

Social Science and World Order

By ALVIN JOHNSON

CONSIDER THE WORLD as it stands today. It is not a quieting world. A great war has been won; but the end of war has not meant the establishment of peace on a basis that fills any of us with confidence. In whatever direction we look, to Asia or Africa or old Europe, or even toward the heart of our American life, we encounter grave problems.

If security and ease of mind are the essential items in the heart's desire, I can offer only commiseration. There will be little security in the next two decades. The winds of history will blow from every quarter, often as devastating hurricanes. But one who looks upon the present in the light of history may be confident that out of the existing chaos a new cosmos is forming, a cosmos in which man will enjoy a richer life than ever before.

A world cosmos is now within the scope of practical possibilities. But this new cosmos will not come of itself, but by the tireless and unremitting efforts of men and women of intelligence and good will. The task is too gigantic for the powers of any single leader, superstatesman though he might be. It demands the loyal co-operation of all of us. And it demands particularly the faithful service of those who have enjoyed the privilege of training in the social sciences.

There was a time, in the not remote past, when a wide gulf yawned between science and practical affairs. The hard-headed business man was willing to maintain the scientist, but as a luxury among other luxuries that wealth could afford. The physical sciences did on occasion produce ideas that might ripen into profitable inventions. The social sciences were not

as a rule meshed with any useful inventive process. At best, they helped people to understand the economic and social process that proceeded by its own inherent power.

All that has changed. Science today is in the saddle. We look to science and its Cinderella sister, technology, to win our wars and establish the basis of our welfare. We look to the social sciences to help us resolve the conflicts among men, international and domestic. We have learned by bitter experience that these conflicts do not settle themselves. They can be adjusted only by human will and human intelligence.

All around the world we see social scientists drawn into the public services. The Army needed economists, sociologists, psychologists, anthropologists, men and women trained in finance, in social administration. The Armies of Occupation, in Europe and the Far East, need them still more. Social scientists are needed by national and state governments in our increasingly complicated economic system.

For those of us who wish to retire from active life the world we see ahead of us may be far from reassuring. We cannot foresee the early establishment of a fixed order, good or bad, in which man may live in serenity. But for those who are entering upon the active life of science, the world of the future is one of unlimited opportunity. They are drafted, each to do his part in bringing order out of chaos, in building a world in which men shall be more free than ever they were before, in which peace shall prevail, in which nation shall collaborate loyally with nation to create the superb edifice of a genuine world civilization.

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