

the past fifteen years. This resistance and this story are very much alive everywhere today on the peripheries of China, from where the expelled priests are watching the death struggle of their brothers in Chinese gaols, camps—and underground. They are watching, but not passively. One of the most encouraging phenomena I witnessed during my travels was the relentless activity of Jesuits and others on behalf of refugees and people still on the mainland. Charity here is a daily work of finding food, shelter, money, jobs and education for the thousands pouring out from Red China, mainly through the double gate of Hong Kong and Macao.

I asked a French Jesuit in Hong Kong what happens to the soul of such individuals. He told me that the soul often hardened in natural self-defense, but in the majority of cases the soul, also in self-defense, developed only an apparent armor behind which it maintains contact with the faith. The example of the refugees shows that in most cases faith has been either only dormant or actually strengthened during the years of persecution and repression. It may, at any rate, be rekindled even in the souls of young people who hate communism perhaps more than their elders do because it has disappointed and cheated them. Yet, most people I talked to are pessimistic in the long run: the decades of vigorous attack, coupled with exacerbated nationalism and teaching of hatred for whites and *their* religion, may, they feel, gradually extinguish Christianity there.

An additional problem is that the heroic priests who lived in China for so many years, loved the people and learned to speak the language, are not easily replaced. Young priests from Europe and America have discovered new missionary fields in Africa and Latin America; Asia is no longer a "popular" choice.

One thing, however, is certain, and I should like to emphasize it as my conclusion: the old civilizations of Asia—of the entire continent—are almost empty shells, existing more by inertia and habit than by vital contribution to people's lives and thoughts. Two dynamic forces compete for people's loyalty: communism, and to a lesser extent, Christianity. The first is adhered to as a way—a detour—towards Westernization, the grand ideal of the entire "third world"; the second has accumulated a reserve of achievements, respect, and seriousness of purpose; it is also a way towards Westernization, a more trustworthy one, appealing to the best elements.

I do not know which one will win. The Communists have the inside track, not because of their economic policies, which everybody in Asia knows are a failure, but because they know how to manipulate a frenzied nationalism. But in the eyes of the Far Eastern populations they are *Chinese* and, I repeat, this fact works against them. If East Asia can be kept out of their grasp, Christianity has a strong chance of remaining present as a factor of social stabilization and economic progress, and as a spiritual prop for Asia's immense yet inert soul.

FACT AND FICTION IN SOUTHEAST ASIA

One Attempt to Uncover the Realities in Vietnam

Harold W. Thatcher

Once again we are practicing brinkmanship in a manner that even the late Secretary of State Dulles would have envied. How we have done so and why the American people in the Atomic Age have permitted their government repeatedly to get itself into perilous situations which could escalate into a general nuclear war cannot really be understood without reference to the background of our thinking since World War II. We must separate fact from fiction, Dr. Thatcher is chairman of the history department at Wilkes College in Pennsylvania.

which means that we must re-examine critically and objectively the premises and conclusions from which our actions have sprung. Such an examination will reveal that many of the premises upon which our conclusions, and therefore our actions, have been based have been false. Senator Fulbright, in a notable speech in the Senate on March 25, tried to dispel some of these "myths" concerning our foreign policy. The purpose of the present article is to try to dispel some further myths, especially those relating to our policies in Southeast Asia.

We have insisted since the beginning of the cold war that all Communists are imperialists, just as the Communists have made the same charge against the West, and especially the United States. The older phrase embodying this charge, originating during the Truman Administration and usually directed against the Soviet Union, was "Communist international imperialism." It was said that the Soviet Union inherited the imperialism of czarist Russia. Let us attempt to weigh for a moment what truth there is in this statement.

The Soviet Union, in accord with the anti-imperialist sentiments which characterized its early years, not only voluntarily relinquished all the imperialistic concessions previously wrested from China by the czarist government but also made no attempt to regain the Baltic states, which had been lost in the debacle of World War I. It did, to be sure, reacquire them for what it termed reasons of national security at the beginning of World War II and for the same reason forced Finland to cede certain small strategic areas. At approximately the same time, however, and for the same given reasons, the United States occupied by force Greenland and Iceland, the latter an independent nation. As a result of the Potsdam Agreement at the close of World War II the Soviet Union insisted that, in the areas allotted to it for supervision of reconstruction and rehabilitation, governments friendly to it must be established, and it has continued to the present to maintain a close hold on these "satellite" states, against the wishes of the inhabitants. It is quite probable that the Soviet Union will retain control of these satellites by whatever means is necessary as long as the cold war continues.

Are we not doing the same thing on a smaller scale on the other side of the globe? At the close of World War II we insisted on keeping and fortifying, for reasons of national defense, many of the former Japanese islands that we had conquered during the war, especially the Bonin and Ryuku groups (of which Okinawa is one). The inhabitants of these islands are not happy under our rule and they have repeatedly requested to be returned to Japan, even carrying their petitions to the United Nations on occasion. We have been adamant in our refusals. Liberation for these people will probably come only with the ending of the cold war.

