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### THE "COLD WAR"

As there is irrationality in every human situation, so there must be elements of irrationality in the political rivalry called the "cold war". (a) Can they be detected? (b) Could they be brought to the attention of some of those involved with any hope of producing modifications?

Of the two parties to this rivalry, there is little doubt that the West is accessible, i.e. those participating in the process of government and those operating the organs of public discussion are occasional readers of a wide range of publications in which political psychology can be, at least, summarily discussed (Encounter, Observer, and their local equivalents.) Their state of mind, is in many cases, not so emotional or irrational that they would be quite unwilling to consider evidence if it was reasonably presented.

The broad evidence of irrationality in this particular relationship of the "cold war" is, in part, fairly obvious. If the world were to blow itself up over a disagreement of the size and character of the recent disputes over Berlin and Cuba, that would be an irrational act. It is, of course, quite possible that such an event might be forced on one side by the uncontrollably irrational attitude of the other. But it is also possible that, if one side is relatively free of irrationality, it may be able to handle its dealings with the other in such a way as to avoid such an event.

Is the more accessible side, i.e. our side, so free of irrationality as not to be worth studying? On the face of it, this does not seem to be the case.

Irrational ideas of sufficient strength to cause serious miscalculations can easily be seen among many who influence public opinion in America; and public opinion is a powerful factor in conditioning United States government policy.

There is, for example, a strong tendency in America to think of the "cold War" rivalry in unreal terms of absolute Good and Evil or absolute Right and Wrong. Comparatively few Americans can bear to hear themselves and the Russians discussed in the manner common in Britain (i.e. as being in some respects comparable rivals) without making a more-or-less sharp protest. There is relatively little willingness in America to notice that important changes have occurred in Soviet society since the death of Stalin. During the Berlin crisis of Summer 1961, it was usual to represent Krushchev in editorials and cartoons as the spiritual heir to Hitler (as Nasser was represented here at the time of Suez) and this occurs, also, when there is no special crisis. After the recent Cuban crisis, Adlai Stevenson was publicly attacked for allegedly having advocated a settlement by negotiation rather than by the use of force and was largely defended on the grounds that he had not done this, rather than that it was the right thing to do. All the above attitudes could, in certain circumstances, be dangerous.

An even more striking example of irrationality in American public thinking is the fairly widespread belief that there is an internal domestic Communist threat to their society. This persists despite all evidence to the contrary and colours public thinking on world affairs.

If these and other such factors in American public thinking could be dispassionately studied, the effect might make a valuable contribution to assisting our side of the "cold war" rivalry handle the other side with heightened sanity.

One difficulty in carrying out this proposal is that Americans involved in such a study would be liable to be discredited as being appeasers, soft-boiled, un-American etc.: The effect of their work would be liable to be misrepresented as being likely to weaken America in the "cold war". This illusion may be a major difficulty; but it is also an indication of the serious need to attempt this work.

A parallel study should also be made of Soviet society, despite the far greater difficulties of making it and very limited possibilities of disseminating it in Russia.

I would not propose that studies of "cold war" irrationalities should be given any special or strained relationship to a study of the Third Reich. Affinities would undoubtedly be found in both camps - the quality of the anti-communism of the John Birch Society, the "millennialism" of the Communists. Clearly, studies of "cold war" irrationalities would be greatly helped by a previous study of the Third Reich.

I can only imagine all this being done with any hope of success if it is part of a broader study of the political psychology of mankind in general.