

in the magazines

What kind of year has it been? According to Auberon Waugh, writing in the London *Spectator* of December 27, "for as long as any Christian, liberal or humanitarian tradition survives, the year 1968 will be remembered as the one in which a British government, for the first time in its history, was prepared to condone the mass starvation to death of innocent civilians as a means of implementing one aspect of its peacetime foreign policy. . . . Although photographs of the atrocities being perpetrated in Biafra have appeared in most newspapers, the general impression given by the captions and news coverage is that the children are starving to death as the result of a famine brought about by the war. Not a single newspaper has seen fit to point out that the children are dying as the direct and intended result of a siege which is supported by the British government, by the official opposition party and by very nearly every Commonwealth correspondent in Fleet Street."

One justification offered for British support of the Nigerian government "by ordinary people with an awareness of what is happening," Waugh notes, "is that if we do not support the Nigerians in their efforts to crush Biafran nationhood and extinguish as many Ibos as are necessary for this purpose, then we shall lose our investments in Nigeria . . ."

"Even if this consideration justified our complicity in the deliberate starvation to death of two million Africans who are not our enemies . . . it ignores the whole nature of Western investment in the newly independent third world. All investment in black Africa is in the lap of the gods to the extent that there is nothing in theory to prevent a sovereign state from nationalizing any assets it likes without compensation. What discourages them from doing so is not sentimental regard for the old country, nor memories of happy cricket afternoons at Sandhurst and Eaton Hall, but the necessity of encouraging further investment . . ."

New uses and abuses of private capital in the third world are described by Socialist party Chairman Michael Harrington in a column in the party publication *New America* (December 19). "There is," he states, an example of American imperialist politics in the works which is so flagrant that the *Wall Street Journal* expressed editorial doubts about it.

"The United States is getting ready to tell the people of Peru that they must make a deal which satisfies Standard Oil of New Jersey as a payment for the seizure of its Peruvian affiliate, or aid will be stopped. The *Journal* thinks that 'it's hard to see how the U.S. at this juncture could or should act otherwise,' but adds, 'it's unfortunate for all concerned that matters

have come to this pass.' It even notes, 'this country hasn't been entirely blameless. No matter how Jersey Standard may have comported itself in Peru, many American firms in the past have engaged in the rank-est forms of exploitation in underdeveloped lands.'

"But what is involved," Harrington comments, "is not an 'unfortunate' aberration in American policy but rather one more instance of a pattern in which the sovereign power of this country is used against poor nations and placed at the disposal of private corporations, particularly when they are in oil or mining. And just behind that fact is the emergence of a new institutional form of Western capital, the multinational corporation . . ."

"As Sanford Rose described this new institutional form in the September 1968 *Fortune*, 'these companies now regard the world rather than the nation state as their natural and logical operating area.'

'Carrying multi-nationalism to the logical extreme,' Rose continues, 'a corporation will concentrate its production in the area where costs are lowest, and build up its sales where the market is most lucrative.' It is precisely such a global policy which will freeze the present international division of labor—profitable machine production for fat capitalists and Communists, unremunerative sweat production for starving countries trying to develop, whether they are capitalist or Communist. And this is, of course, one of the main sources of the total failure of the United Nations' Development Decade and the consequent growth in the gap between the rich and poor nations.

"But what if a sovereign nation should assert itself? One response is that the oil corporation sends the State Department down to Lima to do its bargaining. Another, more subtle, method is described by Rose. If a developing country should decide that foreign capital cannot repatriate its profits but must re-invest them locally, 'a multi-national corporation could simply "take out" its dividends by rising prices on intra-corporate sales proportionately.'"

In an editorial retrospective (and prospective) of the American Presidency, the *Christian Century* recalls (issue of November 20) that "with the escalation of the Vietnam war in the summer of 1965 and the increasing credibility crisis of the Presidency, it became apparent that Lyndon Johnson was deficient in both the communication skills and the ability to sort out national priorities which the people as a whole rightly expect of their only truly national spokesman. There is one other political shortcoming which is particularly relevant to the election season just concluded: Johnson's inattention, as chief of his party,

Continued on p. 5

in the magazines . . .