As for China, that huge nation was the victim, rather than the practitioner, of imperialism throughout the nineteenth century and, indeed, until the end of World War II. It has, to be sure, been guilty of aggression on two occasions since World War II, but these seem to have been inspired by nationalism rather than by the desire to spread communism. One

was the result of a border dispute with India in a remote area where the location of the border has never been too clear. The other was the taking over of Tibet, which as late as 1948 was officially considered by the United States to be a part of China. Neither of these seems to have been a clear case of a desire to spread Communist doctrine by force.

The phrase "Communist international imperialism" has recently been supplanted in our terminology by "international Communist aggression," a term which is applied to any and all conflicts in which Communists are engaged. Whatever validity the charge that communism is an "international conspiracy" may once have had, certainly the events of recent years have shown conclusively that communism is no longer a monolithic structure. Its tenets are not handed down *ex cathedra* from Moscow with the stamp of infallibility upon them, nor are its military operations directed from one central citadel. There seems, indeed, to be almost as much diversity and as many claimants to international leadership in the Communist world as in the so-called "free world." To the extent that communism, with all its diversity, is still "international," it is so only in an ideological, not in a military sense. Since it is still a relatively new "ism," communism includes among its devotees many zealots who yearn to spread its doctrines to the far corners of the globe. The struggle has become a battle of ideas, in which eventually the better ideas should win out. Yet, during practically the whole period of the cold war, we have continued to place our chief reliance in combatting communism on armed might, as if a sword could extinguish an idea.

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The word "aggression" generally connotes attack and intrusion from the outside, yet the conflicts to which we have applied this term have, almost without exception, been civil wars, such as those which keep recurring in Latin America, but to which we do not apply the term "aggression." There were, for example, no Russian troops in the Korean conflict, nor were there any Chinese troops until after the U.N. forces had accomplished their avowed mission of repelling the North Korean attack, and our allies on the Security Council had been pressured by us into attempting to unify Korea by force. In so doing, however, we and the United Nations were in effect insisting that Korea should properly be regarded as a single state and were thus admitting that the struggle there had been an internal one. If further proof were needed that the Korean struggle was a civil war, it was supplied by the representative from the Republic of Korea, Y. T. Pyun, who appeared before

the United Nations in November 1952 and testified that South Korea would have struck first if it had possessed sufficient arms.

Vietnam, too, was intended to be a single state as indicated in the Geneva agreements in 1954 which ended the war of liberation in Indo-China. The consummation of this through an election to have been held in 1956 was prevented by the refusal of President Ngo Dinh Diem, with the support of the United States, to permit the election to be held. All subsequent attempts to unite Vietnam by force must therefore be regarded as civil war.

Further evidence that the conflicts in both Korea and Vietnam have been genuine civil wars is found in the fact that the forces fighting on the Communist side have not been troops driven unwillingly into battle by foreign masters. In both instances news reports have noted the great *esprit de corps* and dedication of the Communist forces. More than one American officer has been quoted as saying of the Vietcong: "I wish we could match them in troop quality and motivation." In other words, these soldiers are fighting for a cause in which they believe and to which they are deeply committed.

In the case of Laos the struggle seems even more clearly an internal one. Because of the inability of the Laotians to establish a strong, unified central government, there was established in 1962, under the sponsorship of fourteen nations meeting in Geneva, a tripartite government in which the three contending factions, Rightist, Neutralist and Communist, were represented. This arrangement, though not very successful, was precariously maintained until the spring of this year when an attempted coup by the Right failed because of the disapproval of several great powers, including the United States. Almost immediately thereafter, however, the United States gave its blessing to a coalition of the Rightist and Neutralist factions, which destroyed the previous tripartite setup. Under these circumstances it should not have been surprising when the third faction, the Communist Pathet Lao, resorted to force and defeated the unauthorized coalition. This, in turn, brought about active intervention by the United States.

If these conflicts are civil wars, then the term "international aggression" cannot be properly applied to them. The fact that one side or both may be receiving aid and advice from the outside does not change the character of the struggle, for this has always been common practice and is not contrary to international law. It is only when one of the out-

side powers enters the fray with its own military forces that the struggle ceases to be a civil one and becomes international, and the disturbing fact is that we always seem to be the ones who undertake this kind of intervention. There are no foreign troops but ours in Vietnam or Laos, just as there were no foreign troops on the Communist side in Korea during the expulsion of the Communists from South Korea.

