

# WARS OF NATIONAL LIBERATION III

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In this discussion of Wars of National Liberation I will be concerned more with ethical method than with setting forth policy implications and conclusions. I shall develop this method around six points of reference: (1) the phase of ethical reflection, (2) levels of analysis and responsibility, (3) examination of assumptions, (4) analysis of wars of national liberation, (5) exploration of criteria of justice, and (6) suggestions for policy.

*The Phases of Ethical Reflection.* Ethical reflection would seem to require three overlapping phases that are, hopefully, cumulative. There is first the examination of stance or perspective, the bringing of assumptions into the open, the questioning of stated goals in terms of their real intent. At the least, this means self-awareness and openness; at the most it becomes the road to repentance. The second phase is that of assessing the situation, exploring options and possible consequences. It is worth noting that our assumptions significantly influence our definition of the nature of the problem and color our judgment of risks. The constructive phase seeks to relate the criticized norms to the assessment of the situation, to draw out the implications as guides to policy decisions, to keep ends and means in some kind of harmony.

Obviously the intent is to bring rational processes to bear on every stage, including recurring evaluation, but there is no suggestion that only reason is involved. We are creatures of loyalties and fears, conscious and unconscious, and we need not only rational guidance but resources to enable obedience. There is continuing tension between obedience and relevance, as between rational and less rational influences.

*Levels of Analysis and Responsibility.* There is an inescapable *personal* level, the locus of individual responsibility and final decision. One's commitment may not be completely amenable to rational criticism, or it may go beyond reason. It is qualified as one engages with one's fellows in the process of criticizing and recommending *policy*. Policy decisions are never a simple extension of personal commit-

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ment, largely because policy is public and requires the adjustment of a plurality of commitments. But this writer's commitment has also been qualified, in the direction of policy, as he has recognized the necessity of police power and has sought for justice and change as well as peace.

If the mind of the person is not completely open, it is in part because it reflects a *rootedness* in the communities of nation and of church. Joseph Hromadka has emphasized the necessary this-sidedness of our criticisms, in that we reflect, speak, and act from within a particular community of responsibility. The level of analysis and responsibility most concerned with policy is that of the nation, involving conceptions of "national interest" and of stewardship of public trust and resources. Secretary of State Dean Rusk urged citizens to ask: "What are the basic interests of the United States that are involved?" He noted that our fundamental interests "in some situations are not crystal clear and may even be in conflict with one another." Mr. Rusk added: "Let us remind ourselves that the world looks different when seen from Central Africa or South Asia. . . . It tends to look different to a small or weak nation." (*Guidelines of U.S. Foreign Policy*, June 6, 1965.)

There is also a level of analysis and interpretation which belongs to the church, where the responsibility is not policy-making but the critical illumination of policy. Theologically, this means a continuing reminder of conceptions of man, stewardship, and creation, and of the dimensions of sin, suffering, reconciliation, and forgiveness. There is also the existential and normative matter of relatedness, of oneness, of the maintenance and expression of a universal fellowship. Together the theological and fellowship emphases qualify the rootedness in the nation, urge transcendence of tribal loyalties, move in the direction of universal demands. There is also an undergirding and enabling power in the life of the fellowship. Note, too, that not all universalizing tendencies are specifically or uniquely Christian. Some argue from the idea that mankind is now the unit of cooperation or from a philosophically universal natural and moral law.

*The Examination of Assumptions.* The unmasking of those assumptions which we ordinarily take for

granted is both difficult and necessary. This list is suggestive only:

1) Assumptions about *violence*: Our views of violence as good, i.e., necessary, or bad are intertwined with our understanding of its location. We are predisposed not to see the "violence of order," or what Frantz Fanon calls "peaceful violence" in his work, *Wretched of the Earth*. Rather we perceive that violence which disrupts order in retaliation or revolution. To ascertain cause and responsibility, we need to distinguish between efficient and underlying causes, between the violence of *provocation*, structured in a given order, and precipitative or *responsive* violence. Such judgments reflect our assumptions about the value of the present order and about whether violence (or coercion) can be used to oppose, or only to maintain, order.

