

THE UNITED STATES AND REVOLUTION

What Path Will Americans Follow?

Philip Berrigan, S.S.J.

What is the major reason for America's dilemma in Vietnam? Actually, the same reason holds for the near-boiling point of the cold war, for the resumption of arms sales to Arab countries following the Middle East crisis, for current American intervention in Thailand, Laos, Guatemala, Peru, Ecuador, Columbia and others; for mutual defense treaties with 42 nations; for military and economic aid to nearly 100 other nations. The same reason, furthermore, why defense appropriations constitute nearly 10% of gross national product, why Congress appropriates money for the Defense Department faster than the Pentagon can spend it; why 72¢ of every tax dollar goes for war and war preparation; why the Pentagon controls almost the exact percentage of Federal property in the world (53%) that the United States itself controls of the world's productive capacity. The reason is, of course, our wealth, and the type of society necessary to produce it.

On June 28 of this year, President Johnson gave in Baltimore before the Junior Chamber of Commerce one of the most important speeches of his Administration; no major official of government had previously dared to say what he said of the rationale behind foreign policy. Yet the President's remarks evoked little analysis or comment in the communications media.

The President began by alternating between a defense of his Administration and a scathing attack upon the war protest movement. The first is full of unhistorical and exaggerated claims, the second follows the familiar Johnsonian pattern of guaranteeing dissent in the same breath he condemns practice of dissent. "During the very same week," he said, "as the peace-niks invaded the Pentagon, walked over the tulips, sat down on the steps, slept in the halls, 10,000 young Americans voluntarily, on their own, walked into the military enlistment centers directed by the Pentagon and volunteered their services and their lives for America. Let me repeat, there were over 10,000 first-term enlistments in one week." The intentional meaning of such a statement arises from the implications it contains: (1) The protestors in the Pentagon and

10,000 voluntary enlistments are somehow related; (2) They are related because the second (10,000) is a reaction of patriotism to the irresponsibility and traitorism of the first; (3) The 10,000's intent is to be directly involved in the Vietnam war. Actually, the vast majority of the latter were fleeing the war in Southeast Asia by joining the Reserves.

President Johnson also made some notable remarks about poverty. "A little over three years ago, when I became President, we had no poverty program. We were in Vietnam, but we had no poverty program. We started one—and we have increased it every year since. This year, we are increasing it by 25%—without tucking tail and running in Vietnam. More money will be spent on poverty in the United States in trying to do something about it this year by the Federal Government than we spend in Vietnam." But 25% of \$1.8 billion (the '66 anti-poverty budget) is \$450 million, supposedly bringing the allocations for anti-poverty measures to \$2.3 billion. This has simply not been done, and even government genius for juggling monetary statistics to fit criticism cannot prove that it has been done. Finally, the Vietnam war is likely to cost \$40 billion this year (by sound estimates it cost \$30 billion in 1966), so even if one were to add government involvement in local welfare programs to anti-poverty, plus every Federal measure that has even the most marginal effect upon poverty, one could not come up with expenditures over \$40 billion.

The President then offered statistics that help explain why our society is now called the welfare-warfare state, and a garrison economy. "Our prosperity is second to none anywhere in the world. Our standard of living is second to none anywhere in the world. We produce more goods; we transport more goods; we use more goods than anyone in the world. We own almost a third of the world's railroad tracks. We own almost two-thirds of the world's automobiles—and we don't have to wait three years to get a new one, either. . . . We own half the trucks in the world. We own almost half of all the radios in the world. We own a third of all the electricity that is produced in the world. We own a fourth of all the steel. Our health conditions rank favorably with those of other countries in the world. Although we have about 6%

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of the population of the world, we have half its wealth."

"Bear in mind," he continued, "that the other 94% of the population would like to trade with us. Maybe a better way of saying it would be that they would like to exchange places with us. I would like to see them enjoy the blessings that we enjoy. But don't you help them exchange places with us—because I don't want to be where they are. Instead I believe we are generous enough—I believe we are compassionate enough—and I believe we are grateful enough that we would like to see all of them enjoy the blessings that are ours."

It is typical of the American world-view, or typical of our hypernationalism, that we need to think that other men want to change places with us. Typical also, that we think ourselves "generous, compassionate and grateful enough" to desire that all men "enjoy the blessings that are ours." The evidence somehow runs contrary to the longing. Our wealth is equal to, or greater than that of the whole world against us, and to match this as security, our military hardware is greater than that of the whole world against us.

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Logically, foreign policy must fit these twin economic and military realities. And indeed it does. The State Department performs essentially the same tasks on foreign soil as politicians perform at home, that is to say, it cultivates a political climate favorable to economic operation, protecting where protection is needed, manipulating governments and native business interests to insure a greater flow of profits to feed the American gross national product. And if native opposition becomes such that revolution threatens economic presence and ongoing investment, there is the pressure of American economic and military force. It is, after all, the familiar tactic of carrot and stick.

