

# INTERVENTION: A TWO-WAY STREET

*Wilson Carey McWilliams*

marked what many feel is the virtual end of a very long road: the development of a situation in which tariffs no longer are a really serious impediment to the flow of goods among developed countries. And ironically, at this moment of triumph for classic liberal internationalism, the demand for protective tariffs has revived in this country to an amazing degree. The first wave of this new protectionism has been led by what we are accustomed to consider conservative elements, but they are already joined by substantial labor union forces, and if the underlying currents which are making these waves do not die away, protectionism will soon be advocated by some of our most radical progressives who will fear the consequences in, say, the Detroit slums of unemployment derived from massive imports of foreign autos and steel. At the end of March, 1968 the Senate approved new import quotas on textiles.

Finally, our policy in Vietnam, and in less acute ways, the whole range of our military commitments abroad make up the most obvious and most painful example of this reversal of alliances. We are all familiar with the tensions today between the "old liberals" with their deep commitment to mutual security, and the "new left" with its profound skepticisms about the value of almost any effort by the United States to influence events abroad.

Can one draw any conclusion from this crossing of lines, beyond the truism that the world is very complex and fundamentally mixed up? Perhaps only another truism, which is that there is no such thing as a "pure" policy — one favored for only one clear reason by a cohesive body of public opinion. A proper comprehension of this complexity should lead us to be suspicious of labels.

This brings us back to where we started, rejecting the use of the label "new nationalism."

Having surveyed the varieties of contemporary nationalism, we see that nationalism is indeed a prevalent "state of mind" in the contemporary world. It is far from clear that all present nationalisms will survive the strains of their constituent provincialisms. Supranationalism, even on a regional basis, seems very remote.

International cooperation—the U.N. idea—will no doubt continue for some time to be the most effective means of coping with the interplay of nationalisms. The varieties and the strengths of nationalisms suggest, however, that the success/failure balance in international cooperation is likely to undergo more violent and radical swings than most founders of the United Nations imagined. This may suggest that the foundations for peace are precarious, but that is hardly news.

Pain and tragedy often teach men, and sometimes nations. Comfort mothers conceit more surely than necessity does invention, and torment accompanies the birth of thought as it does that of men. Even in Vietnam there is that much hope; national anguish may lead us to a new and better understanding of the world and of our role in it, and to a foreign policy which avoids the grim and needless alternatives that have confronted us in Southeast Asia.

The hope, however, is ambiguous. Pain should stimulate the search for causes and cures, but it may produce no more than flight. In intellectual as well as physical matters, there are hurts so great as to be "blinding." "A cat which has sat on a hot stove lid will not sit on one again, and that is well," Mark Twain wrote, "but she will not sit on a cold one either." Like Twain's cat, men are prone to develop associations with agony which run far beyond the cause, overreactions which lead them to shun fearfully not only threatening situations but also compelling opportunities. Generals fight the last war, diplomats seek the last peace, and both end disastrously. So long as nations can do no better, they fall victim to an analogue of manic depression, oscillating between rashness and cowardice, pride and innocence, intervention and isolation.

The moral law may be eternal, but under it the political world changes. Statecraft is a thing of judgment, an applied moral science that cannot afford fixed rules. The decision to war or not to war, like all the less dramatic choices which impose themselves on political man, is a choice of means to an end which must vary with the times. In this, as in many things, we would be wise to be guided by the third chapter of Ecclesiastes.

Choice in politics is fearful because it partakes of the uncertainty of man's condition; good intentions may produce evil, and bad motives may lead to good results. In a more than usually fearful world — more uncertain because of change, more threatening because of modern technology — it is no surprise if many fall victim to the temptation of believing that

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there must be some sure rule, some safe standard, that can absolve them of the burden of decision. Anti-communism; international law; the U.N.; national self-determination; international policing: all have had and will have their votaries. These "escapes from responsibility," however, are only illusions; there is no safe standard, just as there are no longer fixed stars. Precisely because the burden of decision is more fearful than in the past, it must be accepted; once men could allow themselves the luxury of little illusions, but that time has gone by. That must be the first premise of the effort to plan a new foreign policy for Americans in the dark shadow of Vietnam.