What right have we to intervene in this fashion in these conflicts? The Agreement on Cessation of Hostilities in Vietnam signed in Geneva in July 1954, specifically states: "no military base under the control of a foreign state may be established in the regrouping zone of either party" (i.e., on either side of the 17° parallel of north latitude), and the more general Conference Declaration signed at the same time states: "In their relations with Cambodia, Laos and Vietnam, each member of the Geneva conference undertakes to . . . refrain from any interference in their internal affairs."

Although the United States did not actually sign these documents, it indicated in a separate statement at the time its intention of observing them. Are we, then, to brush aside the rules in order to snatch victory from defeat for our wilting protégé? If so, what becomes not only of our pledge to observe the Geneva agreements but also of our much vaunted principle of self-determination? The fact that force is involved in these struggles does not necessarily prevent them from being expressions of the will of the people. Revolutions, including our own, are generally accomplished by force rather than by "free elections" and usually, again including our own, by minorities. In countries with as little experience in political affairs as most of the emerging nations it is almost inevitable that the form of government will be established forcibly by the best organized, most dedicated, and most powerful group in the society, even though it be a minority.



Are we then to say, as we seem to be saying, that none of these emerging nations can exercise the right of self-determination unless they opt a type of government of which we approve? Are we saying that they cannot become Communists if they choose? This, indeed, seems to be our policy as was made evident by our forcible ejection in 1954 of a Communist government established in Guatemala by a free election. But can we really defend such a policy based on naked might while we still continue to extol the sanctity of treaties and virtues of self-determination? Such a policy is power politics pure and simple, for which it is difficult to find any moral justification. The American people should be aware of this when they condone or support such policies, but they frequently are not because the realities are hidden from their view. It may be, of course, that a majority of the American people favor pure power politics. If so, however, they should at least vote for such a policy with their eyes open.

Another of the myths that we carefully nurture in official utterances and that our press generally supports is that our interventions are always to preserve the freedom and independence of the people involved. Freedom from what? Independence from whom? Since no foreign nation has attempted to take over Korea, Vietnam, or Laos, there seems to be no need to protect their independence. And since there has been no foreign subjugation, freedom must mean simply freedom from rule by their own Communist fellow-countrymen, who in these cases seem to constitute the most powerful and most dedicated faction in each society. But are we obligated to protect these nations from themselves? In international affairs are we our brothers' keepers to that extent?

Our government has beclouded the issues and created a climate of public opinion which has led the American people to accept its quixotic and extremely dangerous course in South Vietnam and Laos, although many articulate and intelligent citizens and Congressmen have warned of the possible disastrous consequences of such a course. Some of those disasters have occurred, and more are on the way. We have become so embroiled and so frustrated that we have now adopted as official policy the risk of war with Communist China.

But there is no more reason to suppose that China will tolerate a hostile, Western-supported and supplied government on its border than there was that we would tolerate a hostile government, supported and fortified by foreign Communist powers, on our doorstep in Cuba. If a showdown comes, we cannot possibly compete with China in land warfare in terms of manpower and would probably have to resort to

nuclear weapons. Under these circumstances there is the real possibility that the Soviet Union will honor its treaty of military assistance to China. The situation will then have escalated into the general nuclear holocaust which all must dread.

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Withdrawal from the internal politics of Southeast Asia would seem to be the only sensible way out of our present dangerous predicament, and it could be accomplished without too much loss of face. Nobody has appointed us to prevent the small emerging nations of Southeast Asia from becoming Communist. Our assumption of this role has not been regarded with much enthusiasm by many of our allies. Even if there were any validity to the "falling domino" theory, and most of the new nations of Southeast Asia should embrace communism, the military threat to our national security would be negligible. As for prestige, if we cannot convince the new nations of the superiority of our way of life by example, we are even less likely to do so by force of arms.

A first step toward a solution in Southeast Asia should be the prompt acceptance by us of the proposal that there be a reconvening at Geneva of the fourteen nations that have been responsible since 1962 for supervision of Laotian affairs. Communist China, the Soviet Union, President de Gaulle, and U Thant, Secretary General of the United Nations, have separately proposed this, but thus far the United States has steadfastly refused. A second step should be the turning over by us to the nations that signed the Geneva agreements of 1954, or better still, to the United Nations, all problems involving Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia. A third and final step, but least likely to be accomplished, would be for us to turn over to the United Nations the problem of Formosa, together with Quemoy and Matsu. Such steps would not materially affect the security of the United States, and they would eliminate many of the trouble spots that threaten to bring on a great atomic conflict; they would also greatly increase the opportunities and prestige of the United Nations, which we have tended for the most part to bypass.

There is little likelihood, however, that American public opinion can be induced to support such policies toward peace until the myths created in the past are swept away, the realities exposed, and the public enabled to view the situation in Southeast Asia and elsewhere more critically and objectively. Until this is accomplished, the public cannot be expected to distinguish fact from fiction and to demand and support national policies which, without endangering our security, will lead toward peace.