

VIETNAM: SOME THOUGHTS ON PROTEST

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A rational grasp of the opposition to U.S. policy requires an understanding of that policy's method and presuppositions. It is a *prudential* policy posture, in which the end is identified and possible means are judged in terms of their contribution to the end. Such a decision presupposes several extremely important points. First, it presupposes that ethical principles, whether religiously or philosophically derived, do not in themselves *solve* problems, but *go into* the solution along with the circumstances. It perceives, for example, that in a concrete case such as Vietnam, typically several values, ends, or principles will be in conflict: we value life as a good-in-itself, but we value also freedom and order. In the final act of judging *what to do*, the greater good or the lesser evil is sought, and appropriate means are selected. Thus, the final act of judging is always a unique act of evaluating principles in conflict, circumstances, and available means.

The second presumption implicit in the government's position—and one which will seem self-evident—is the judgment that, in the present conditions of the world, the nation-state is a legitimate decider of questions which impact on the fate of mankind. It is always hoped, of course, that nation-states will define their interests with an eye toward world order and justice, and not in simple chauvinistic terms. But nonetheless it must be the **nation-state** deciding as the legitimate societal agent.

Against the Administration are ranged two broad positions of opposition, the first of which accepts the Administration's conceptual categories but draws sharply different conclusions; and the second of which, in my judgment, differs not only in terms of policy conclusions but, more radically, rejects even the categories implicit in the Administration's posture.

The first kind of opposition is represented by such different voices as Hans Morgenthau, John C. Bennett, President of Union Theological Seminary, and J. W. Fulbright. Though they differ in many aspects of their criticism, such men share one characteristic: they all challenge one or several of the critical judg-

ments the Administration has made; they all level their critique at some points of prudential vulnerability in the Administration's policy. Professor Morgenthau, for example, seriously questions the contention that either the Soviet Union or China is basically motivated by Communist ideology. Rather, he argues, for both countries ideology is only a mask for genuine motivations, which motivations are those of traditional national interest. Thus, what we are witnessing in Indo-China is not an unlimited surge of Communist expansionism, but basically a traditional Chinese aspiration to establish spheres of influence over areas contiguous to China. The implications of this are clear: if Professor Morgenthau is correct, Vietnam is probably not of vital concern to us, and the whole justification for American policy crumbles.

Along similar lines, Dr. Bennett argues that, given the incoherence and Balkanization of communism presently, it is false to contend as the Administration contends that the war in Vietnam is really a test case which must be won to avoid similar wars of national liberation in the future. Rather, Vietnam has little significance outside itself, is not symbolic of a greater conflict, and accordingly, cannot justify the horror of war as we and the Vietnamese are conducting it.

There are many other lines of criticism which these and other commentators have developed, e.g., that the objectives which the U.S. has espoused are not *feasible*, that in the kind of mixed, blurred, and turbulent situation prevailing in Vietnam, it simply is not possible for this country to bring order out of chaos, and we should recognize that fact and disengage.

But whatever particular point such criticisms attempt to establish, the character of these criticisms is extremely clear: the terms of the criticism are the same categories out of which the Administration's policy flows. There is no rejection of prudence, or ends-means calculation, as the method for deciding *what to do*. And, equally important, in such criticisms there is no rejection of the legitimacy of the nation-state as a source of decision.

But what of the second, more radical kind of opposition? There are, I think, two forces of this type which, though different in motivation, tend to be mixed in practice. First, Vietnam has generated a significant response from religious and philosophical pacifists. For the convinced pacifist it seems, the war in Vietnam is wrong not because the United States has miscalculated on the matter of ends and means, but simply because war itself is intrinsically wrong, and can never be justified. And the impor-

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tant point is this: for the pacifist, war is wrong, and the specific war in Vietnam is wrong, not because of prudential judgments he makes, but because he knows it to be unacceptable in some prophetic, *a priori* sense. The unacceptability of war is, in other words, a moral commandment which is in fact a *problem-solver*, not just a principle to be consulted in problem-solving. On the matter of war, the political decision derives directly from the ethical principle perceived. Thus, on the matter of war, the religious or philosophical pacifist challenges the government's judgment on how to decide *what to do*.

In the pacifist position there is implicit, I think, an anarchistic dimension. For pacifism says it is willing to recognize the legitimacy of political decisions *except* that, when human conflict arises, the political authority cannot decree destruction as a legitimate means.

The second critical force which rejects the categories of the government is less precisely identifiable but of probably greater significance. I refer to the many movements of protest against Vietnam which are not rooted in an articulated religious or philosophical pacifism but in what often seems to be something more akin to alienation without clear premises. Such protests may take the form of draft-card burning, non-violent but quite illegal demonstrations, self-immolation or any number of other manifestations—and they are not confined to the United States, as witness recent demonstrations in Great Britain and Australia. What does it mean, for example, when significant numbers of young men feel, or claim to feel no obligation to serve their country when the country's government says the need is here and now? They seem to be saying not simply that they disagree with present policy on Vietnam, but that the government has no right to formulate such a policy and no right to expect them to carry out such a policy.

Various attempts have been made to explain why the protesters protest. Some say cowardice and complete self-centeredness are unusually prevalent in the rising generation. But I see no evidence for this charge, and some evidence to the contrary: for example, many of these same people have been active in civil rights activity, which has required courage and selflessness, and indeed, to protest against Vietnam itself is probably a difficult thing for many of them to do.

Others point to the unusual quality of the Vietnam case itself and suggest that the confused character of the war has simply triggered an attitude which has always been present in society, but rarely actualized. I think there is some truth here, but

I do not find it a sufficient explanation of the phenomenon of protest.