Let it be made clear that there is no express desire for domination present in such policy. We have no territorial aims, no intentions to annex, none of the conventional colonial aspirations. Rather, the technological society to which we have given such an overwhelming mandate has an inherent need to grow and expand, at home and abroad. It has a consuming interest in profits, just as most Americans do; there is a sincere and profound belief that what is good for General Motors is now good for the world.

In effect, we are captives to our wealth, and the system that produces it. It seems that when material tangibles assume overweening importance, they tend to control their owners; means have imperceptively become ends. An ideology develops to rationalize the irrationality of this process: domestically, it becomes

a national mythology called Americanism, while its foreign version becomes anti-communism. Rival peoples, races, systems and nations become "friendly" insofar as they accept what we accept, value what we value. Insofar as they diverge from our consensus, they are labeled "less friendly," or "enemy," as the French, Cubans and Chinese seem to prove.

Foreign policy then, as articulated by President Johnson or by any Administration spokesman, stays "official" by concerning itself with "aggression," "Communist subversion," and the need to preserve "the self-determination" of "free" peoples. Such rhetoric is needed to foster mass support. In any real sense, however, foreign policy is merely a creature of economic and military power. With both of the latter at peak strength, it does not make sense that diplomacy now opt to "contain" communism. We are no longer dealing with Stalin's Soviet Russia or Mao's Revolution. Our wealth and arms, two aspects of massive technological productivity, are capable of a course far more beneficial to national purpose than "containment." In a word, we have proven that we can out-produce the Communists. The object now is to outbid, outsubvert, outpropagandize, outthreaten, outmaneuver, and embarrass them at every turn. And if it comes to the brink, to take them there and send them home once more defeated by our righteousness and firmness, knowing that they have less stomach for nuclear exchange than we do.

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Official Washington, therefore, is not apt to consider Vietnam as the same moral and political disgrace many of us do. Vietnam is seen, instead, within the context of Pax Americana, within terms that flow from the imposition of the American cultural, technological and political miracle upon the world. In these terms, evidence abounds of our success. Eastern Europe has opened to the West, Russia is becoming more and more "like us," China is undergoing a cultural revolution. North Korean and Japanese Communists are being divorced from Peking, Sukarno has been overthrown and an anti-Communist bloodbath has followed, stability and growth are evident in Singapore—all these are benefits of our firmness in Vietnam. And though the price there might be heavy and unpopular, a rising "quotient of pain" for the Vietnamese will inevitably end in a Korean solution and a concrete realization of our aims.

War in Vietnam, therefore, cannot stop, if stopping means a defeat of policy. It is policy that is at stake, and behind policy, ruthless economics and overwhelming military force; and behind that, a Way of Life which revolves around the highest standard of

living in the world. The thing has a ponderous logic and consistency about it, even a morality, if you will. That is why Washington's reaction to protest always has an air of angry incredulity about it. If the protestors were to have their way, and America withdrew from Vietnam, the world floodgates to national wars of liberation would be opened, and then what would happen to our "blessings," which the protestors share?

Such realities do not form an altogether new pattern. Major General Smedley Butler, who is still a legend in the Marine Corps, had these few observations to make upon his retirement in the '30's. ". . . I spent 33 years and 4 months in active military service as a member of our country's most agile military force—the Marine Corps. I served in all commissioned ranks from 2nd Lt. to Maj. General. And during that period I spent most of my time being a high-class muscle man for Big Business, for Wall Street, and for the bankers. In short, I was a racketeer, a gangster for capitalism.

". . . Thus I helped make Mexico and especially Tampico safe for American oil interests in 1914. I helped make Haiti and Cuba a decent place for the National City boys to collect revenues in. I helped in the raping of half a dozen Central American Republics for the benefit of Wall Street. I helped purify Nicaragua for the international banking house of Brown Bros. in 1909-1912. I brought light to the Dominican Republic for American sugar interests in 1916. In China in 1927, I helped see to it that the Standard Oil Co. went its way unmolested.

"During these years, I had, as the boys in the back room would say, a swell racket. I was rewarded with honors, medals and promotions." (Maj. Gen. Smedley D. Butler, USMC, Ret., *Common Sense*, November 1935.)

His words have been echoed more recently by General David M. Shoup, former Marine Corps commandant. The speech has been widely quoted but deserves repetition. "I believe," Shoup said, "that if we had and would keep our dirty, bloody, dollar-crooked fingers out of the business of these nations so full of depressed, exploited people, they will arrive at a solution of their own." Odd how many of the military begin to rethink their position upon freedom from service. Odd how Bradley, Ridgeway and Gavin have emerged as critics of American diplomacy and military strategy.

