

Thursday 25<sup>th</sup> [October 1962]

Everybody is concerned about Cuba. Someone in a shop asked Pete 'Do you know how the war is going?' We've all read papers and turned on the News. On the night Kennedy spoke, however, I was in the black abyss of sleep whilst Petie listened, in bed beside me, and then stayed awake until 2 wondering when the rocket would drop. Our main feelings at first were a mixture of alarm – and a confused tendency to 'understanding' the American attitude although doubting the wisdom of its actions. Since then I have swung a little away towards a reluctant acceptance that Russia is not entirely without a tenable point of view, demanding understanding too. Fortunately the whole world seems to have been so shocked by the rapid blow-up of an 'incident' able to lead to our wholesale destruction, ~~and~~ that it even looks at the moment as if the main protagonists may be will at least to show each other they have no [illegible] inside their gloves. It's true that as one 'crisis' subsides, another between China + India blows up. But general feeling seems to be that this is not of the same magnitude of danger.

As usual now I am extraordinarily removed from involvement in such large-scale outside events. I suppose I no longer believe there is anything I can do, in the immediate sense, to stop the world we know being blown to bits if all goes badly. I can no longer seem to worry even at the personal/maternal level of 'what will happen to my treasures?'. They will probably not survive, I suppose I think. Even if they do – and even if we (parents) didn't – it would all be so much a world destroyed as to be relatively irrelevant about our lives before.

Presumably it is this kind of resignation of the old which drives youngsters wild. I know, I recall it so vividly, that I cared so desperately at 14 about averting war. But it was partly that I could not accept then that it may not be possible to avert war as such. Now I'm no longer sure. And yet, and yet – if man fails to master these outbreaks of mass aggression there is no hope in the end.

I tried, as I walked Oscar around the gold-green park to imagine our world destroyed. Not the scene of destruction, but the loss of what we have. I stopped and turned over a great pile of golden chestnut leaves as I thought about this. Of my diaries, all 20 years of them, vanished along with ourselves and all we know. Perhaps Steve may even be right; at least for some of us adults. He infers he and his kind care more because they have not 'had their lives'. We adults have begun, it is true, to try to come to terms with our own deaths – the inevitable end of our individuality. To come to terms with everyone's death could be easier having prepared ourselves (or tried to begin at least looking at the possibility) for our own deaths. Could it, dangerous and unpleasant thought, could it even be that the middle-aged and overs are in some sense pleased if since they must go to take everyone with them? No, that can't be. We can't understand life, but death is in some sense comprehensible as the finality of things. And although it seems life in general must logically have its ending, it has been one of the consolations for so many generations before to feel that, even though 'I could not go on, 'mine' would. And 'mine' could be sons, or works, or simply fellow-men.