2) Assumptions about *choices*: We justify a choice by explaining that we had no alternatives—"What else could we do?" This may reflect an *a priori* rejection of certain choices as undesirable and therefore nonexistent. The concluding paragraph of the Mansfield Report to the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations is instructive:

Such choices as may be open are not simple choices. They are difficult and painful choices and they are beset with many imponderables. The situation, as it now appears, offers only the very slim prospect of a just settlement by negotiations or the alternative prospect of a continuance of the conflict in the direction of a general war on the Asian mainland. ("The Vietnam Conflict: The Substance and the Shadow," U.S. Government Printing Office, January 6, 1966, p. 13.)

3) Assumptions about *initiative*: Here there may be a prior assumption about responsibility. Since the opponent is deemed responsible, then it is he who must take any initiative, either in escalating or damping down the conflict.

This is the third and William V. O'Brien's will be the fourth article in a series devoted to "wars of national liberation." The printer's gremlins were unusually busy with Robert Gesert's article, the second in the series, which *worldview* published last month. In the second paragraph "do emphasize" should read "de-emphasize"; p. 5, last paragraph, "could be found" should read "could be fought"; p. 8, first column, ninth line, "defending" should read "defeating"; p. 8, second column, third paragraph, third line, "defeating" should read "defending."

4) Assumptions about *limits*: With increasing commitments of men, money, prestige and honor to a struggle, it becomes more difficult to set boundaries to what means are permitted. The presumed goodness of our ends may serve to justify any means which promise to end or shorten the hostilities.

5) Assumptions about *threat or enemy*: Polarization of conflict makes identification of the enemy deceptively simple (until we ask upon whom war should be declared or with whom we should negotiate for peace). We may admit that there are causes for revolutionary ferment in the world, but the enemy is seen to be that nation manipulating these causes. Perception of enemy is of course influenced by our perspective. M. M. Thomas of India appeals to "the older nations to see the crucial human issues underlying the struggle of the new nations for new structures and ideologies," and urges that judgment not be altogether from the basis of Western ideological battles. ("New Nations and the West," *Social Action*, September 1964, p. 8.) Lin Piao charges that following the second world war "U.S. imperialism has stepped into the shoes of German, Japanese and Italian fascism and has been trying to build a great American empire by dominating and enslaving the whole world." (*Long Live the Victory of People's War!* Peking: Foreign Languages Press, September 3, 1965, pp. 52-53; further reference to Lin Piao will be to this edition.)

The crucial issue is one of values or ends presumed to be preserved or protested. Paul Albrecht notes that "Western power gains its moral political authority from the assumption that it is exercised in the name of Christian civilization." (*The Churches and Rapid Social Change*, Doubleday, 1961, p. 129.) It is from such an assumption that Colonel Virgil Ney must write:

The deep-rooted cultural tradition of the West renders it an easy prey to blackmail by protracted guerrilla terror. Unlike the average citizen of a democratic country, the guerrilla does not feel ill at ease in the presence of conflict. Since he regards conflict as the best—indeed, *the sole*—means of achieving his objectives, he is able to come to terms with terror, violence, and abiding insecurity. By fomenting conflict and instability, the guerrilla levies blackmail upon the humanitarian West's longing for peace and thereby enhances his political bargaining power. . . . ("Guerrilla Warfare and Modern Strategy," in P. M. Osanka, ed., *Modern Guerrilla Warfare*, Free Press, 1962, p. 38. Emphasis added.)

A challenge to this assumption is found in an address on "The Road from Non-Violence to Violence" at a 1964 World Council of Churches consultation

in Rhodesia: "The history of relations between black and white ever since they met on the banks of the Fish River in the Cape in the 18th century has been one of conflict." (WCC # 5: *Race Relations in Ecumenical Perspective*, July, 1964, p. 14.) Fanon argues that citizens of the colonizing countries are protected from seeing exploitation and conflict not only by distance but by "a multitude of moral teachers."

*Analysis of Wars of National Liberation*. There is confusion today about both war and revolution. Walter Millis argues that the nuclear stalemate forces us to a new understanding of the "real nature and functions . . . of armed violence in international politics." He goes on to urge that revolution can no longer be seen as "an internal affair," "a mass popular uprising, generated out of intolerable conditions."

