A Word to Mr. Wallace

BY FREDA KIRCHWEY

TO MR. TRUMAN, it must seem cruel and paradoxical that the threat to his candidacy should come simultaneously from opposite political directions. To see his Northern strongholds successfully invaded by Henry Wallace’s growing army and at the same time to suffer the wrath of the embattled Southern reactionaries is an ordeal the President is bound to resent under his new sun-baked smile. Hating each other, the two sets of dissidents have in effect united to bring him down and it has all happened suddenly, in the short space of an ill-timed holiday.

The crystallizing of anti-Truman feeling is described on the next page of this issue. But beneath the obvious facts a deeper process is going on. Political molds are breaking and reforming; in America, as in the rest of the world, one senses a shift toward left and right, a swelling dislike of things as they are and a fear of things as they may be. In this process, Wallace has come to represent the pressures toward change; Truman is hardly more than their victim, a small neutral figure who has lost meaning for liberals and conservatives alike. It is not that Truman is a worse President than he was two months ago when he still registered high on the public-opinion polls. Not even his recent bad record of dismissals and appointments or his pusillanimous handling of the Palestine problem would by itself account for the massive swing against him, though it surely helped lose the Twenty-fourth District in New York for the Democrats. The thing is more profound. We are witnessing, I believe, one of those popular revulsions of feeling that ultimately produce major political readjustments.

THE question is: how can progressives take advantage of the earthquake that has loosened Mr. Truman’s grip on his own party? As the cracks open under his feet and the Republicans prepare to take over, only a bold and concerted plan on the part of progressive political leaders will prevent catastrophic defeat for the liberal forces.

This goes for Mr. Truman and Mr. Wallace, and for the advisers of both. It is too late, in my opinion, to accomplish the liberal rehabilitation of the President. The time has passed when, in order to win the important states, it is enough to show that his program and intentions are more decent than those of the Republicans. Nor is it sufficient for Wallace to demonstrate that he can bring about a Democratic defeat. What is needed is a plan that will put a progressive in the White House and, in doing so, prepare the way for an alignment in which a reunited liberal force can hold power.

For Mr. Fitzgerald to demand an all-out attack on Henry Wallace as part of his effort to salvage New York for Truman and the Democratic Party, seems to me nonsensical. Appeasement is bad tactics in dealing with an enemy; it is essential in dealing with a disaffected ally. What is needed today is reunion, not war, among the elements of the independent left.

FOR many reasons, I believe the best chance of such a reunion lies in Wallace himself taking the initiative. Just because he has shown that he can probably encompass the defeat of his old party, he is in a unique position to help remake Democratic policy. However, to help his own ambitions may have mounted, Mr. Wallace is too good a progressive to take satisfaction in merely slipping the skids under Mr. Truman. He must believe that his larger mission is to assist in bringing about the basic political realignment which world events, and his own rebellion, have made possible.

Wallace can afford to be magnanimous since he holds the balance of power. If he will use his present leverage to bring about agreement with key liberals in the Democratic high command on a progressive candidate of unquestioned ability in place of Mr. Truman, offering to withdraw from the race and back such a man, his stature as a leader will be far greater than if he merely proves he can elect Mr. Taft or Mr. Dewey.

There are, of course, problems of policy to be solved before agreement can be reached. Mr. Wallace has burned a few bridges since he set his army on the march, but surprisingly few. He has not taken many irrevocable positions; his progressivism even today is eclectic rather than doctrinaire. He is campaigning against the E. R. P. because he believes, with much good reason, that it will be perverted to ends of power and political division in Europe. With a progressive whom he trusts at the head of the Democratic ticket in place of the well-meaning, pliable Mr. Truman, most of Wallace’s objections might evaporate. And so would those of millions of liberals who share his fears. As for his other chief plank, opposition to compulsory military training, a large part of the Congress, conservatives and liberals alike, of both parties, would be glad to duck the issue altogether until after election.

If these two problems can be resolved or tabled for the duration of the campaign, I see no reason why ground for united liberal action should not be discovered. Mr. Wallace could make the attempt without accepting in advance any unreasonable compromise.