Easily one of the most intelligent critiques of American foreign policy is Richard J. Barnet's *Intervention and Revolution*. Rejecting the Leninist explanation of American intervention,<sup>o</sup> which he finds too simple and almost wholly inapplicable to Vietnam, Barnet finds American policy best explained in terms of the ideology and organizational needs of the gigantic bureaucracy of "national security planners" which has grown up since World War II.

Richard J. Barnet, *Intervention and Revolution: The United States in the Third World*. World. 302 pp. \$6.95.

This bureaucracy, Barnet points out, is rather uninformed about and uninterested in the third world; its real concern is for "security," and it sees non-Western states as a minor adjunct of a global system, not as states important in their own right. That focus of attention is bound to be a source of conflict with third world leaders who, obviously, view the world rather differently. Even more, it results in conflict with revolutionary leaders whose concern is for domestic justice rather than international security.

As Barnet appreciates, security planners in the Soviet Union and the United States are united in their concern for order and their fear of instability. The overwhelming danger of war makes them anxious regarding any threat to the perilous stability of international society. Perhaps irrationally so: small and local incidents are probed for, and often given, global significance. Yet this is a form of thought characteristic of *all* of those whose greatest concern is avoiding

all-out war between the great states. The "domino theory" and the theory of "escalation" are the same doctrine: both presume that violence, once initiated, has a tendency to seek the highest possible level. This is often false, but a suspicion of violence has its justifications in an age of super-weapons; the security planner could, with some justice, argue that the burden of proving that violence is compatible with international peace lies with the revolutionary. Often blind to the relation of means and ends inside the state, his eyes fixed on injustices that exist and the good society he envisions, the revolutionary is equally—or more—blind to the effect of his methods on international society. The case for the security planners does not rest, as Barnet believes, on the claim that they are "disinterested"; rather, it lies with the assertion that the *interests* of the planners and of the great powers enable or compel them to see things in a context which is lost on others.

Barnet's sympathies lie with the revolutionaries because he senses the injustice and despair in which the many live, but he hates violence as well. He resolves this ambivalence simply — by blaming the violence of the great power which "intervenes" in a revolutionary war (and, to some degree, that of the established government which must fight it) and by excusing that of the revolutionary.

This, unfortunately, makes his view of revolution rather puerile. "Effective government," Barnet asserts, can prevent guerrilla war. This, of course, is circular, given the elastic meaning of "effective": governments which avoid guerrilla war are thereby proved effective and *vice versa*. Barnet declares, rightly, that regimes which win power by themselves are more independent than "puppet" regimes installed by invading armies. Why, then, is there no guerrilla war in East Germany or North Korea? Are we to presume that such governments are more "effective" than — say — that of Venezuela? In what sense was Marshal Pétain's regime "effective" in 1940-41 and not in 1943-44?

Repressive despotism can be "effective" if it is ruthless and has the tools of repression at hand; Suharto's execution of 300,000 Indonesian Communists may be as effective as the best Nazi or Soviet purge. Less "effective" tyrannies may be able to avoid violence if disaffected elements think their case hopeless, despairing both of internal victory and outside support. In 1956, for example, the United States led the Hungarians to believe that help would be forthcoming; in 1968 it allowed the Czechs no such illusion, and the two cases speak for themselves.

This, of course, suggests the "international" element in "civil" strife which Barnet chooses to ignore. He

<sup>o</sup>There are some lapses. Those familiar with international sugar pricing will be astounded by the assertion that the American premium price on sugar is paid "to insure a steady supply" and not — as they would have expected — to gain political leverage in the countries so rewarded.

approaches the question through a classic fallacy: by assuming that the *cause* of a revolutionary movement is identical with its *meaning*. The Spanish Civil War, for example, was not caused by Hitler, Mussolini or Stalin, but no one now can miss its effect on the disintegration of the peace, just as the independence of a regime (Mussolini's Italy, for example, or Thieu's South Vietnam) is no proof of its autonomy. In fact, Barnet knows as much. Carefully explaining that only a few hundred North Vietnamese regulars and "several thousand guerrillas" had entered South Vietnam when American intervened, he also comments — almost in an aside — that the "organizational initiative" in the war in the South rested "*from the start*" (my italics) with the Communist Party of North Vietnam.