Revolution is generated more forcibly by nationalist ambition than by internal want and oppression; it does not well up from the mass but is incited by an elitist leadership; it is not a domestic matter for the people to decide but is inextricably tangled in international politics; if not directly fomented from abroad it is usually sustained by outside intervention or assistance and it is a counter in the power rivalries of the great (and no longer themselves revolutionary) states,

. . . The "wars" of today intricately confuse social and political revolution, economic hopes and nationalist self-assertion, conflicting propagandas and ideologies, with the power struggles of the great which, because of the stalemate, can be carried on only vicariously. (*War and Revolution Today*, Center for the Study of Democratic Institutions, 1965, p. 2.)

It may not be possible to separate nationalist sentiment from the sense of want and oppression as Millis suggests. There is a sense of "relative deprivation," of colonialism not having shared the blessings of civilization with the colonized but rather having been achieved at their expense. It is worth noting what Mao Tse-tung wrote in 1936:

We must not allow the establishment of our own war industry to foster in us a sense of exclusive reliance on it. Our basic directive is to rely on the war industries of the imperialist countries and of our enemy at home. We have a claim on the output of the arsenals of London as well as of Hanyang, and, what is more, it is to be delivered to us by the enemy's own transport corps. This is the sober truth, not a joke. (*Mao Tse-tung: An Anthology*, Anne Fremantle, ed., Mentor, 1962, p. 115.)

The central question is whether there is *inextricable* tangling with international politics, and policy hinges at least in part on whether there *can* be disentanglement.

Wars of national liberation are not identical with guerrilla warfare, though they are equally "the classic strategy of the weaker" and thus typically a revolt against domination or superior power. They are also "people's wars" in the attention paid to politics and to identification with the masses. (See Lin Piao, p. 30; *Mao Tse-Tung: An Anthology*, p. 67.) Lt. Col. Frederick Wilkins takes this as an essential guerrilla component:

Where there are no economic and political foundations for the guerrilla movement, there will be no guerrilla movement. The bulk of any guerrilla force joins out of belief in what it is doing; the hard core of leaders keeps going because of political beliefs.

. . . We can contain guerrillas temporarily by force, but the only lasting way to destroy a guerrilla movement is by removing the foundation upon which it stands. (*Modern Guerrilla Warfare*, p. 14.)

The "people" are predominantly the peasants, providing a rural base for the encirclement of cities (with the West wholly characterized as urban and to be encircled, by some theorists). Still, national liberation is seen as the "principal contradiction" to be resolved before the agrarian revolution can be completed. Enemies identified by Mao include the feudal regime, imperialists, and capitalists. The war is typically, if not always, fought at home, where guerrillas know both terrain and inhabitants. Time is seen to be on their side, so that they can fight with patience. They usually do not seem to be worried about the dangers of escalation into nuclear war. Their tactics are irregular, flexible, and mobile.

Part of the usual definition refers to the glorification of war by theorists of wars of national liberation. Thus, Mao sees war as "the highest form of struggle . . . for settling contradictions between classes, between nations, between states, or between political groups at given stages of their development." (*An Anthology*, p. 75.) Lin Piao appeals to Marx, "Force is the midwife of every old society pregnant with a new one," without recognizing some later Marxist qualifications, and to Mao, "political power grows out of the barrel of a gun." But he goes on immediately to shift the causal nexus and the burden of responsibility:

War is the product of imperialism and the system of exploitation of man by man. . . . So long as imperialism and the system of exploitation of man by man exist, the imperialists and reactionaries will invariably rely on armed forces to maintain their reactionary rule and impose war on the oppressed nations and peoples.

What should the oppressed nations and the oppressed people do in the face of wars of aggression

and armed suppression by the imperialists and their lackeys? Should they submit and remain slaves in perpetuity? Or should they rise in resistance and fight for their liberation?

... This is called doing unto them what they do unto us. (pp. 44-45.)

