

made from railroad ties and modeled on the type Capone was making famous at the same time in Chi) I thought then with absolute conviction that this was not for me, any more than were the planes and missiles of the Americans. In both cases death, wounds, torture, poison. Though I must admit that the sight of our friends here gives me more hope of control and integration of death than does our public experience at home. Is it possible that men may even violently defend an ideal, and in so doing come to moral superiority as human beings, despite the blood they have shed? Is such a thing only the old lie in a new guise? Truly, the present visit sharpens the debate on violence, instead of solving it. . . .

Tonight they put an old electric heater in my room somewhat like the one we used to have to "take the chill off" in the rooms at home some thirty years ago. It chatters and sputters; the connection is faulty. One dares not get into bed with the thing going. Outside, there are flashes of noise like summer thunder, the sound of anti-aircraft at some distance.

The French in Vietnam. They were able to raise

perhaps the most formidable cultural epoch of modern times here and in Asia and Africa. Something like Egypt and Greece in their own day. Yet I have never felt full in my face such a furnace blast of hatred against any nation as I have felt here against the French. Was the Old Testament right? Are Babylon and Tyre raised inevitably on the mortise of a victim's bones?

What Christians have to offer, both to assailants and victims, is a decision to go to the heart of the conflict, not as a solution of force but as a solution of non-force. If this is a Gandhian insight, so much the better.

Instructions for return. Develop for the students the meaning of Ho's "useless years." The necessity of escaping once and for all the slavery of "being useful." On the other hand, prison, contemplation, life of solitude. Do the things that even "movement people" tend to despise and misunderstand.

To be radical is *habitually* to do things which society at large despises.

[To be concluded.]

THE CONTEMPORARY CRISIS AND THE WILL OF AMERICA

James V. Schall

These past years have rung with growing clashes of arms and men. Surely we can observe with more than literary justice that our generation is filled with wars and rumors of war, with violence, strife and hatred. Even though psychologically and spiritually we pass from Nigeria to Palestine to Vietnam to China, and even to Detroit, we are uneasily aware that the scope of unrest today is both world-wide and of universal significance. No one can long remain objective and calm in the face of our news media which make the whole planet so visible before us. We are often tempted to wish that Asian news still had to be sent to San Francisco via a slow-moving clipper ship rather than via instantaneous radio and television. Yet, the clipper ship is gone; there is no escape from

James V. Schall, S.J. is a lecturer at the Instituto Sociale of the Gregorian University in Rome and author of the recently published *Redeeming the Time*.

where we are. This is the world we have made. And though we all indulge in it at times, there is more than a touch of escapism — secular and pious — in prolonged lamentation about the gravity of our earthly crisis.

Mankind likes to believe that its problems and hopes are of the highest significance. If our contemporary failures and uncertainties are any inverse indication of our potential worth, as they are, we can readily believe that the nature of the world is such that men are not long permitted to ignore their basic human condition and problems, are not allowed to be indifferent to man's true situation without tragic consequences to someone. This is another way of saying that men are responsible for their activities both for good and for evil, that there is a profound wisdom in holding precisely man responsible in some sense for his situation.

What, then, is our world like? The responses are sometimes little short of amazing. "Holy, holy, holy,

holy, holy, holy, holy, holy, holy," sings Allen Ginsberg, appropriating to the world what the Sanctus of the Mass and the prophet Isaiah attribute to God. "A remarkable new generation of Cubans," James Reston has written, ". . . is being indoctrinated systematically with the idea that the United States is the embodiment of everything that is narrow, selfish, and evil in the world today." "We shall never call for, nor accept peace," wrote the Syrian Defense Minister in 1964. "We shall only accept war and the restoration of our usurped land. We resolved to drench this land with our blood, to oust you, aggressor, and to throw you into the sea for good." "He [Ho Chi Minh] is still convinced today that if Roosevelt had lived through his term, France would never have dared the reconquest of Indochina and that Vietnam would have become a distant but warm friend of the United States," writes David Schoenbrun. Meantime, in San Francisco, the flower city, this last summer, a disc jockey began his delightfully insane program with this rather profound remark: "Well, here we are for another four hours of love — can you stand it? can you stand it?"