All of this suggests why Chinese doctrines of "liberation war" may be dangerous irrespective of Chinese military prudence, just as — despite equally great military hesitation — American propaganda in Hungary was dangerous in the 1950's. Encouragement, especially when backed by the enormous prestige of China, even if it results in no material gain, may lead revolutionaries to take up arms early and remain in a war longer. Would anyone argue that General de Gaulle's flirtation with Biafra has not had the latter effect? Nor need Americans be reminded that the erroneous belief that "cotton is King" had serious consequences in the American South in 1860.

The fact is that in the non-Western world *no* government can be "effective" in meeting the exploding demands of its people while, at the same time, it pursues economic development. This is even more true of somewhat democratic or libertarian regimes which lack the will to employ the purge, and of the weaker, poorer states which lack the means. It will not do to say that revolutionaries take arms only in "the last resort"; which resort is "last"? What one settles for and what resorts one tries are psychological facts, effected by one's aims and one's hopes for victory. Chinese doctrines change the psychological variables and make war more likely, and in turn, this reinforces the vicious cycle of poverty and violence. Governments *must* divert badly needed resources into weapons, for if rifles are not the answer to discontent, reason is not the answer to a sniper, and the diversion of resources reinforces the economic and social sources of disaffection. The third world is not the center of international politics, but it is a part of a whole; instability and violence at the periphery can affect the center. If this is not true of Vietnam, it is surely true with areas intrinsically more impor-

tant, like the Middle East. And that dimension of the problem plays no role in Barnet's analysis.

Out of his desire to make a case against recent American interventions, Barnet is led to a thorough "revisionism" in relation to past interventions. Rationalism can run mad and see consistency where there is only disorder, and Barnet risks that charge. Orthodox cold war history has distorted enough, and there is no need to respond in kind.

Barnet is certainly right to argue that Truman's advisors (confronting the public unwillingness for further international involvement which had produced our rapid demobilization and the 80th Congress alike) felt the need to "scare" the community into action. And he is correct in saying that the Administration exploited the established strain of anti-Bolshevism to point to a "Communist threat" and that this, in turn, helped encourage Stalin's consolidation of East Europe behind the "Curtain." Yet this was part of a cruel dilemma, for Europe desperately needed assistance in a magnitude which neither Congress nor the public was prepared to provide. With hindsight, this may seem an error of means; Barnet seeks to make it more than that, and his argument is not always fortunate.

James Byrnes is cited as having stated that the atomic bomb might enable us to dictate the peace — a reasonable enough speculation; the bomb, Barnet declares, "had not produced its intended result." On the face of the evidence, Barnet has changed a comment regarding the *possibilities* of nuclear technology into a statement of *policy*, and it will require more evidence than he presents to do that. Similarly, Barnet argues that Truman's advisors felt that communism ended the "political evolution" of a country. Bitter anti-Communists they were and are, but this is wholly unjust; whatever else Kennan's "X" article says, it does envision an evolution of the USSR into a state with which some limited accommodation would be possible and argues for containment — rather than "preventive war" — on just these grounds. The late 1940's were not a propitious time to make foreign policy; surviving isolationism was making a political peace with anti-Communist ideological militancy in the political alliance that eventually became McCarthyism. There is no need for Barnet to identify American policy makers with that alliance; his own analysis of the bureaucracy of security planners explains far better the rhetoric and response of the times.

