

worldview

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NEW DIRECTIONS?

A great change in the United States Congress took place on November 4 and analyses of it will continue in the months ahead. Depending on their own politics and prejudices, commentators will see it as a shift of the American electorate to the "left," as "a victory for youth over age," as a vote for "moderation," or merely as the mass expression of a vague discontent.

Each of these explanations, and several others, are probably in a sense true. In democratic societies public events are seldom decided on the basis of single issues, and historic shifts, when they happen, happen mostly *per accidens*.

It is doubtful, for example, that in electing an overwhelmingly Democratic Senate and House this month, the American voters were registering a coherent repudiation of past U. S. policies and demanding new policies for the future. They surely acted from a complex of motives. But the effect of their action (and this is what is important) is to make possible redirections in American policy more basic than any since 1946.

What has happened, in fact, is the virtual annihilation of the hard-core, stand-pat, isolationist powers in the Senate. Only a few years ago they were a force to make internationalists tremble. Where are they now? Senators Jenner, Knowland and Martin have retired. Senators Bricker, Malone, Barrett, Rivercomb and Watkins have gone down to defeat. In each of these instances, and others, the senatorial replacements are men of a more internationalist view. In the new Senate the few isolationist legislators will stand as lonely monuments to a power that is past.

The new possibilities for redirection probably do not mean *radical* change in United States policy. This nation, after all, has had a bipartisan foreign policy, in most important areas, for over a decade now, and (ironically) radical change occurs in America more rarely than it does in almost any other modern society. Those who hope that a "liberal" Congress will chart for

America such a course as might be planned by the editors of the *Nation* will be greatly disappointed. But in the new Congress there will almost surely be changes in emphases, and these changes, though they may be subtle, could make all the difference for the cause of freedom in the Cold War. In the area of foreign policy, several possibilities of major importance immediately suggest themselves.

One possibility is the question of Red China. This is a question that, for almost a decade, has been shrouded in darkness and dogmatism. For a number of reasons (none of them plausible) it has not been open even to discussion in American public life. There may be no radical change in our China policy during the next two years, but it now seems reasonably certain that the time of great silence is ended. We will now be able at least to debate the wisdom of our past policy and the advantages of a new one.

Because, though a free society can survive many misfortunes, one thing it probably cannot survive is an attempt to freeze history into the hard mold of dogma. A policy that might have been wise in one decade may be folly in the next. In planning its future, a nation can seldom say "never." It must leave open for itself the widest possible area of choice.

The shocking thing about our China policy since 1950 is not our failure to recognize Red China. (This is a question which has yet to be decided.) The shocking thing, rather, is the till-now successful attempt to shut off even the possibility of recognition. In the new Senate this dogmatism will certainly die. And this is a hopeful sign for our future.

Another possibility that now becomes real is a greater emphasis in Congress on economic rather than on military aid. The new majority in the Senate will be more sympathetic than were past majorities to long-term economic assistance, and it will be much less insistent that this aid be tied

to military strategies. Several of the new Senators, in fact, are already on record as committed to the fight for a more vigorous, more generous foreign economic policy, and each of them has replaced a Senator who was dead set against "give-aways."

There are other probabilities. In the last session of Congress, for example, Senator Kennedy fought hard for an amendment which would have allowed the Administration greater freedom in its economic policies toward countries behind the Iron Curtain. This amendment was defeated by one vote, but Mr. Kennedy has announced that he will reintroduce it in the new Congress and this time it will surely pass. And the tortured problems of national defense—of nuclear versus conventional weapons—will certainly be re-examined next year.

This should not be a period, then, for inaction—for that traditional time of futility during the last two years of an administration when it is opposed by a hostile legislature. Our world moves too rapidly to allow us the luxury of inaction. The next two years, given the Congress that has been elected, should be a time for constructive redirections, for flexibility, imagination, and hope.

JOHN XXIII

"Liberal" and "conservative" are relative terms, generally meaningless as definitions of a man's political views. As definitions of religious positions, these terms have even less value. And as definitions, specifically, of positions within Roman Catholicism they probably have no value at all. Because here, in the Church of Rome, there exists a clearly defined body of doctrine, and a man either accepts it or does not accept it, is a Catholic or is not a Catholic—period.

But the liberal-conservative labels continue to be applied, even to Roman Catholics. And they do communicate a certain truth, if it is understood that they describe a man's approach to the world rather than any "degree" in his acceptance of the essentials of Catholic doctrine. In this sense there may even be a certain truth in the "liberal" description which has been widely applied to Angelo Roncalli, who now reigns as John XXIII.

Before the opening of the Conclave which elected the new Pope there was much (inevitable) speculation. Some of it seemed informed, some of it seemed mere gossip, and none of it could be, or probably ever will be, confirmed. But

in all of the most responsible reports from Rome, published in European and American journals, three prelates were consistently mentioned as the candidates of the "liberals" or "innovators" as opposed to those listed as the choices of the "conservatives" or "traditionalists" in the Conclave.

The three reported "liberal" choices were Montini of Milan, Lecaro of Bologna, and Roncalli of Venice. And the last-named, the seventy-six-year-old Patriarch of Venice, was said to be the special choice of the six French Cardinals, who had known, loved, and revered him when he served as Papal Nuncio to France after the war. When the election of Cardinal Roncalli was announced from the balcony of St. Peter's, therefore, the event seemed to promise a "liberal" reign.

Only those who know nothing of history would make too much of such a promise. The Pope is the Pope. He is the living exponent of an ageless tradition and his vocation is to conserve and defend that tradition, not to diminish it or casually to accommodate it to the spirit of any age.

But even within the rigidities of the Roman tradition there is room for an infinite variety of approaches. Before the Conclave began, Cardinal Roncalli wrote his seminarians in Venice to say that, whoever was elected Pope, the new reign should not be a mere continuation of former reigns—no matter how glorious they had been. The new Pope, he said, must show forth the "eternal youth of the Church."

In the first pronouncement after his own election, John XXIII identified his cause with the cause of peace and of the poor, and at his coronation he invoked as his special model St. Charles Borromeo, one of the great reformers in the history of the Roman Catholic Church.

It seems clear that, working for peace and justice, the new Pope will indeed be a "liberal"—a man open to the best insights of his time. In this seventy-six-year-old Pontiff, the Church of Rome has elected a youthful Pope.

EDITOR'S NOTE: *Because of a change of printers various delays have occurred in the publication of this month's Worldview and copies will reach subscribers later than is usual. With next month's issues, however, the printing and distribution of the journal will return to schedule.*