"Not only is this racial explosion probably to take place in America," Malcolm X wrote prophetically in 1964, "but all the ingredients for this racial explosion in America to blossom into a worldwide racial explosion present themselves right here in front of us." An official in India's Ministry of Health recently remarked on his country's new program for population control: "It is better to use compulsion than depend on American wheat. After all, how long can India live on a ship-to-mouth basis? To succeed, we must *catch* 45 million men, take them to the nearest hospital, and sterilize them. And catch them as fast as we can." [my emphasis] As Snoopy unsuccessfully battled the Red Baron over Flanders, he was finally shot down in flames into the arms of a lovely French mademoiselle. But soon he had to return to the tasks of war. As he dejectedly sought Allied lines he muttered to himself: "Curse the Red Baron and his kind! Curse the wickedness in this world! Curse the evil that causes this unhappiness!"

Amidst all this conflicting analysis, the final word must go to Al Capp: "You got piddle in Hew-Hess-Hay that *want* to be 17?" "In the U.S.A. it's the *only* age to be!! No one expects you to work, or to be in your right mind. . . . And if you break a law everyone apologizes to *you*!! Snapples will make the American dream come true!! EVERY MAN A TEEN-AGER."

So these are the revolutions of our time — some are political, some are economic, some are human, some are metaphysical and theological. And such is the nature of our world that these revolts need not be

mutually exclusive. Snoopy's castigations are, it would seem, ones that we all are often tempted to share — curse the wickedness in this world! curse the evil that causes all this unhappiness! Yet, we must take careful note of what we castigate in our attacks on contemporary evils and unhappiness. For it is but a short step from attacking evil in the world to a denial of the human reality itself as we actually find it, with its mixture of imperfections and evils and joys and sorrows, with its constant challenge to act with incomplete, with less than omnipotent knowledge. The only world there is — this one — is the one wherein such realities are discovered to be operative. It is of particular importance to the theologian that intellectual discussions do not obscure this fundamental human reality.

Now there is a certain soundness in looking upon the current wave of crises as manifestations of certain theological issues. In brief, there does seem to be a widespread growth of what can only be called "angelism" in the West, a kind of implicit withdrawing from the realities of this world in the name of virtue. The essential issue that appears pertinent is whether concrete, existing men in their actual human condition can act for themselves and for others with a good conscience to limit and reduce the degrees of suffering and evil in the world. And if so, what are the terms and implications of this action? In a way this is the classical problem of politics itself: responsible action to promote human goals, responsible action to limit and reduce the level of human vice and depravity. The fundamental starting point of this approach is that we are dealing with men, with finite, limited men. Therefore, anything that results in an attitude that is basically utopian, naive, or unreal seems doubly illusory — first because it distorts the reality as it is, secondly because it allows to man the hope of ultimate perfection in this life, a hope that by its unreality ends up by causing greater evil.

Some general framework is required to evaluate the present world situation. We confront identifiable revolutionary conditions today, all to some extent inter-related, though not all of equal importance. The most significant of these is what we shall call the *developmental* revolution. This revolution not only lies at the bottom of most of the other revolts, but it is the one that offers mankind the greatest, indeed the only hope of overcoming the other hatreds and divisions that it encounters. The developmental revolution has its origins essentially in Western history, in the recognition that man can and should control his environment so that it provides for human welfare and dignity on the

widest possible scale. It deals with questions of poverty, technology, population, liberty, and welfare. Thus, this developmental revolution challenges mankind with a real, unavoidable, essentially noble goal — to fail in its achievement, it seems clear, is ultimately to fail as mankind. And the very nature of human freedom means that such a failure is at least possible.

Subordinate crises that seem most visible today are these: the Negro revolt, the continuing Communist ideology, the Vietnam war, the hippie phenomenon, and the Arab-Israel impasse. Reaction to these various problems in our society is most interesting as it serves more than anything else to indicate the complexity of the world we inhabit.

