

# HUMAN RIGHTS AND THE PEACE MOVEMENT

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Some time ago I did a series of articles for *worldview*, each concerned with some aspect of what I termed the "nuclear obsession." I used the phrase to highlight an example of what seemed to me a tendency of the liberal community to become so preoccupied with a single issue, or value, as to lose sight of the damage done to other values held by the same community.

As one constantly fascinated with contradictions, I want now to examine the stunning and total contradictions of the two principal positions taken by some adherents of the "New Politics."

We have, on the one hand, the passionate search for human rights, justice, and opportunity. We know most of the major aspects of that search, and I will not mention them in detail. From my point of view the search could not be more critical to the future of the U.S. We have, on the other hand, the passionate demand for an immediate end to the Vietnam war. This carries with it a series of associated demands made with varying intensities by individual members of the "New Politics." I will not attempt here to provide a personal evaluation of each demand, e.g., a cutback in the power allegedly held by the "military-industrial complex," non-deployment of the A.B.M., or recognition of selective conscientious objection.

I will argue that the principal thrust of the peace movement seems philosophically incompatible with that of the human rights movement. I count it almost a national tragedy that following the example set by Martin Luther King, the two movements have tended to join each other. It is a tragedy, that is to say, if the objective of the human rights movement is the construction of a new, totally integrated national society. To get at the base of the argument, I turn to an oversimplified look at the nature of the U.S. itself.

*The U.S. and the "Nation-State" Concept.* One of the favorite terms of many students of international politics is "nation-state," the two-headed word used to describe the political entities which up to now have interacted to form the substance of international behavior. Admittedly this is a "traditionalist" approach now under serious challenge; quite a few political scientists, busily engaged in systems analysis, are

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building frameworks designed to assume (or perhaps *wish*) the state out of existence on the world scene. But there is no clear concept on the horizon for a world society, so I assume that "states" will be with us for some time to come. Of all the states currently active, however, the U.S. can hardly classify as a "nation." The old-fashioned phrase "melting pot," still has a certain validity to it. In any case it might be argued that the driving force behind the U.S. as an entity, perhaps its very glue, has been unification against external or internal threats of military force.

Some of the threats have been real ones, several others may only have been imagined. There is no intention here to justify or glorify all of our national adventures over the years. The point is that we believed more or less *as a society* that there were threats to the national existence, and acting in concert against those threats became one of the great unifying forces of the society itself. On the most emotional occasions (World Wars I and II), societal unification has been both powerful and lasting. Who can deny, for example, that those two wars had a significant impact upon cultural forms peculiar to the U.S., e.g., the musical theatre? This emotionalism is very nearly as strong when the threat does not lead to substantial national action or even mobilization; if the Kennedy years contained such a high point, it was the Cuban missile crisis. It is not overstating it to conclude that the country quickly was assembled behind the banner of potential total sacrifice. During such periods there seems to be a tendency in the U.S. toward disappearance of ethnic values in favor of the major unifying value in U.S. history—national security.

If these emotional peaks bring with them strong overtones of moral righteousness, national feeling becomes even more solidified ("Praise the Lord and Pass the Ammunition!"). Passion, morality, and the state become fused as one ("*Crusade in Europe*"). As individual citizens, and even as practicing intellectuals, we are not disposed even many years later to entertain seriously the twin notions that the U.S. *may* have presented Japan with unacceptable alternatives in 1941, or that Hitler was attempting to fight quite a limited war. Indeed, the very fabric of U.S. history is woven from such periods; after all, historians invariably rate U.S. wartime Presidents according to who was "strongest." What concerns me

is the damage done to society as a whole when *anti-war* moralism reaches the same sort of peak, and on this question I want to be quite specific.

*The Central Contradiction and the Negro Future.* Of course there is nothing new in widespread protest against U.S. warmaking activity that does not fuse passion, morality, and the state. Few of us point with pride to the Mexican War or the Spanish-American War, and we learned in Korea that the threat was not real enough to sustain an emotional peak for any length of time. The current anti-war movement is something else, however, for it argues that the individual should withhold his allegiance from the state for as long as the war continues. He is praised for refusing to respond to the selective service laws, and derided if he does. It is then thought justifiable to encourage him to desert, to establish "underground railroads" to Sweden and elsewhere, and to elevate selective conscientious objection to the status of a moral and political norm. The overall thrust, in other words, is to brand the state itself as an illegitimate entity, an attitude that must have a cruel impact upon the future of blacks in the U.S.

By almost any measurement the armed forces have, since 1948, led the way in demonstrating how blacks can obtain improved opportunities for advancement and assimilation within a significant activity of U.S. society. Just a few months ago a black Army officer was promoted to the rank of brigadier while serving on the front lines in Vietnam. There are now scores of colonels where once there was but a handful. Considering that it takes approximately twenty years for a professional officer to reach colonel's rank, we must be only at the start of a truly integrated officer corps. At all ranks, blacks and whites live in totally integrated communities in what probably is the prime example of its type.

