

## After the Ball

With new and perfect, seen on film materials  
the poet's mother-in-law thinks are swell.

So much for America, let it sweep in grand style  
up the avenues of its failure. Let it promenade smartly  
beneath the marquees of its despair.

Bells swing lazily in New Mexico

towns. Where the wind celebrates

hanging their messy sheets  
in slow motion against the intrepid dust  
or the silence

which they cannot scare.

Le Roi Jones

vide social services combined with local supervision."

He goes on to record how crime has been stamped out. "Thieves and pickpockets were formerly as common in Chinese cities as in America today." A friend in New York City had a hi-fi set and typewriter stolen from his apartment in broad daylight. In China such an incident would "shock a whole street into immediate action."

Snow then states that "Nowhere today are people more regimented, more disciplined, and more quickly brought to order by other citizens in instances of public misbehavior." The situation in New York is left looking shabby, which it may well be, but many Americans—and other people elsewhere—would rather run the risk of petty theft and even greater crimes, however deplorable, than live in a society where neighbor informs on neighbor and the same committeeman (or woman) keeps the census, oversees rationing, settles domestic quarrels and dabbles in thought remolding—all under the Ministry of Public Security. In public affairs, as in individual life, something is likely to be lost when something else is gained.

There is undoubtedly an inclination in this country to reduce Communist China to a gross caricature, but in correcting the picture there may be some virtue, also, in keeping precisely clear what it is we are re-evaluating. One need not extol the Kuomintang regime or expect Western-style democracy in China. There are historical, economic, sociological and psychological explanations for the course of events. But human freedom and so-

cial justice are vital issues of this century, and we ought to keep our concepts and definitions straight. Then whoever prefers or feels impelled to justify "people's security committees" will be clear what he is about—and we in the non-Communist world will be better able to judge just exactly where we stand.

Elsewhere in Snow's book the suggestion is made that not only China, but even the Western democracies, are ruled by "the few" rather than "the many."

As the author points out, every country is ruled "by a few." The world would probably be in even worse chaos otherwise. But that is not the essential point, if the issue is to be argued (and Snow *does* argue it). The issue lies in the degree to which this "few" receives its mandate from the "many," the degree to which this "few" is limited from undue exercise of arbitrary power, and the degree to which less influential minorities are actively protected—by the office-holding few—both from the vast majority and also from "the few" themselves.

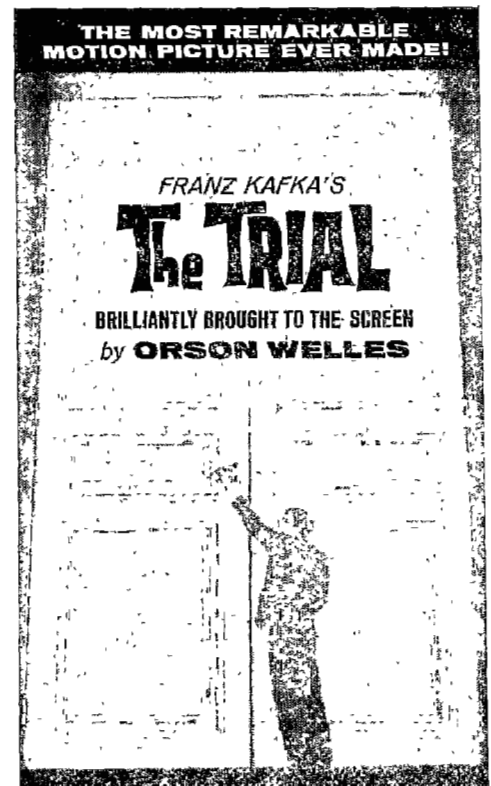
Recently, despite our many grievous inadequacies, the top office-holding "few" in Washington put the whole official prestige and a remarkable portion of the armed force of this country behind the entrance into a state university of a single Negro student who was being blocked by some of the local "few" and some of the local "many."

We in the Western democracies perpetrate our share of injustices, but when we do, it is because we are misusing our system—and not because

democracy demands their perpetration. In a system based upon the as-

China if they did not raise serious questions concerning the author's analysis of the regime itself. After the world's experiences with Mussolini's Italy, Hitler's Germany and Stalin's Russia, there should be no more doubt that superb organization, improved sanitation, spectacular work efficiency, the ability to make trains run on time (or abolish flies), the building of schools, the marshaling of mass projects and even the stimulation of mass enthusiasm do not necessarily equal either political or social justice.

Edgar Snow has written a powerful and engrossing book. With more discrimination and restraint and self-disciplined analysis he might have written a great one. Few men of our time have had a better background or an equal opportunity for producing a truly magnificent work.



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