But, just after the earlier statement, Mao has a section entitled, "The Aim of War Lies in Eliminating War." "But there is only one way of eliminating it, namely, to oppose war by means of war." Mao then proceeds to distinguish between "just" and "unjust" wars, with revolutionary wars declared to be just. (p. 77.)

Lin Piao employs some criteria of "just war" theory in characterizing China's war against Japan as just: it was a defense against aggression and thus in a just cause; it had reasonable hope of success. (pp. 8-9, 35.) Mao also has a section on "Can Bad Things Be Turned into Good Things?" If imperialists unleash another war, the Chinese will be against it but not afraid of it. (*An Anthology*, p. 293.) It may be worth noting what Mao seems to mean by "paper tigers." In 1958 Mao insisted that strategic thinking should be oriented to the long view, in which imperialist forces are seen to be "paper tigers." However, tactical thinking should take account of present reality, that there are "living tigers, iron tigers, real tigers which can eat people." (p. 177.)

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*Exploration of Criteria of Justice.* The writer understands the concept of the "just war" to be a *limiting* as well as a *justifying* concept, the use of which can, in principle, find some wars unjust. There is not clear guidance whether a certain number of the criteria qualify or disqualify a conflict; rather there would seem to be a cumulative placing of the "burden of proof" upon one or the other policy. In this testing the attempt will be made to explore both wars of national liberation and responsive measures of counter-insurgency. The treatment is recognized to be illustrative; no single criterion is adequately tested; the concern is still upon method rather than conclusion.

1) The traditional first criterion is that the war be declared by the *proper authority*. This is probably the point of least help, in so far as it is oriented to preserving the status quo and thus judging the issue in advance. The criterion is rendered more indecisive in that wars are seldom declared, but just fought. The only burden of proof here would seem to be unjustly placed.

2) The second criterion is that the war shall be for a *just* cause. The appeal of the revolution is free-

dom from oppression, liberation from colonial rule. Fanon argues that decolonization is the process by which the colonized become men by freeing themselves. Sartre's introduction to Fanon's book carries this a step further to include the freeing of the colonizers also, "with the settler in each one of us being savagely rooted out."

General S. B. Griffith, in his introduction to *Mao Tse-Tung on Guerrilla Warfare* (Praeger, 1961, p. 5) acknowledges that "several hundred millions less fortunate than we have arrived, perhaps reluctantly, at the conclusion that the Western peoples are dedicated to the perpetuation of the political, social, and economic status quo." Peter Paret and John W. Shy suggest that in counter-insurgency or in a *coup d'état* the United States would likely justify its intervention by "invoking the higher law of human freedom." But, they add, "we might be more convincing . . . if we had a record of supporting guerrilla subversion of right-wing tyranny as well as that of the left." (*Guerrillas in the 1960's*, rev., Praeger, 1965, p. 67.) Richard Shaull has written that U.S. policy "gives progressive Latin Americans the impression that we are willing to go to almost any length to preserve our economic and political domination in the face of the new nationalism, that we are obsessed with stability and order." (*Christianity and Crisis*, January 10, 1966.)

This is reflected in the hearings on "Project Camelot," entitled "Behavioral Sciences and the National Security," House of Representatives Committee on Foreign Affairs, Subcommittee on International Organizations and Movements, December 6, 1965. Lt. General W. W. Dick, Jr., Chief of Research and Development, Department of the Army, testifies: "To do our best job we should understand all we can about what leads to conflict, unrest, so that we can avoid those things and what actions of the individuals or the military units best support conditions of stability, which is what we want to support." Hon. Donald M. Fraser then comments: "There are some who think that if you are able to maintain stability in Latin America this is going to mean that you are going to maintain the status quo and a continuation of the kind of social imbalances that characterize many of the Latin American countries." (p. 37.) Earlier, on August 25, 1965, Senator J. W. Fulbright had spoken about Department of Defense research in foreign policy matters:

... I can well imagine how Members of the Senate might react if it were announced that Chilean or British or French "scientists" were initiating a study of the conditions that might give rise to racial insurgency in Los Angeles or any other American city and what

might be done to prevent it. . . . I believe there lies beneath the jargon of "science" in which these studies abound a reactionary, backward-looking policy opposed to change. Implicit in Camelot, as in the concept of "counter-insurgency," is an assumption that revolutionary movements are dangerous to the interests of the United States and that the United States must be prepared to assist, if not actually participate in, measures to repress them. (*Congressional Record-Senate*, August 25, 1965, p. 20905.)

