

However, industry is also experiencing severe difficulties. Raw-material shortages have forced the curtailment of industrial operations and plant shutdown in many cases. It is increasingly evident that the transfer of workers from industry to agriculture was prompted more by the emergence of redundant labor in industry than by the desire to help agricultural production. The Chinese press has in recent months strongly urged greater effort to economize on labor in industry and construction, attacking, among other things, a tendency to hoard admittedly excess labor against the day when it may again be needed.

The Chinese now clearly recognize

that agriculture must be revived and developed before they can get very far with industrialization. They now refer to a "long-term process" rather than an evolution that can be accomplished in one or two "great leaps." However, nothing in the Communist record in the agricultural field in China or elsewhere provides ground for optimism about the ability of the present regime to develop a strong and flourishing agricultural base. The voices of those who so enthusiastically hailed the victory over hunger and the dawn of a bright new epoch on the basis of exaggerated reports of a single harvest have long been silent. They have been replaced by more somber tones such

as those emanating from China's Vice-Premier, Chen Yi, who on the eve of the May Day celebrations in Peking stated that the Chinese people are soberly aware that their country is culturally backward and economically poor and that it will take several decades of bitter struggle to turn China into an advanced, prosperous and powerful Socialist country.

The question is, how do the Chinese peasants and workers, who so recently were promised the imminent dawn of the millenium, reconcile themselves to this gloomy prospect? Perhaps the answer is found in the inundation of Hong Kong by 60,000 refugees last May.

THE KENNEDY CULT . . by Sister Mary Paul Paye

THE GENTLEMAN smiles, the youngster sidles up to a pony on the lawn, the lovely lady bows. Cameras click, tape-machines whirl, and the American public is exposed again to that dangerous phenomenon: the personality cult of the President. I protest — vehemently, vigorously, apolitically and almost alone.

Three threats are inherent in this constant projection of the personal image of the President: the suppression or the obscuring of significant news; the amassing by the President of personal power; and — most insidious of all — the irrational worldwide identification of him with the country as a whole. We all — mass media and mass audience — could well pause to assess the ramifications of what less sophisticated societies termed hero worship, a phenomenon that, in our own electronic age, has become both more complex and more potent.

Because of the cult of personality, to the average man everywhere Mr. Kennedy has become synonymous with the United States; his victories

are American victories; his health, American health; his smile, his family, his hobbies, his likes and dislikes, become symbolic of the country. And the danger of this equation is that should the President fail, then the country fails; should he make a mistake, the country errs.

This identification of the nation with its Chief of State was clearly evident at the time of President Roosevelt's election for the third and fourth terms, and also at the time of his death in office. It was evident when Mr. Eisenhower suffered a heart attack. As a single recent example, it was militantly apparent when Mr. Kennedy addressed the assembled nations of the world at the U.N.

A President is not the country. Mr. Kennedy is not the United States. If he should fail, as well he may, the country will not disintegrate. But if the personality cult continues, if it increases during coming administrations, it will be very difficult to convince the people of that fact. And in the measure that the cult grows, the tendency will grow stronger to elect Presidents not on the basis of reason, but on the basis of the emotional pull the candidates engender.

A combination of causes has conspired to bring the personality cult

to full strength in the current decade. Experts agree that changes in American society have made it necessary for a Presidential candidate to appeal directly and personally to the mass of politically unaligned voters; thus, when elected, he can maintain a certain independence vis-à-vis his party. The trend, in other words, is away from government by party toward government by a personalized Presidency. Mr. Kennedy has exploited this tendency to a greater degree than any of his predecessors. Unlike Mr. Eisenhower, for instance, he uses the mass media directly to project his personality to the people; and to the degree that he appoints non-political men to decision-making offices, he stifles the political personalities of others.

It's time to examine the effect of this situation upon the collective public mind.

THE President and his family are naturals for publicity, and journalists have not been slow to exploit the color, the drama, the human appeal that emanate from the White House. No day passes without the appearance of some news or feature about the Kennedy clan, and while I admit that some of the items revealed are interesting or amusing, much is of

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questionable value. In this category fall recently published articles on the following subjects: the President's preferences in clothes (illustrated, with sizes and patterns); the man who "trims" the President, the barber; the life in the White House of the puppy sent to Mrs. Kennedy by Khrushchev; the President's salary and his budget ("He and Jacqueline are determined to get along on his Presidential pay—of course, they don't *have* to" is the tagline on this). On a slightly higher level are scores of articles like those about the trips abroad by Robert and Mrs. Kennedy, the plans for refurbishing the White House, the cultural interests of the family, the entertainment of distinguished guests (down even to the kind of napkin-folding employed at the White House dinner parties).