Continued from p. 2

to the disintegration of established state and local party organizations (and the national committee which reflects them) in the face of new social circumstances and political demands. The Democratic party itself perhaps became a casualty of the war, but it is doubtful that the President grasped what was happening.

"This concentration upon Johnson's attributes as a technician in his own profession may come as a surprise and may seem out of place in a religious journal. But, as Max Weber recognized long ago, there is a fateful intertwining of ethics and technics at the core of politics as a vocation. It is not enough to speak to the ideals and purposes which animate politicians. The most morally significant fact may be lodged in a structure or a system or a process of responsibility—and not simply in the souls of individual men. There has been a process of profound demoralization at work in American politics for the past several years. Lyndon Johnson seems not to have understood that process or what to do about it. It is greatly to his credit that he apparently came to realize his inability to cope with it and stepped aside."

"One returned finally to South Vietnam to talk to the inmates, to try to find out what lessons have been learned," writes Ward S. Just of the *Washington Post*, a former correspondent in Saigon ("Notes on Losing a War," *Atlantic Monthly*, January). "We have been in it now for—what, three years? Five years? What do the people there think about it? How does it look inside the kaleidoscope?"

"It really is a lot better now," a friend, an official said, as if speaking of someone who was ill. "Really, it is. . . . The civil defense forces really are doing very well; the GVN has supplied the guns faster than we ever thought they could. The coordination has been fantastic. . . . You know about the new miracle rice. It's terrific. It is going to revolutionize farming in Southeast Asia. There is only one small trouble [smile]: the Vietnamese don't like the rice much [smile]; they don't like the taste of it. . . ."

"He had been nodding, and speaking very slowly. Then his voice became an edge, and looking at me, he went on: 'You know the GVN has beefed up the ARVN. They are past their 1968 quota and well into 1969. I know there are troubles with the officers and the rest; none of it is perfect. But the GVN has gotten off its ass better than we ever thought they could. It is a real government now; it's working.'

"Now he looked at me directly: 'Look. We have proven one thing. We have proven that if something like this happens somewhere else in the world we have proven now that *we know how to do it*. We

know how to contain an insurgency. We have made a hell of a lot of mistakes, but we've won this war, make no mistake about it. We have proven that we can win. We can do it. We have proven that now. . . .'

"He went on for a little, but I did not pursue it. There was no point. I no longer lived in Vietnam; I lived in America. He had been in the country since the 1950's, had spent the better part of the last ten years dealing with the Vietnam problem. He knew more about it than I did. If he wanted to win the war, wanted to believe that it was won, it seemed to me that he had every right. There was nothing I could say that would help, because I saw it as an outsider. But as we left the restaurant I thought of the country, South Vietnam, as a corpse: molding, long dead, but with the hair and fingernails continuing to grow."

"Ecumenical Information from Czechoslovakia," distributed by the Ecumenical Czech Council of Churches, quotes in its September-October bulletin from an article by Dr. Zdenek Kucera which appeared in a Czech publication in the fall.

"The epoch, realistically designated as socialism with a human face, sets as its objective: to overcome the discrepancy between politics elevated to metaphysics and the social personal character of man. It wanted to overcome the estrangement afflicting the innermost part and outer demonstrations of man, individuals and society, the past and present of a nation. Expressed otherwise: the epoch tried to give politics and social relations their natural, human (anthropological) background and depth. The main means of this became dialogue, exchange of opinions, personal contact, in short, communication, opinion-wise and personal. For this reason, there is so much being said about frankness and truthfulness; questions about the press and means of communication are in the foreground. Truthful, direct and complete information should create the basis for social relations built on trust. Individualism, true subjectivism, overcoming inner and outer estrangement—this was the main import of the post-January era. . . . The main question of the time was the moral relation between freedom and responsibility. I believe that the Czechoslovak model was directed toward solving deeper problems: individual and power. Wisdom in managing public affairs and the future of the healthy development of a socialist society depends on the balancing of personal and power elements in social relations. The August events contributed very much to the spiritual and moral overcoming of discrepancies between the individual and society of the pre-January era and the seemingly precarious contradiction between freedom and responsibility, individual and power. A great moral unity of the nation and unseen trust between people and their representatives was created. . . ."

PAMPHILUS

January 1969 5