On the basis of our own professed principles as a nation, the burden of proof in regard to "just cause" would seem to fall on counter-insurgency.

3) Much more difficult to ascertain is the substance of the third criterion—*just intent*, or good motives. Here the deciding factor might be the conflicting motives of the intervening parties, whether Moscow- or Peking-oriented attempts to foment or take over revolutions, or Washington-inspired attempts to counteract these. Other things being equal, the burden of proof would fall on those who intervene to control.

4) The case is somewhat clearer in the fourth criterion—*last resort*. In Asia, Latin America, and Africa peoples affirm that they have (or soon will have) exhausted all other possible remedies. Richard Shaull says of Latin America that more and more Christians "are gradually and reluctantly concluding that there is little possibility of establishing a new social order without protest, resistance, and violence." He concludes that, in this event, "it will not mean that they have been taken in by the Chinese Communists or the *Fidelistas* but only that they see no other path to social justice." (*Christianity and Crisis*, January 10, 1966.)

The Report on the Ecumenical Consultation on "Christian Practice and Desirable Action in Social Change and Race Relations in Southern Africa" (World Council of Churches, July 1965) noted, under "The Trend from Non-Violence to Violence":

The urgency of the situation in South Africa is further increased by the conviction of leading Africans that as all peaceful measures tried by African political organizations over a period of many years to bring about an ordered change have proved abortive, only one avenue remains open—that of violence. (p. 11.)

It would be difficult to establish that counter-insurgency would be a "last resort" on the part of the United States, if it were conducted against people engaged in a war of national liberation. It becomes somewhat more complicated when the object of the attack is "Communist infiltrators." Here the burden of proof would seem to require the intervening gov-

ernment to exhaust other avenues open for peaceful settlement (United Nations, etc.).

5) The fifth criterion deals with *just means*, or appropriate methods of war. Here we face the notion of "just terror" or the "dirty little war" as opposed to a "clean" war. Griffith raises the question of guerrilla warfare being more "primitive," noting that its basic element is man, not a machine. He concludes: "While it is not always humane, it is human, which is more than can be said for the strategy of extinction." (*Mao Tse-tung on Guerrilla Warfare*, p. 7.) Paret and Shy ask whether terror should be singled out for special censure: "It is not easy to see why tossing a hand grenade into a crowded bus should be more cowardly, wanton, and sneaky than bombing a town from an airplane. . . . Often terror is the only method available to insurgents, so that its condemnation seems simply a declaration for the status quo." (*Guerrillas in the 1960's*, p. 77.)

Such considerations would seem to exercise a relativizing influence, justifying terror because napalm or bombing is bad or worse. Actually, the criterion asks not *which* means are the *lesser evil*, but which should be outlawed, in themselves, or because they inflict unjustifiable damage on noncombatants or are liable to escape control (in both cases, become indiscriminate). Because the revolutionary guerrilla fights on home territory, he can be and often is more discriminate than counter-guerrillas in the use of the same means (e.g., terror in a village). Further, excesses (or indiscriminate use) may be due in part to outside intervention and the consequent escalation. In such a case control becomes a difficult problem for the revolutionary and for any and all forces of intervention.

6) The criterion of *proportionality* insists that the evil done in the war must be less than the good achieved as a result. In this area the time problem becomes a crucial factor. In a "protracted war," injury may accumulate, destruction may become so devastating, the conflict may escalate so that justice is not served. Again the problem becomes acute with outside intervention. Paret and Shy caution the counter-insurgent of the danger of meeting terror with counter-terror as playing the "guerrilla's game without his particular advantages."

Brutality, fear, and the resultant social disorganization can work only for the guerrillas, no matter who initiates them. By forcing the legitimate [sic] power to adopt their own methods, the guerrillas gain a vital point. All government is based on the discriminating use of power; its indiscriminate use over extended periods implies a surrender both of policy and of ethics, and releases the kind of internal conflict that

frequently destroys the capacity of a political and social organism to defend itself. (*Guerrillas in the 1960's*, pp. 48-49.)