Is this asking too much of the future third-party nominee for the Presidency? On the contrary, in my opinion it is offering him a unique opportunity to help bring about a necessary political revolution. The most Mr. Wallace loses is the chance to run a race which must end, if he does well, in his own defeat and that of
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his old party. He stands to win the leadership of that powerful "second party" he has so often advocated. He stands to unite, around a candidate agreeable to him, not merely his own independent following, but the C. I. O. Political Action Committee, the A. F. of L., the Brother-

hoods, the restive rank and file of the Americans for Democratic Action, and many millions of untagged, unhappy citizens who resist his third party but have no stomach at all for four more years of Harry Truman. Such a chance will not come his way again.

Must It Be Truman?

BY DALE KRAMER

Washington, March 4

THOSE tremors recorded on the political seismographs are Democrats asking each other: Will President Truman step aside and let the nomination go to a man with brighter prospects of victory? Two weeks ago the catastrophe date for Mr. Truman was set for November 9. Now a growing school of opinion holds that his descent into political limbo may occur in Philadelphia in July. Such speculation, at first confined to dreamy theorists, is being discussed with increasing openness in Congressional Democratic circles, among former New Deal leaders, in the C. I. O., and, most revealing, among local party bosses with probable strength at the convention.

The shift in Democratic thinking from "We're stuck with Harry" to "Why be stuck with Harry?" appears from off-the-record talks on Capitol Hill and elsewhere to stem from three fundamental sources—personal irritation with the President, political desperation, and the dispassionate conviction that Mr. Truman is simply not equipped to deal with the monumental problems of the times. When asked to explain the deterioration in the President's relations with Congress, the average Democratic member is apt to roll his eyes heavenward, sigh, and exhale loudly. "Mr. Truman, being a law-abiding man, sends messages to Congress promptly, as the system requires," one member told me, "but otherwise he forgets all about us." The astonishing fact is that neither of the minority leaders—Barkley of the Senate and Rayburn of the House—has been called to the White House since the present session of Congress was convened. Neither do Presidential emissaries pound the doors of Congressional offices, as they did in the days of Roosevelt. Party caucuses are rare, and strictly New Deal caucuses even rarer. Many Congressmen are convinced that the so-called Southern revolt could have been avoided, or at least effectively muffled, if Truman had bothered to consult a few of the more responsible Southern leaders in advance.

Until the Wallace victory in New York's Twenty-fourth District last month, the fears and irritations of Democratic Congressmen could still be assuaged by consulting the public-opinion polls. The people seemed to like plain Harry in spite of everything. But the Bronx vote was a severe jolt, and quick soundings of other constituencies were equally disturbing. Liberal incumbents took no comfort from the Wallace argument that his candidacy would help them by getting out a big vote. Even if the threat to file third-party candidates is not carried out, the recrimination certain to come from both sides will seriously embarrass and may defeat the Congressmen caught in the middle. Some of the best members may not seek reelection. In the resulting discontent Truman has had to take much of the blame. Bitterness is so widespread, in fact, that practically everyone in the House has been chuckling over the cloakroom gibes of Gene Cox, of Georgia, who suggested that Truman's best chance is to talk Wallace into giving him second place on the third-party ticket.

Away from Capitol Hill intra-party opinion with respect to the President has undergone a similar curdling. And here, too, the charge is made that Mr. Truman has become too remote, too sealed off by the palace guard. The men around Roosevelt, they say, were glad-handers compared with the dour entourage that hems in Mr. Truman. "We just throw messages over the wall," one high-level politician complained to me, "and hope for a reply." In the circumstances the feeling appears to be warranted that the President is not getting a rounded picture of what is going on in the country. The existence of a palace guard is bothersome in any case, but the picture is downright disheartening when the guard is made up of such third-raters as Snyder, Vaughan, Vardaman, and Steelman.

The "Wallace thing"—the customary designation in Washington for the third-party movement—has frightened the party bosses at least as much as it has upset Democratic members of Congress. And there appears to be little inclination to throw the blame for the Bronx fiasco on Ed Flynn. The boss's task, after all, is to analyze the yearnings of his district and to do his best to match