First, the Vietnam war and the Negro revolt are producing a phenomenon that is difficult to identify in classical terms. For lack of a better phrase, it can be called the "liberal, neo-isolationist, America-first view." Such a description is used ironically perhaps, yet it seems to be the best description of not a narrow segment of American opinion. The statement of Walter Lippmann is typical:

The game of power politics may again become playable some day if mankind can come to terms with the technological revolution. But this will not be in our time, and what we all have to realize — President Johnson and President de Gaulle and Chairman Kosygin and the rest of us — is that the solution of the internal problems of modern living must have priority over foreign affairs.

On a less exalted level, the noted and popular San Francisco columnist Herb Caen reflects the same sentiment:

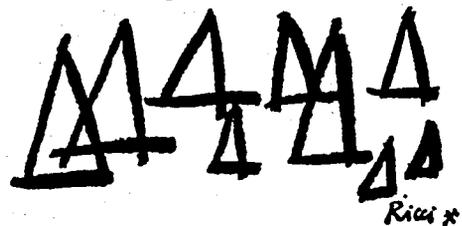
France cannot remake Europe and President Johnson cannot remake Asia. They have to remake France and America. And if this be isolationism, so be it. It is nevertheless an almost universal human sentiment in the world today.

I'm no longer undone when somebody accuses me of "bad taste." With billions being squandered on an insane war while our own people live in squalor; while education, mental health and welfare are being sabotaged in the sweet name of "economy"; as long as this administration insists on policing the world while it can't police its own streets. . . .

Aside from the interesting suggestion, contrary to our constitutional tradition, that it is the task of the "administration" to police our streets, this approach must seem to an outsider very self-centered and isolationist. Suddenly the lessons about world responsibility gained from World Wars I and II seem to be reversed. Here America's poor are held to be more important than the much poorer and vastly more numerous people of the rest of the world. American efforts to pacify the world are the direct causes of domestic unrest. This is the paradox of a good segment of the contemporary liberal mind as it appears to espouse a sort of neo-nationalism opposed to the

more classic American liberal philosophy of "all men are created equal. . . ." Poverty and wealth, alas, are very relative. By world standards America's poor are fantastically rich. It is an enlightening exercise to imagine what a really poor man from the underdeveloped world must think of this new American philosophy which tells him that America's rich-poor are more important than his poor-poor. Would he be so impressed with Mr. Lippmann's "so be it"?

The Arab-Israeli war was a mercifully quick one. This struggle did much to clear the air about the quality of the war philosophy in the United States and Europe. We quickly discovered that it was often not war in itself that was opposed but only certain kinds of war, fought in certain places. American Jewish leaders, who have in large part been highly critical of American involvement in Vietnam, are now severely critical of the supposed American and Christian failure to support actively enough the war in the Middle East. This war, on the other hand, was something of an eye-opener to Europe, to a Europe which is losing more and more its international leverage because of its inability to unite and because of its failure to see that it cannot really avoid its own world and continental responsibilities. The popular Gaullist thesis of obvious Russian disinterest in further expansion stands much shaken in the path of the Israeli victory.



Behind the surface of these world events is the constant anxiety that arises from the nuclear and food sectors. "The human race has only thirty-five years," the pessimists tell us. Perhaps they are right. William and Paul Paddock contend that it is already too late to do anything about the world food problem to avoid famine in 1975. The great continents no longer have any real surplus to meet the earth's ever growing needs. Food is the great weapon of the future. Revolution, from here on out, will be based on its control. The time for optimism has already passed us by.

In the face of all this we have the psychedelic and flower generation that seeks to avoid such a world by "dropping out" altogether, by learning how to live off the land like the American Indian, by going on another sort of "trip." This is the rejection of technical civilization, a longing for immediate confrontation, for a life of be-ins and happenings.