Galleys of type and yards of picture spreads about the birthdays of the children, the social affairs of the First Lady, the horsemanship of a sister, the recreational habits of the Attorney General's family, feed the public's desire to know all about the White House inhabitants. Everything goes to deepen the cult.

THAT the mass media should so exploit the President and his family for circulation purposes is serious enough. But I submit that even more dangerous implications arise: the danger of the imbalance of news. In newspapers and on the air, time and space are limited and every inclusion means a corresponding exclusion. Important events and decisions may well be obscured in the welter of feature material. And, even when significant news is reported, as prisoners of the cult we may be tempted to overlook it. Readers, too, are pressed for time; and too often they prefer to be amused rather than informed. Who doesn't gravitate toward the human-interest story, per-

haps to the neglect of the duller but more significant news?

The Christmas illness of the President's father is an example. Is it heartless to suggest that the event was woefully overplayed, that the international involvements of the United States became no less worthy of reporting because the elderly Mr. Kennedy had suffered a stroke? A spot check of newspapers reveals that the Kennedy story crowded out, in many cases, the following important international developments: Nehru's stand on Goa, and Tshombe and the Katanga peace talks. Most papers gave "number one" treatment to the President's talks with Prime Minister Macmillan. But because of the emphasis that had been placed upon the father's illness, is it unreasonable to suggest that for many Americans the vision of the "anxious son" in conference became more important than the conference itself?

This is no imputation of machination or of deliberate preying upon public sentiment by the President or his associates. It exemplifies, rather, the furtherance of the cult through circumstances beyond the President's control. But whatever the cause, the effect is the displacement, or downgrading, of significant events.

Stemming from this overemphasis on personality is the danger of the amassing of personal power. A grievous error was made in the American press regarding Fidel Castro, who survived in the media as a hero for a rather long period. If the same kind of mistake had been made by the American people in selecting President Kennedy, how long would it have taken for the media's projection to reverse itself and present the true picture? But such a situation, you will say, could never arise in a democracy.

Or could it? As President, F.D.R. had a powerful impact upon the pub-

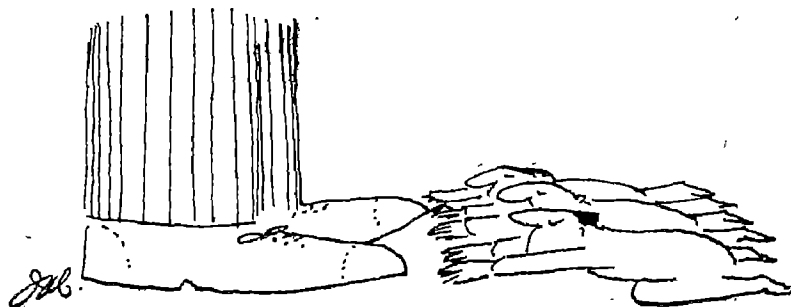
lic. He was able to bring about action which would have been rejected if proposed by another; his personal magnetism obtained agreement to treaties and policies which were greeted with cheers when they should have been examined critically and unemotionally. The same was true during the Eisenhower administration, when the public repeatedly absolved the President of responsibility in actions for which he should have been held to some degree accountable.

For the sake of argument, I am willing to concede that President Kennedy will never consciously be guilty of duplicity or of evil or even of error. But even in argument it must be admitted that he will act. His actions should not be judged emotionally, but on the basis of reason.

WHILE the political trend may be toward a personalized Presidency, with the substitution of career experts for politicians in key positions, certain facts are still true. No individual is capable of managing all aspects of government. The nation and the cult to the contrary, there are other politicians whose opinions and actions are essential. Truth is not served, nor the common good, if these men are not adequately reported by the mass media.

This is not to imply that the press is in any danger of approving all President Kennedy's proposals. But the media may cast a cloak of oblivion over political figures who in other times would be prominent in the public eye. Granted that the President makes decisions and that the decisions are news; others make decisions, too, or have opinions worthy of publication. Now, as elections draw near, other politicians do capture a share of publicity, but the Kennedys obtrude successfully even here.

