

niflheim

I didn't really intend to put anything into a SAPS mailing until I made it up into the active membership ranks, but Walter Breen changed my mind by making some remarks about me in SAPTERRANEAN last mailing. I thought I might as well say a few words in my own defense.

Actually, of course, there's nothing much to defend. No arguments were advanced against my views; only some rather sneering language purporting to describe my position. This is legitimate enough if your purpose is defamation of character; or winning converts to a Cause; it has nothing to do with rational discussion and argument.

Apparently Breen knows nothing about my views except what he has seen in that one letter in DISCORD, and equally apparently he equates "non-pacifist" with "conservative, reactionary, Birchist, defender of the status quo", and other such epithets. This isn't very good semantics. I am not a "Gallant Defender of the Redwhiteandblue Status Quo", except insofar as I am on record as preferring life in America as it is now to the examples I see of life in territory conquered by Russia, and that I am a pragmatist who wants an alternative solution before attacking the one that I have. I'm not in love with the Status Quo or with the military, but what is the alternative?

Let me try to clarify my position with something like logic and realism.

Point 1. A look across history reveals that the Russians have always oppressed the population of any conquered territory. CONCLUSION: It is undesirable to be conquered by the Russians.

Point 2. The U.S. has a tremendous nuclear arsenal. If a war starts, and we are faced with a virtual certainty of losing it, our government would almost certainly unleash our nuclear firepower, provoking retaliation and possibly ending all life on Earth. CONCLUSION: It is desirable that we not be placed in a position of having to use nuclear weapons in order to avoid losing a war to Russia.

Point 3. The day of the "minute-man" is long past. In the time it would take us to train civilians to use modern weapons, the Russians could obliterate us without ever touching nuclear weapons if there were no regular military to hold them off. Thus we are faced with three possible alternatives: 1) Permit the Russians to conquer us without a fight (undesirable from Point 1). 2) Dispense with a regular military, but maintain our nuclear deterrent (undesirable from Point 2). 3) Continue to maintain a regular military force at an adequate level of manpower and training and equipment, so that there will at least be a possibility that a war need neither be lost nor degenerate into a nuclear holocaust.

I feel that these points all follow logically, and that no reasonable man can quarrel with them. If anyone

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does have an argument with them, I'd be glad to hear it. But I want argument on a logical, reasonable plane, not name-calling a la Breen.

It is easy to find fault if you don't have to suggest a better course - it would be easy for me to criticize Breen because FANAC never comes out on time, but I don't because I can't tell him how to make his schedule come out right. I feel that unless Breen can suggest a better way of keeping what rights and freedoms we have (and I'll admit that they leave something to be desired) than supporting the Government, he should at least shut up about it. I am not a 103% American - if there were to appear an organization which I thought would serve better to maintain world peace and my liberties, I'd support it unhesitatingly. But right now the only thing that stands between me and the knout is the U.S. Government, and for that reason I am behind it fully.

Actually, I don't know how I got dragged into his discussion anyhow, since the question under discussion in Wrhm and the point I was making in DISCORD were quite separate. I did mention the Civil War in Discord in reply to a statement that "violence never settles anything", since the obvious fact is that it does. It doesn't settle a moral question, but it can settle questions on the pragmatic level quite nicely. Violence cannot prove an intellectual point, but it can quite effectively make the proponents of the defeated point of view shut up, which is usually all the violent ones want in the first place. Normally they are either so sure that they're right that they see no need to prove it, or they don't really care about the rights and wrongs but only about who wins the war. Whoever claimed that violence was capable of settling a point of right and wrong? As far as I know this hasn't been claimed since the "trial-by-combat" days, when the idea was that God would insure that Right would triumph. This theory has been dead for at least five centuries, but some people still delight in attacking it, defeating it, and then Pointing with Pride and saying, "See What I have Done!"

I am, I suppose, a conservative in that I don't believe in pushing nonsensical solutions to problems. While I feel that there are a great many flaws in the present setup, I want to hear some practical alternative before I agree to a change. I defend the status quo if there is nothing worthwhile to defend as an alternative - Breen seems to defend no point of view, being almost wholly offensive...

Having covered the main points with some space to spare, I'll throw in a little personal information, since this is the first contact with me for at least some of you. Lichtman, Pelz, Art Rapp and Ruth Berman I know from correspondence, and a few others of you have seen my genzine LOKI, but there are many of you whom I don't know at all, and who therefore presumably don't know me either. So: I'm 25, married (my wife takes some interest in fanac, is taking more and may get a page or two in NIFLHEIM when I'm a full-fledged member and don't have to pay for the privilege), and a Lt. in the U.S. Army. My job at present involves being head of an instructor group teaching the field maintenance of Nike Track Radars (this does not mean I do any teaching myself, and I don't). I'm something of a neo, having become active in fandom something over a year ago and not having really done much but correspond until the first of this year, but since then I've become more active with publishing and some writing for other fanzines, mostly poetry and fantasy-slanted items. And that about covers that, "that" being the page I'm allotted - Ave atque vale.