

cation and health, in the battle for better cities, and most of all in the cause of really equal opportunity—those, in short, who care for social progress—should not strengthen the hands of their opponents by accepting the notion that we must choose between persistence in Vietnam and full budgetary support for a strong domestic program of action. It is not so, in economic or even in political terms.”

This is well said and Mr. Bundy could find historical precedents for city-states and nations that developed great societies even as they contended with powerful forces abroad. But the position he has outlined is subject to question on two major grounds. First, no modern, industrialized nation has developed and elevated its domestic life at the same time that it has engaged in a substantial war.

Second, if legislation and the federal budget are fair indications, we may number among those who “choose between Vietnam and social progress” a large number of our national leaders. Faced with the alternatives of tax hikes or reduced public spending—and this is how the alternatives are seen—the latter is the politically palatable choice. And the sector of public spending that is most vulnerable includes exactly those new programs that have not yet established themselves, those programs that most clearly mark advances in social planning. For psychological as well as political and economic reasons, the war in Vietnam directs resources from domestic programs. In assessing the cost of Vietnam we may have to include, therefore, the debility if not the demise of the Great Society.

J. F.

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## **in the magazines**

A leading Brazilian newspaper, Ernst Halperin reports in the *New York Review of Books* for December 29, recently proclaimed in an editorial that “in Latin America, the United States had ‘constituted itself into a mainstay of everything that is oligarchic, reactionary, stubbornly anachronistic, submissive, and sad.’” Anti-American expressions like this one, Halperin says in his review of several books on nationalism in Latin America, do not issue generally from the masses—from whom one would expect them if the situation were simply attributable to “the dominant role of American capital in the Latin American economy.” They are common, however, “in certain Latin American social groups not directly concerned with the economy—university and high-school students, intellectuals in general, and among the professional politicians who constitute the cadres of parties representing middle-class and working-class interests. It is thus a phenomenon of the political and not the economic sphere, and of the elites, not of the masses,” he maintains. “Its basic element is resentment of the lack of neutrality displayed by the United States in the power struggle between the oligarchic elites and the counter-elites of nationalist middle-class intellectuals, which has been going on in Latin America since the early years of the century.”

Yet the economic and political spheres do come together to influence American policy in the area, Halperin asserts: “It would of course be too much to

expect the average American business man in Latin America to remain neutral in the struggle between the oligarchies, the military, and the nationalist counter-elites. Although there are exceptions, business men as a group are not remarkable for a high level of political sophistication. They are unlikely to back a rabble-rousing Leftist in the hope that once in power, he will provide a bulwark against the very Bolshevism which he now appears to represent. . . . Business men need political stability for the satisfactory conduct of their affairs, and they need it at once, not in some unforeseeable future. It is thus perhaps inevitable that they should take a short-range view.

“What is less inevitable, and far more harmful, is that the Latin American policy of the United States should so often have been determined by this same short-range view; that is, by the opinions and prejudices of the American business community in Latin America. It is not the link between the local oligarchies and American business circles alone, but the apparent ability of these business circles to determine Washington’s Latin American policy which has given the United States the unfavorable image of being ‘a mainstay of everything that is oligarchic, reactionary, stubbornly anachronistic, submissive, and sad.’

“The Alliance for Progress was an attempt to change this image. It failed because it asked too much, not of the Latins, but of American policy

makers. In order to ensure its success, Washington would have had to take serious political risks. It would have had to bludgeon conservative Latin American governments into implementing social reforms, or even to encourage their overthrow by ceasing all political and financial support if they failed to do so. Such behavior was of course unthinkable. It would have violated the basic principle of American foreign policy, which is to avoid anything that might lead to a Congressional investigation." . . .

An article by Senator George McGovern on "Foreign Policy and the Crisis Mentality" in the January 1967 issue of *The Atlantic* inaugurates a new feature of the magazine called "Viewpoint." The junior senator from South Dakota describes the "disturbing American tendency to overreact to certain ideological and military factors while overlooking issues of vastly greater relevance to our safety and well-being." Certainly a "civil insurrection in Santo Domingo or Vietnam is dramatic," he says, "but what is its significance compared with such quiet challenges as the proliferation of nuclear weapons, the surging of nationalism and social upheavals in the developing world, or the mounting crisis of hunger and population? What, too, is the relationship of the quality and strength of our own society to our position in the world? How will the world see us if we succeed in pacifying Vietnam but fail to pacify Chicago?"

"Many Americans, having grown impatient with the frustrations of the cold war, see each international tension as an urgent crisis calling for a direct and decisive attack on the enemy." . . .

One of the explanations Senator McGovern offers for this "crisis outlook" is that "many Americans have not assimilated a sense of the world's diversity, nor do we look at events from an international vantage point. The older nations of Europe, steeped in the maelstrom of continental politics and with a century or more of colonial experience in every corner of the globe, have acquired a cosmopolitan view of the world. But when a political coup is attempted against an unpopular government in the Dominican Republic, or student rioting changes government policies in Japan, or de Gaulle seeks the leadership of Europe after liquidating hopeless French ventures in Asia and Africa, or a guerrilla movement threatens to bring down a much more generously armed American-backed regime in Saigon, we are unable to equate these events with our own experience. The revolution in mass communications instantly brings such developments into our living room, but there has been no corresponding increase in our capacity to evaluate the swift changes of our convulsive age."

In the September 30 issue of *New America* there

appeared an "Open Letter" addressed to members of the British Labour Party and signed by a number of American Socialists which called on the B.L.P. to "totally disassociate" itself from the United States' position on Vietnam." One member of the Labour Party, in response (November 30), pointed to the Wilson Government's unflagging efforts—often unpublicized—to improve the climate for negotiations and explained why he could not subscribe to certain of the points made in the appeal letter.

The correspondent, John Gilbert, notes of the two recent occasions when "the B.L.P. did protest violently," that "Suez was an armed invasion by three powers against the territory and legitimate Government of a fourth, without there being a shred of a *casus belli*. Hungary was the imposition by an alien power of a regime, against which virtually an entire populace had risen in spontaneous and justifiable revolt, and which had never previously succeeded in maintaining itself in power without relying on the presence of large quantities of alien troops.

"None of these circumstances seems to apply in South Vietnam today," Gilbert contends. "U.S. forces arrived there at the request of the present effective Government of the country and its predecessors. It may not be a very attractive Government and it may well offer little to satisfy the aspirations of its people. It may well be keeping itself largely by the use of armed force. There is, however, little evidence that the N.L.F. would, in any of these respects, prove itself more attractive to a Democratic Socialist. Where the N.L.F. may be less corrupt, the Ky regime at least permits to Buddhists and other religious sects a degree of open dissent and even defiance, which would be unthinkable in any Communist-controlled land.

"If, moreover, one accepts that there is no moral distinction to be drawn between the Ky regime and the Viet Cong, one is left with a choice between a dictatorship dependent on U.S. support and a dictatorship dependent on Communist support. It is not mere cynical 'Real Politik' to say that one would almost automatically prefer the first alternative.

"The U.S. Government is, however ponderously, it may seem to those who dissent on any particular issue, in the last resort answerable to public opinion as expressed at the U.N. There is no evidence that Communist China or the Hanoi regime are susceptible to either.

"The Open Letter gives the impression that it is the volume as much as the nature of U.S. activity to which objection is made. Surely, however, if one accepts the need to make such bitter and ugly war as has fallen to the lot of the U.S. in Vietnam, then it is in the path of prudence, and in the long run, of mercy, to attempt to bring it to an end with all possible dispatch by the application of overwhelming force."

PAMPHILUS