Consider two of Barnet's case studies from the period. He is an opponent of the American intervention in Greece, as are many others, but his reasons are less than satisfactory. For example, the election

of March, 1946, we are told, was "termed a fair election by numerous Allied observers" but that this is in doubt. For this doubt the sole source presented is Howard K. Smith, "who visited Greece *shortly after the elections.*" (My italics.) Were the case reversed Barnet would surely point out that the only reason for accepting Smith's after-the-fact observations is that they support one's own biases. Surely the reader can expect more than that, especially since Barnet almost immediately describes the ELAS rebels as numbering 17,000 soldiers, 50,000 informers and 250,000 sympathizers: this totals about 6% of the Greek population, not normally enough to win elections. Too, when the U.N. Commission (sent by the Security Council with the assent of the USSR) was denied admission to Yugoslavia and Albania to investigate their possible assistance to the Greek rebels, the United States, Barnet states, "took this to be an admission" — surely a guarded statement in view of the fact that Barnet knows, and proves, that in fact it was exactly that. Finally, though Barnet does demonstrate that the Greek movement was not caused by Stalin's orders or wishes, it is interesting that he fails to draw any conclusions from the ELAS crisis in 1948. Tito had broken with Stalin, and since Tito's military aid was vital, it is no surprise that Markos, the Greek rebel commander, took a pro-Tito stand on military grounds. Oddly enough, however, it was the *Stalinists who won the test of power* in the Greek movement; independently caused, the movement was hardly "independent" if — as events subsequently proved — it preferred *extinction* to a break with the Soviet Union. Barnet's evidence, which he uses for other purposes, could easily be used to support a State Department white paper.

His discussion of the Korean conflict is even more checkered. Rhee's South Korea was hardly a model regime, and the border clashes had been continuous. But it is *not*, as Barnet believes, "at least as plausible that the North Koreans attacked to forestall an attack from the South as that this was a case of Hitler-like aggression." It may be that this was what occurred; *plausible* it is not and by the best of tests — the speedy and overwhelming defeat of the South Korean army by the vastly better equipped forces of the North. Nor is the discussion improved by Barnet's complete neglect of Acheson's controversial statement which, by excluding Korea from the vital zone of American defense, allegedly led the North to believe it could attack in safety.

Such criticisms could be multiplied. They would not, of course, negate the many intelligent observations which Barnet makes, nor prove wrong the policies he would have preferred. They do, however,

indicate a fatal defect in Barnet's style and approach: it is simply ideological, sophistry without casuistic grace, concerned to select that evidence which supports the preference of Richard Barnet and to ignore not only other evidence, but the implications of Barnet's *own* evidence which run counter to his nostrums. And that simply will not do.

Barnet's anti-interventionism rests, in part, on his regret that the traditional distinction between civil and international war is no longer applied, and that Department of State spokesmen call "non-intervention" an obsolete rule. If Barnet appeals, in this case, to a rule of the old law *out of* his generous sympathy for revolutionary regimes, in another case — the "rights of recognized governments" — it is the policy maker who holds to the old rule and Barnet who ignores it as outdated. The fact is that traditional international law, always slow to change, is out of phase with the world, and serves only for rhetoric to which contending parties repair when it serves their purpose and preference.

Barnet is outraged, for example, by the American-Belgian intervention at Stanleyville because, as he points out, the State Department became "aroused only when it appeared that Americans and Europeans might be the next victims" and not because of atrocities *per se*. Yet this response — though possibly racist in origin — is precisely the traditional response of "non-interference in internal affairs" to which Barnet otherwise prescribes. By that rule, a government should refrain from action (though it may be "aroused") until its own citizens are involved. Nor is it comforting that Barnet asserts that the intervention was *needless* because Gbenye's hostages would have been released if we had "ordered" Tshombe — then Premier of the Congo — to stop bombing Stanleyville. Barnet's suggestion might have been wise policy, but it is hardly "non-intervention"; in fact, he advocates a blatant case of traditional imperialism.

