens the progressives, Mr. Wallace will undoubtedly be sorry. But to keep silent in the presence of a terrible challenge like that of today, to fail to speak his faith to the people, would be to him a sign of weakness. As for the Communists, they too are human beings; if they choose to support a movement for peace and a decent world order, who is he to reject them?

Mr. Wallace's broad criticism of the Truman Administration was effective. Most progressives, I believe, would agree with most of it. It is in the detailed application of his general remarks that differences arise—differences important enough to riddle his whole case for a third party.

Certainly, he is right in asserting that, under the present administration, inflation has eaten into the living standards of the people, monopoly has strengthened its control over industry, military influence in the government has enormously increased, and, most important, foreign policy has grown more and more reactionary. His complaint that the Marshall Plan has by-passed the United Nations and sharpened the division in Europe between East and West is basically justified. But it is on this critical point that Wallace’s general indictment breaks down under detailed scrutiny.

Let us see what Wallace says about the Marshall Plan, which is, after all, the keystone of the Administration's foreign policy and, therefore, of his attack upon it.

I fight the Truman Doctrine and the Marshall Plan, as applied, because they divide Europe into two warring camps. Those whom we buy politically with our food will soon desert us. They will pay us in the base coin of temporary gratitude and then turn to hate us because our policies are destroying their freedom.

We are restoring Western Europe and Germany through United States agencies rather than United Nations agencies because we want to hem Russia in. We are acting in the same way as France and England after the last war and the end result will be the same—confusion, digestion, and war.

When Secretary Marshall agreed, though belatedly, that Russia should be drawn into the discussions of his proposal at Paris, he abandoned the idea, if he had previously held it, of excluding Eastern Europe from American aid or of hemming Russia in. It was Molotov who decided, by walking out of the Paris conference, that Eastern Europe should be excluded. Why did he do this? Was it because Marshall was acting "through United States agencies rather than through United Nations
The Shape of Things

TERROR IN PALESTINE HAS REACHED THE stage where attacks and reprisals follow each other too swiftly to be chronicled. A communal war has emerged from Arab defiance of partition; Arab bullets kill Jews, and a few Britshers, but their war is against the United Nations. Since the government of Palestine has either lost control of the situation or is willing to let the killing go on as a demonstration of the impracticality of partition, the U. N. has an urgent obligation to send a force into Palestine to defend its decision. Contingents of regular troops contributed by several of the smaller nations, as proposed by Guatemala in the recent General Assembly, should be sent to the scene without delay. To arm Haganah is not enough. Even if the Jewish army, properly equipped, were able to restore order, it would be wrong and unfair to give it the task of crushing an Arab rebellion even before the Jewish state comes into being. And only a force representing the authority of the United Nations will convince the Arabs that violence will not defeat partition.

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WARREN AUSTIN HAS ANNOUNCED THAT common sense will be used on future occasions when the United States wishes to challenge the accreditation of foreign reporters at the United Nations. "Every effort should be made," he said, "to settle the matter by informal discussion without taking steps that might be construed as engaging in public controversy." Thus the damage that was done by our blundering arrest of newspapermen from an Indian and a Greek Communist newspaper has been partially repaired: But only partially. The State Department—through Mr. Lovett—has made it quite clear that it intends to say which foreign journalists assigned to the U. N. it considers welcome and which it does not; but from now on the say-so will be delivered sub rosa and diplomatically. This is known as setting an example of "freedom of the press" to a world in which it is so conspicuously lacking—except, of course, here at home.

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THE "WALLS OF THE SOUTHERN JERICHO," which A. G. Mezerik examines and finds somewhat shaky in his article on page 41, have been given a few sharp jabs in the days since he prepared his account. Judge Samuel A. Weiss of Pittsburgh refused to allow the extradition to Georgia of a twenty-six-year-old escaped Negro convict on the ground that it would "be signing his death warrant." The Supreme Court of the United States announced it would review the cases of nine Negro strikers who were sentenced to jail by an all-white North Carolina jury, and of Eddie "Buster" Patton, a Negro...