7) the seventh criterion insists that the person undertaking a just war must have a *reasonable hope of success*. Again the revolutionary has the advantage of home terrain, among his own people, with a more flexible set of methods. Questions of support become relevant mainly in the case again of outside intervention. A more basic question concerns the meaning of "win" or success in either nuclear or protracted war. This relates inevitably to the sixth criterion. Jack Langguth, who wrote "The War in Vietnam Can Be Won, But —," began

When I first arrived in Vietnam, I thought the war could not be won but it was worth trying. Now I sometimes think it can be won but that it is not worth the price.

He concluded with a question:

Will Thailand be reassured by a victory in Vietnam if it is achieved at a great cost to the civilian population: Is the United States compounding mistakes in its policy toward China that it must one day redress? Or is the next generation of China's leaders learning that wars of national liberation are too costly? Finally, is the United States now helping the people of South Vietnam more than it is hurting them? I don't know. (*New York Times Magazine*, September 19, 1965.)

*Suggestions for Policy.* Wars of National Liberation would seem to be justified on the basis of satisfying the requirements of just cause and last resort. The case is in their favor but not quite so clear on the criteria of authority, proportionality, and reasonable hope. We can, of course, hope and pray that the revolutions that are needed can be won by non-violence, but such a hope should be distinguished from both policy and advice.

There have been indications that U.S. policy is oriented to stability and the status quo. This seems to lead us into violence. Writing of passive resistance in South Africa, Leo Kuper notes that "violence [on the part of the dominant group] is evoked by both forms of resistance"—non-violent and violent. (*Passive Resistance in South Africa*, Yale, 1957, p. 72; cf. p. 94.) The burden of proof is upon our policy which supports, sanctions, or acquiesces in such a repressive policy.

The "justice" of wars of national liberation as people's wars is complicated by intervention. It is easy for us to condemn such outside interference and manipulation by Chinese or Russians or Cubans, perhaps too easy. General Griffith concludes:

Historical experience suggests that there is very little hope of destroying a revolutionary guerrilla movement after it has survived the first phase and has acquired the sympathetic support of a significant segment of the population. (*Mao Tse-tung on Guerrilla Warfare*, p. 27.)

Alongside this must be placed the judgment of Paret and Shy: "Until today, the Communists have never organized and dominated a foreign guerrilla movement from the outset." This is more than a suggestion that Communist intervention is not drawn into a "vacuum," but is a response to a perceived threat of other intervention. In a spiral of threats and counter-threats, peoples in different countries become pawns in the cold war which erupts in revolution and counter-revolution.

Paret and Shy note some of the consequences of our use of counter-insurgency: the discrediting of regimes which accept our help, the necessary fraud in convincing "bystanders, friends, and even ourselves that we are not acting at all"; the alienation of our own citizens and the encouragement of extremist groups. They conclude that the first step in a successful response to the problem posed by the guerrilla "is to come to terms with the reality of the world today." The attempt to understand a political problem "as a purely military one is the most dangerous kind of oversimplification. Guerrillas are a symptom rather than a cause." Counter-insurgency and other forms of military response to the problem of wars of national liberation not only seem to bear the burden of proof according to the criteria of the "just war" theory; they also tend strongly, if not inevitably, to preclude the possibility of effective political and economic programs which seek to deal with the problems rather than the symptoms.

Although the stress in this paper has been on ethical method, there would seem to be some emerging conclusions for U.S. policy. We should recognize that we may not be able to set the terms on which peoples in all parts of the world achieve a change in status. We should recognize the necessity of revolutions which may take the form of wars of national liberation if other means fail; at least we should seek not to be caught in an anti-revolutionary stance in the name of stability. We should seek to deal with economic and political causes, with the vestiges of colonialism, challenging Communist competition in the area of development. But such competition should strengthen rather than weaken the international institutions which make possible peace with justice. There are risks to such a policy direction, but they differ markedly from the risks which seem inherent in our present course.