Since 1960, probably the only politician who competed noticeably with Mr. Kennedy for publicity was the late Speaker of the House, Sam Rayburn. During his illness, he briefly captured the spotlight on the national stage; daily bulletins, eulogies, reviews and features about his impressive public record had prime coverage. But he was dying, and



then dead, and the divided waters of the cult converged again upon Mr. Kennedy. Strong words, I admit, in a situation in which it is difficult to be objective. But they emphasize the extent of the monopoly and the readiness of the press and the public to accept it.

The cult has its causes in current social and political trends. It is caught in a conveyor belt: the supply increases the demand and the demand increases the supply. Pressures far removed from politics further it, for it is influenced by insecurity, by

the anonymity of the man in the crowd, the public desire for status — even if vicarious.

The cult is dangerous because it seems as innocent as a baby's picture, as simple as a man's smile, because it is public and yet unseen. Even if events conspire so that no limitation of freedom occurs because of it, it is still an appalling trend; for it is symptomatic of an American disease: mental apathy.

The best defense against it is awareness, by the President, the public, the press. The White House

— elections or no elections — should guard itself more stringently against frivolous reporting. Editors and program directors should weigh news and features for inherent value. And the American people — all of us — should be aware that we are beginning to respond to the Chief of State as we have responded to movie stars — and as other nations have responded to their monarchs. Adulation of a monarch or a star may be permissible; similar treatment of a President, considering the power he wields, can never be.

Taxation With Misrepresentation . . by R. Peter Straus

AT THE Constitutional Convention of New York State in 1894, the hall rang repeatedly with a peculiar kind of rhetoric. "A sewer of ignorance and corruption," was the phrase of one rural delegate as he spoke of the people of New York City. "The average citizen of rural New York," said another delegate from the countryside, "is superior in intelligence, morality and self-government." The people of the big city, chimed in still another spokesman for the upstate counties, "are unfit for citizenship."

Just what brought forth all this solemn abuse from the great pasturelands of New York State, directed at the entire population of what was already the greatest city in the land? It was all pretty simple. New York City in 1894 was growing faster than ever before or since in its history. The imminent consolidation of the five counties posed the prospect of a single municipality which might soon have a clear majority of all the people in the state. Now, while rural delegates still had the power to write the rules of government, was the time to make sure that the big city could never control the state through the immense voting strength of its great and growing population.

Into the state constitution went the entire apparatus of discrimination against New York City which

operates to this day. On their face, the 1894 provisions for apportioning the two-chamber Legislature appear quite innocent. The chief guarantee of upstate rule in the Assembly (the lower house), for example, is the requirement that every county except two have at least one seat all to itself. This is coupled with a limitation of the chamber to exactly 150 seats. By the time upstate counties having fifteen, twenty or thirty thousand people get *their* seats, a fairly high proportion is accounted for. The remainder are then apportioned as additional seats for the bigger counties according to population, and New York City gets the lion's share of these. But it's too late at that stage to disturb the rural voting power in the chamber created by all those single seats assigned to upstate counties with a third, a fifth and even a tenth the population of an Assembly district in New York City. Similar rules laid down in 1894 insure that Senate districts in the city encompass far more people than those upstate, thus guaranteeing upstate control of the upper house as well.

After nearly seventy years, discrimination against New York City requires no special effort on the part of the rural power in Albany when, after each federal census, the time comes to reapportion. The rules are all laid out in the constitution. The mandate is clear. If the upstate majority in the Legislature were to delegate its apportioning powers to

Mayor Wagner himself, there is no way in which he could give New York City a stronger voice in the state body than it now gets.

OVER the years, this over-representation of upstate New York has hurt the city in many ways. What might be called the dollar-gap in the flow of funds to and from Albany is easily the most irritating issue. New York City, with its highly taxable big corporations and the highly taxable incomes of its executives and white-collar workers, supplies well over half the revenues of the state. When the state gets around to spending its money, however, only a relatively small share of its great annual largesse to local communities trickles back across the city line.

Just as in the case of apportionment itself, the discrimination against the city in state aid is based in every case on formulas which have an apparent foundation in equity. Take, for example, the vexing matter of aid to education. School aid is a function not only (in direct proportion) of a community's public-school attendance but (inversely) of the assessed valuation of its real estate. Real estate is made a factor on the grounds that communities with relatively high total assessments are in a better position to support their schools by local taxes than those whose total assessments are low. In effect, this means that, over a long period of years, New York

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