The case is simple: Barnet finds the Tshombe regime distasteful and sympathizes with Gbenye and Gizenga. He devises a set of arguments to make "reason" support his sympathies. That Gizenga sought outside armed support while Premier, for example, seems less heinous than that Tshombe did the same; nor does Barnet ever face the fact that without American intervention, a different "solution" would have resulted: Katangan secession would have been a fact, and Zambia would have been almost wholly surrounded by South African-Portuguese sympathizers. Indeed, American refusal to intervene would surely have been explained as the result of an im-

perialist concern for the investments of the Union Minière. In fact, the American Right, with equal inconsistency, supported Tshombe and denounced Gizenga.

I might make a case that Barnett's values are preferable, more appropriate to the nature of man, than those of the Right or of his other opponents. That, however, has nothing to do with the "rule of law" and still less with political judgment. Indeed, it has little to do with political morality which — among many other requirements—demands at least a fairly clear-sighted effort to see the world as it is, to see the existential fact nakedly, not through the screen of one's own preferences.

Historically, it was the Left which proclaimed that modern conditions had "abolished frontiers" and made nations obsolete. For Marx and Engels, it was a progressive achievement of the bourgeoisie to have, to "the chagrin of the reactionaries . . . drawn from under the feet of the old industry the national ground on which it stood" and to have "made barbarian and semi-barbarian countries dependent on civilized ones, nations of peasants on nations of bourgeois, the East on the West." That such statements would, today, be regarded as the most extreme form of neo-imperialism, and that, if they were made at all, they would probably emanate from the chancelleries of the super-powers, adds point to the old Rightist critique which asserted that the Left was psychologically naive and unaware of the nature of political things.

Marxism and internationalist liberalism were, certainly, premature in their announcement of "one world," but their doctrines spoke truly nonetheless. The struggles of the "third world" today do not reveal autonomous "nations"; the popularity of the phrase "third world" suggest that it is *worlds* that are the units of contemporary international politics. In fact, the current phase of the revolution of the erstwhile passive nations reflects the ubiquity of modern organization and technology which, as Marx foretold, reaches into peasant villages and upsets age-old patterns, creates new hopes and standards, and makes all men—regardless of their nations—prone to feel small and helpless, flotsam drifting in the backwash of the great currents of the time. The industrial nations feel an impact softened by a history of dominance and a present of affluence, but one heightened by the fact that they find no clear enemies and no easy explanations for uneasiness; the case of the third world is reversed.

Intervention is, however, the *fact* of modern life. It could scarcely be otherwise with missiles and satellites overhanging frontiers, with the wealth of the industrial nations (and especially the United States) a mark

for envy and emulation and a reproach to complacency in the face of human suffering. The poorer, weaker nations are not allowed to remain aloof if they would; salesman and propagandist would penetrate if the soldier remained outside. The fact is that few if any will forego the goods of the modern world ("Low prices," Marx wrote, "are the heavy artillery of the bourgeoisie"). To most non-Western states, a failure to provide assistance — at least in the economic and social sphere — and the *failure to intervene* against obnoxious regimes like South Africa or the former dictatorship of Marcos Perez-Jiminez is a form of imperialism, a variety of intervention. The third world understands, as many do not, that there is no refraining from intervention in a world that has become one: it is only a question of the form of intervention.

Nor is intervention a one-way street. The doctrine of "national liberation war" may exaggerate, but the assertion that enough Vietnams would bring down American power suggests that the powers of the weak and the strong overlap and that the weak *must* intervene, by propaganda if nothing else, if they are to be of maximum strength. Surely, the Vietnam war has demonstrated that in a time which weakens national solidarity socially and technically, even the great powers can be "penetrated." A civil war in Vietnam has become a crisis in the United States, and Ho and N.L.F. shrewdly fight battles with an eye to American opinion as much as to military logic. In fact, when a group in the Netherlands suggested that it ought to possess a vote in American election in 1968, it merely made clear how much "domestic" life in great powers has become one of the central facts in international life.