When the black soldier returns from Vietnam, however, complete with medals and commendations for his overall performance there, he finds himself condemned for having participated in an immoral enterprise. He is given to understand that while he may have become an important part of an integrated activity, all of his experience is totally irrelevant. He cannot aspire to leadership in civil life, for one of the "badges of leadership" is vocal opposition to anything and everything connected with military life. Small wonder that the black soldier decides that he had better remain with the military. When all of this is combined with the demand for an all-volunteer army, about all that an intelligent black soldier can see ahead of him is participation in a largely black mercenary armed force.

We may indeed have turned a dangerous corner

when Martin Luther King chose to combine his search for human rights with active and passionate opposition to the Vietnam war. The extent of U.S. participation there, as I implied in the December, 1966 issue of *worldview*, probably can be traced to the Kennedy Administration's intense desire to acquire the label of "strong," even via the device of international adventurism. But the reaction simply has been overdone; if it is to be argued that the state's actions are to be branded as totally immoral and totally illegitimate, and if any national leader who participates in such decisions is also to be branded illegitimate, it follows that there is no reason for groups considering themselves "outside" the U.S. society to seek entry into it. The trends in current U.S. political life are hardly in the direction of further integration.

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*What Next? "Separatism," "Participational Democracy," or Something Else?* Many would argue, I suppose, that the current situation only proves once again that national states are to be abandoned in favor of something better. If one equates the historic manifestations of nationalism with international anarchy and war, the simple solution is officially to declare the "state," indeed all "states" as illegitimate once and for all. I acknowledge the existence of the argument, even if I see no clear alternative. Further, I see no movement in the U.S. to achieve total, complete, and equal distribution of the world's resources.

Within the U.S. on the other hand, there are distinctly observable trends toward various forms of separatism. If, as I would argue, the quest for national security has acted in the U.S. as a replacement for the other culturally unifying factors not found here, and if that replacement is no longer viable, subgroups within the society must of necessity search for something else. There seems to be an identifiable return to ethnic or racial separatism. Carried to its extreme, this could turn out to be interesting, if tragic. There is a constituency that would support military action against the Arab states, and there is another that would vote for an invasion of South Africa and Rhodesia. It would be worth analyzing the composition of the volunteer army that could be mounted for either of those actions.

Looking at another direction, individuals as prestigious as Newton Minow, for example, have argued seriously that we might build a political system wherein electronic gadgets attached to television sets would enable the citizen to cast his vote on each issue up for decision. The drive for "participation" seems to envision daily plebiscites, presumably bypassing all elected or appointed officials, with the additional

proviso that each individual would be expected to decide *afterward* whether or not to honor the result.

Within the political realm itself the drive is undoubtedly toward "single-issue" political parties, and we can only speculate about where this might leave the U.S. I, for one, do not look forward to such a system. It seems to me that it would not be based upon compromise and would inevitably become totalitarian. Hubert Humphrey, for example, despite a lifetime record of adherence to progressivism, already has been "purged" because of the single issue of 1968.

If there is to be a U.S. in the foreseeable future, I see no driving force to replace national security as a major factor which holds the society together. The current war, as is true of several earlier ones, is not a monument to the international state system, but a series of miscellaneous international racial wars would not be an improvement. The problem is a simple one; the leaders of the "New Politics" cannot have it both ways. They cannot disintegrate and integrate the society at one and the same time. If each individual is to be free to decide on his own which laws he will obey, which taxes he will pay, and which U.S. military action he will participate in, then we are indeed

headed toward a new, and dangerous, society. If an argument of this sort is dismissed as reactionary and as a call to glorify U.S. militarism, so be it. Herewith, one vote for a total re-examination of the domestic and international consequences for continued glorification of the "Nuremberg principle."

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*The Role of CRIA.* To close on a more narrowly parochial note, I would suggest that questions such as those I have been trying to raise are uniquely within the area of concern of an organization entitled the Council on Religion and International Affairs (CRIA). Is it not time to deal openly and critically with the long-term impact of the alliance between human rights and anti-war forces? As for participation in the political process, can a society such as ours survive the psychological stresses that might attend a system requiring the citizen to vote almost daily on some significant issue? Will the centrifugal or the centripetal forces in our political life carry the day? As an organization with a long history of encouraging people to "talk" and to "listen," CRIA should welcome such challenges.

## THE CHRISTIAN AND POLITICS

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After centuries of discussions and disputes over the church-state relationship, it would seem that there is little to say about the "Christian and politics." The reality is that the relationship is more disputed today than it has ever been. Nor has the theology of the secular, so extensively developed over the past few years, increased the area of agreement about the perspective from which the Christian should look at the political order, how he can speak to it and to what extent the emphasis should be placed on "Christian" or on "politics."

There have been few political systems in man's history which have not appealed to God in one way or another for their justification or foundation or mis-

sion. The ancients made no distinction between Church and State, and the Emperor or King or Pharaoh was high priest (*Summus Pontifex*) of both church and state. The priests and seers were always at the service of the state to tell the king how well things were going and how well they were going to be; the protesting prophet could expect to have his head chopped off. The Jews and the early Christians were hated and persecuted since they refused to worship the gods of the empire or the Emperor. With Christianity we had the first separation of church and state, a position which the ancient world considered downright outrageous and seditious of established law and order. In the words of Celsus, the great second-century antagonist of Christianity, these Christians "were bad citizens, refusing public employment and avoiding service in the army; and while they

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