The Vietnam war must be stopped, because it is unjust, because we can't win it justly; because we can't win it without W.W. III. One is appalled, therefore, by the bankruptcy of attitude and action needed to stop it. By and large, the American people are unknowing, unconscious and yet willing accomplices

of the war. Congress is worse than the rank and file, and will give majority support to any war administration for the foreseeable future. So will the major institutions of America, business, educational and religious. By the same token, foreign opposition is too fragmented by internal difficulties to be of noticeable impact. There remains only the peace movement, or more broadly, the American human rights movement.



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Peace people would do well to be familiar with the coalition of Communists and Catholics who extricated France from Algeria during the 1950's. It was a genuine movement, infused with a profound Christian spirit—an enormous sensitivity to injustice and a sophisticated type of nonviolence. Moreover, the major figures of French intellectualism were in the vanguard—Domenach, Mauriac, Sartre, Massignon, Duval and Marrou, to mention a few. White papers, speeches, manifestos, articles, pamphlets, books; it would be impossible to list the literary output against a war that was colonial, inhuman and wrong. Soldiers refused obedience, others who had previously served refused to put on a uniform or to return to Algeria. Francis Jeanson, a young existentialist writer, organized a network of assistance for the F.L.N., advocating refusal to register, desertion and aid to the Algerian nationalists, Lanza del Vasto, a disciple of Gandhi, formed a community of pacifists who identified with 5,000 Algerians held without trial. Arrested repeatedly by the police, they were always released far outside Paris. In 1960, many of del Vasto's men surrounded a draft objector named Jacques Muir, and having destroyed their identity papers, all replied that they were Jacques Muir. Other advocates of non-violence organized public works projects on their own, and invited draft refusers to contribute in this way to public utility. In the end, before negotiations were finally forced by public opinion, Moslems, liberals, Catholics, Communists, and priests were massacred in Algeria by General Salan's followers. But the war ended, and France emerged to a better life. For once,

it could be said, moral considerations outweighed political power.

True, this war is vastly more complex, harder to stop and more atrocious than France's Algerian effort. But it is also true that the peace movement has faced it with proportionately less intelligence, less outrage at injustice, less taste for risk than the French revolutionaries. We whose society springs from profound revolutionary roots, whose country was torn from 1877 to 1914 by a series of labor explosions more ferocious than any counterpart in the world, become frightened at the word revolution, no less so than by the civil disobedience needed for a controlled revolution.

Yet America is a radically sick society, and any talk of reforming it without revolution is nonsense—revolution of consciousness and conscience, revolution

of economic and institutional life. Jefferson, at the very time the Constitution was being framed, spoke of the need of revolution every twenty years in a society like ours. And sociologists have long referred to "an iron law of oligarchy" which seizes representative government, making holders of power insensitive to the needs of the masses.

Of one thing we can be sure, revolution will come: a welfare-warfare state like ours cannot for long contain it. It might be delayed, it cannot be forestalled. And it will come violently, through a combination of escalating urban terror and Southeast Asian war, both of which could coalesce in World War III. Or it will come nonviolently because we have the humaneness to do what is right whatever the consequences; because, in fact, we have insisted that our country be given back to us.

The Press and Foreign Policy: A New Dimension

The Artillery of the Press, by James Reston. Harper & Row. 112 pp. \$3.95

by John M. Lavine

James "Scotty" Reston's *The Artillery of the Press* succinctly presents some of the most pressing questions about our country's foreign policy, and the part the President, the Congress, the press, and the public play in forming and affecting that policy. Unfortunately, the book falls far short of what the reader might have expected from one of America's most distinguished journalists in terms

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of explaining the long-range effects that the press might have in reporting foreign policy and its influence on it.

In his introduction Reston says, "My theme is that the rising power of the United States in world affairs, and particularly of the American President, requires, not a more compliant press, but a relentless barrage of facts and criticism, as noisy but also as accurate as artillery fire. . . ."

This introductory challenge sounds like Reston. It sets a goal which one assumes his book will try to explain. Yet much of the book—which is an expansion of the author's Elihu Root Lectures before the Council on Foreign Relations in 1966—seems to turn Reston's optimistic challenge into an unclear, Lippmann-type pessimism.

Reston, like Lippmann, wonders if the press can have any but an indirect effect in educating the public about the major issues of foreign policy or in affecting the government as it formulates our foreign policy.

One side of the paradox of Reston's presentation is exemplified by what Reston says of the role of the press:

"We are no longer merely in the transmitting business, but also in the education business. Actually, the mass communications of the country probably have more effect on the American mind than all the schools and universities combined, and the problem is that neither the officials who run the government nor the officials who run the newspapers, nor the radio and television programs, have adjusted to that