

American Nationalism; An Interpretative Essay. By HANS KOHN. (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1957. Pp 272. \$5.00.)

Among the values this volume offers the student of American politics and history is its comparison of American and European nationalism. Professor Kohn is, of course, peculiarly well qualified to undertake such an analysis because of his previous works on European nationalism. In one sense, this book is a survey of American political ideas, although the discussion is focused finally on our own national experience.

The interpretation and reinterpretation of the historical meaning of the American destiny is, as is commonly known, one of the primary activities of current scholarship.¹ No doubt, the world position occupied by the United States since the occurrence of two world wars has motivated the undertaking of such studies. Clearly, the American epic is complicated enough to shelter a variety of conflicting views: liberals find liberalism in our tradition; conservatives can see our contribution to conservative thought; pragmatists say we have little philosophy and no metaphysics; Christians can see in our history the materials for a Christian interpretation of America. Numerous others might be listed. Professor Kohn seems to emphasize the historical materials that support the liberal conception of America, although he also says, "History is too complex for any monistic or dualistic interpretation" (p. 224).

Materials for a liberal theory of nationalism are found primarily in the English background of American life, to the exclusion, it might seem of the contributions of other elements of our modern and magnificent pluralism. The tie that bound us together as a nation was not culture, nor the mystic bands of a common memory, but "an idea which singled out the new nation among nations of the earth" (p. 8). This idea is expressed in the bill of rights, and it is the seventeenth-century English tradition of liberty. Kohn cites especially Locke, Milton, and Cromwell (though the sharp limitations on liberty fostered by each of these gentlemen is not examined, and their ideas of religious liberty were, of course, quite limited in practice). "The English self-identification with liberty

¹A notable recent example is the Newberry Library Conference on American Studies. See *The Newberry Library Bulletin*, IV (August 1957), 165ff.

has been the hallmark of English nationalism since the Puritan revolution" (p. 28).

The comparisons with European experience are, indeed, the contribution of this volume. The Swiss Cantons help explain American sectionalism more than Turner's parallel with the European nations. Sections in America do not resemble European nations (p. 99). Bismarck's success was a misfortune for Europe, since it was a victory against European liberalism (p. 120). There are numerous suggestions of comparison through the work which the reader will observe in passing.

There are five chapters in this volume. The first deals with the roots and origins of the Republic; a second chapter deals with the development of our feeling of uniqueness; the third offers a discussion of "A Republic of Many Republics"; the fourth is a study of the character of the people, "A Nation of Many Nations," and finally the fifth chapter studies "A Nation Among Nations." The reader will find in this latest volume by Professor Kohn a stimulating and provocative interpretation of America (as in the last chapter, which considers recent foreign policy), and perhaps even a significantly controversial one.

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Three Human Rights in the Constitution. By ZECHARIAH CHAFEE, JR. (Lawrence, Kansas: University of Kansas Press, 1956. Pp. 245. \$4.00.)

The Creative Role of the Supreme Court of the United States. By M. RAMASWAMY. (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1956, Pp. xiii, 138. \$3.00.)

The first volume is concerned not with the human rights secured in the first ten amendments but with specific rights mentioned elsewhere in the Constitution; namely, freedom of debate in Congress, the prohibition against bills of attainder and freedom of movement. These, Professor Chafee thinks, are of value equal to many of the guarantees found in the Bill of Rights.

The author, because of his abiding interest in the origin and