On the other hand we have the visionaries who see perfectly well that there is something all wrong with

this defeatist atmosphere in the modern world. Mankind's knowledge and technical capacity are themselves explosive. The Buckminster Fullers and the Marshall McLuhans remind us that our real problem is that our hopes and ambitions and visions are much too narrow, that we really are too pessimistic, unwilling to believe in mankind because we are unwilling to hope and to change and to accept the implications of what we are creating. The world is immediately ahead of us, not behind us. It is a world where work is reduced to a minimum, even disappears, and thus too disappear the categories of work and reward as well as the politics based on labor. As McLuhan says, "Formerly, the problem was to invent new forms of labor-saving. Today, the reverse is the problem." It is the world of the guaranteed annual wage, the world where new cities are built from nothing, where a lifetime of leisure and culture is possible for everyone.

From this background we must analyze the nature of the contemporary world crises. They must be seen as opportunities and challenges, not as defeats and tragedies — though they are, often enough, also these. But in order to take his more optimistic approach, two basic points should be proposed: (1) the major problems facing man are based on his finiteness, not on his wickedness. By this it is suggested that problems of suffering, poverty, and inadequacy are rooted primarily, though not exclusively, in man's finite, human condition. They are not as such evil and reprehensible. We could, for example, undoubtedly save many lives today if we had an airplane that could fly 10,000 miles an hour. As yet we do not possess such an instrument and so some people are dying because such an apparatus does not exist. Imagine a desperately sick man in Chile who needs to get to a hospital in New York. But, and this is the point, there is no "blame" or "culpability" that such a plane does not exist. It is a problem of finiteness that challenges our ingenuity and our intelligence. Indeed, it is the highest tribute and dignity that mankind has that it is truly capable of and responsible for reducing the limits of his finiteness. This is man's essential relation to the earth itself.

Yet, there is a moral issue connected with this approach. It is this: the danger of attributing to human malice or selfishness what really belongs to human finiteness. If this is done, there will result a revolution insoluble on human terms and tragically useless in its consequences. Seen in this light, it is not wholly true to maintain that the causes of today's inadequacies which result in slums, undernourishment, lack of adequate living conditions and a host of other such things are due exclusively to evil and to malice on the part of some few or many human beings. It is just possible that, on the whole, the earth is perform-

ing extraordinarily well to do as much as it does, granting present levels of development.

(2) The second point is this: that while it is true that finiteness is undoubtedly the major cause of much of our present situation, still some of our problems are irreducibly due to what must be classified as human evil and selfishness. The question immediately arises, however: What is the human stance *vis-à-vis* such admitted evil where it can more or less be clearly defined and isolated? It is the answer to this latter question that is the cause of a great deal of confusion and hostility.

Granted the context of evil and contingency in which man exists, can he act in such a manner as to reduce the contingency and restrain the evil? There is a widespread and growing suspicion in our society that he cannot. Paradoxically, this has always been the essential political question, the unpleasant question of who is to take charge, who is to do this "dirty work" if the pervasive ramifications of contingency and evil are to be reduced?

As we have suggested, the fundamental world problem today is that of development. The issue is on what terms this development will take place. Are we free to disinterest ourselves in its mode and course? The underlying fear is that this development can happen in a manner that gives man bread but little else. Indeed, today there seems to be not a little sympathy for the view that concern for the type of social, economic, political and cultural life in the developing world is an indifferent matter.

Since World War II, the United States has pursued a general policy which has sought to combine development with containment. Both of these elements were seen as necessary. Containment was thought necessary to give development a fair chance in a non-totalitarian form. The policy paid off in Europe and Japan; it is still up for grabs in the rest of the world. This policy depended on the capacity and willingness of the United States to go outside its own sphere to achieve these goals. What is currently at stake is the continuing capacity and willingness of the United States to perform this function, unpleasant and unwelcome as it is, of leading the forces of containment and development. This capacity is directly dependent upon the will and nerve of this democracy — a form of government that political thought has long suspected of being most vulnerable because of the short vision of the majority of its masses. Our overriding national question is: Is it really a moral imperative to become a less great, less important power, to leave the field to others no matter what their philosophy and to turn in on ourselves to try to cope with our own problems?