If such theories do not satisfactorily explain the phenomenon of protest, it still needs to be explained, and I want to suggest a further hypothesis: that in part, at least, the present protests against U.S. engagement in Vietnam represent the *vanguard of the passing of the nation-state*; that, in other words, the protest movement is in part an implicit rejection of the nation-state as a legitimate decision-maker. I will suggest the bases of this hypothesis.

Man is social, and society needs political organization. Men conflict, and the political order contains and limits this conflict. The nation-state system which solidified in the West after the Reformation was an answer to this need, and it seems safe to say, not a bad one. But the presence of many states leads to conflict among them, and at its worst this international conflict becomes war. War of some shape and at some level is probably the inescapable corollary of the nation-state system.

War is tolerated—and I think rationally tolerated—as long as men's minds can encompass community no more inclusive than national boundaries. In a very crucial sense, the possibility of war is the price you pay for the good that is the nation-state.

But though nature seems to say there must be political organization, there is nothing in nature which says political organization must be in the nation-state form. If that is true, what happens when men begin to see beyond their national boundaries? The immense revolutions of our times, which we say are collectively shrinking the world, may be promoting a new political mentality which is not confined by traditional allegiances. If this is true, then it may be that the real, though inarticulate, meaning of the protests is that for many of the protesters war simply does not make sense any more, since for them its rationale—the protection of the national community—has dwindled to the point of disappearing. This would also explain why the protesters criticize not just the *wisdom* of government policy, but more fundamentally, its legitimacy.

American involvement in Vietnam is unusual, and in one way an *occasion for happiness*, for the terms of this involvement are being established more openly, consciously, and rationally than previous military engagements by this country. And it seems clear that a large part of this rationality derives from the presence of an articulated criticism which has managed to engage the Administration to some extent. Those who criticize the critics for criticizing simply do not understand the function of criticism in a representative political order. Though the specific crit-

icisms of the Morgenthau, Lippmanns, Kennans, and Fulbrights may be erroneous, they serve a vital political function: they force the Administration to be more careful and more circumspect in the formulation of its policies, for it knows it will be challenged and must be prepared to defend its decision.

But our involvement in Vietnam is also unusual and *disturbing*, because it is giving rise to quite ultimate and fundamental critiques, as I suggested before, even to the point of questioning the legitimacy of the nation-state. And in this unusual and disturbing characteristic, the argument over Vietnam is also *unhappy*, for it has within it a large potentiality for tragedy. For if, as I hypothesize, protest is in part the vanguard of the passing of the nation-state, it is still *only* a vanguard existing before the reality it tries to express.

The objective conditions of the world have not in fact progressed to the point of removing the cause

of the nation-state. There is nothing yet to replace the nation-state, nor anything on the near horizon. Indeed, most states are still virile and nationalism is luxuriant; and this seems especially true of the emerging nations. Herein lies the tragedy. If this vanguard exists, it does represent certain real movements toward community within the world, and is, therefore, in a sense right. But at the same time, it is woefully *premature*, and because premature, *wrong*; and in the final analysis, probably *intolerable* to the society within which it resides. If you must have the state, then you must have some agreed-upon system for making decisions.

In no sense does this mean that men should be uncritical of policy, or chauvinistic in attitude. Rather it means simply that the nation-state, imperfect as it is, and transitory as it doubtless will be, remains nonetheless the human order of things, the order from which we draw our very sustenance.

EASTERN CHRISTIANS AND HOSTILE STATES

Carnegie Samuel Calian

A careful look at a map of the world will indicate the puzzling and perplexing situations in which the churches of Eastern Orthodoxy find themselves. (The term Eastern Orthodoxy as used here *includes* the three basic branches of Eastern Christendom: (1) the Byzantine or Chalcedonian churches, the most numerous, (2) the "monophysite" or non-Chalcedonian churches, and (3) the Eastern Catholic or Uniate churches, the least numerous.) In approximate terms the Eastern churches seem to be facing two contrasting contexts—*communism* and *Islam*. Whether it be communism or Islam, the Eastern churches are confronted with alien and competitive systems of thought which threaten their survival. How has the contemporary—and the historic stance—of Eastern Christians prepared them to face this threat, which finds support in the state?

The following nations with Eastern Orthodox churches are under the governmental sphere of communism: the Soviet Union (includes the Russian, Georgian and Armenian churches), Yugoslavia, Rumania, Bulgaria, Albania, Poland and Czechoslo-

vakia. In addition, the Orthodox churches in Greece, Japan and Finland are adjacent to Communist-sponsored nations and are affected in outlook by the policy-making decisions of their respective national governments, aware as they are of their geographical proximity to communism.

On the other hand, the ancient patriarchates and churches of Constantinople, Alexandria, Antioch, and Jerusalem, as well as the Sinai, Coptic, Syrian Jacobite, Armenian (Cilicia) Eastern Orthodox churches and the Eastern Catholic churches (Uniates) such as the Maronites and Melkites are located within Islamic areas. The churches in Cyprus, Ethiopia and India (Malabar Jacobite) are near enough to Moslems to influence their outlook. A cursory glance at these churches and nations is enough to reveal that the Communist-Islamic spheres of impact present a constant tension and uneasiness within Eastern Orthodoxy in her relations with the state.

In Communist-governed lands the church's freedom is limited by the state. However, this curtailment varies within the different countries depending upon their particular negotiations between the church and the state. For instance, the Rumanian Orthodox Church, third largest church in Orthodoxy following the Russians and the Greeks, is furnished with state funds to maintain the clergy and the

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