Intervention by all on all is fact, and differences in wealth and power — which bring resentment and frustration to many—will not be wished away by a formula. Barnett suggests interventions be ruled by the U.N., curiously referring to the "democratic procedures" of an organization in which Iceland and India vote equally. The non-Western nations themselves might suspect such a procedure, just as they have—on the whole — deprecated "non-political" and "functional" organizations, suspecting that their political importance is a better touchstone of reality than votes in the Assembly. Be that as it may, Barnett's suggestion is dangerous because it asks the United Nations to do more than it can, and risks thereby the real goods which it can achieve. The Congo intervention, which Barnett deplores, was managed, after all, by the U.N. and nearly destroyed the organization. Barnett is probably right that United States officials have "neither the capacity nor the right" to make decisions for others, but the United States—its officials aside—is one of the

nations which possesses the power for good or ill, and I may wish that only gods possessed the power of the great states, but since it falls now to mortal hands, like many cups which we would wish away, it belongs to us to act, so far as our limited capacities permit, for values which are worthy of ourselves and of men.

As Barnet makes amply clear, we must *not* intervene on the basis of a hope for or promise of "reforms" made by an inadequate regime. Intervention is a commitment more easily made than revoked, as we have learned at cost. Reforms must be a price of intervention — even more than they have been in the inadequate Alliance for Progress — and we must be prepared and willing to withdraw if the reforms are subsequently "suspended."

Intervention of that sort means that we will abandon the fiction that conditions in governments we aid can be made the responsibility of the "sovereign, recognized government" by appeal to the pale canons of traditional international law. It is, inevitably, partly our own responsibility. Oddly, perhaps, the recognition of a deep commitment may — and should — require a greater willingness to consult with those we aid, to consider their desire for dignity and their right to speak with similar tongues in our own councils.

Fundamentally, Vietnam must teach us a simple truth: that the devotion of our own citizens is not unconditional and that we must be careful of those causes in which we ask their support. For years, the

Right made this clear to Washington and the more rational, certainly more internationalist, Left kept a responsible silence. As a result, the "security-planner," like all bureaucrats eager to avoid controversy and especially so after the scarring effects of Senator Joseph McCarthy's war against State, fearfully sought to cast their policies in terms acceptable to the Right. Certainly that is the sad lesson which Barnet is concerned to tell. Vietnam has changed all that, for the moment at least. And the duty of the citizen is to make sure that the lesson is driven home. An age of peril and responsibilities cannot be left to "experts," nor can the expert forget that the patriotic devotion of citizens is something to be won, not a fact to be assumed.

Polemarchus, in *The Republic*, was refuted when he argued that justice was helping friends and hurting enemies, in part because Polemarchus lacked any basis other than birth and habit for distinguishing friends from enemies. The nations have slumbered for a long time in a similar dream, but the drowsing now may be dying. Officials will need to prove that those we aid are in some genuine sense our friends, and that those we oppose are, in equally real terms, our foes. And when they fail, they must expect resistance. That, however, is not a proof that intervention is dead, but that the old lines by which intervention could be judged, the real estate marks that set off friend from enemy, have been erased, at least for our times.

## The State of Israel in the Modern World

*Israel: An Echo of Eternity*, by Abraham Joshua Heschel. Farrar, Straus & Giroux. 233 pp. \$5.50

by *Monika Hellwig*

The existence of the modern state of Israel appears to have become an embarrassment to most of us. It is not only the strategic delicacy of its position, the legal problematic of its territorial expansion

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through warfare, and the fact that we are all so interested in Arab oil. What emerges as the main source of embarrassment is far rather that Israel chooses to mix religion with politics, which is entirely against the rules in our modern world. We demand specialization of thought and judgment, even in practical affairs, more or less along the lines of academic disciplines we have devised. Of course, the Muslim states also mix politics with religion, but we notice it less because we are used to Muslim nations doing that

through the ages, and when we do notice it it bothers us less because their brand of religion is more exotic and offers us less threat of immediate involvement.

It is quite probable that most thinking Americans, if they are not biased by commercial interests, would prefer to solve the question of Israel on a purely pragmatic basis. It is a generally accepted principle of international law (or, at the least, of equity) that all nations clearly recognizable as such are entitled to self-government and national independence,