

which are primarily nationalist in inspiration but which may be influenced by one or another form of communism. In order to suppress liberation movements we commit our nation to the tactics of counterinsurgency. We support oppressive governments in Brazil, Greece, Taiwan, South Vietnam and many other places. America was once the hope of the oppressed but now it is the ally of the oppressors. Fear of communism may be a major factor here, but there is a deeper fear of change, a fear that other nations will not be safe for American investments, that somehow events will get out of our control. The whole American stance in relation to Castro's Cuba is a kind of paradigm of a policy that above all seeks to prop up a familiar type of order with which we feel more secure. The first duty of our country now is to get off the backs of other nations, to allow them to have their own forms of liberation from us and from their own oligarchies. There will be many mistakes, some of them tragic, as nations seek to find new ways. Romantic revolutionaries may be as mistaken as many who try to freeze the existing order. But when the United States intervenes, with its C.I.A. conspirators, with its training of counterinsurgency forces, with its more overt uses of military force, there are also tragic mistakes: The freedom of people to find their own way is tragically denied. Today it is Southeast Asia where our errors have brought upon us a terrible judgment. Tomorrow it is likely to be Latin America. We shall never learn this until we renounce the implicit claim that we always know what is best for such nations.

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This worldview is far from what is often called a new isolationism. Support of multilateral institutions, especially the U.N., would become more important. Policies of government and ways of life of nations that are designed to reduce the gap between rich and poor nations would be a major concern. Real solidarity with the peoples who have so far been neglected or oppressed would belong to our national outlook. American power would continue to be a factor of enormous importance, and there would be baffling and complicated decisions as to how our national power should be used so that it would do more good than harm. Without effective multilateral institutions this power would at times have to be used in situations in which our own government would have to make the final decision. The difference would come from having those who make the decisions

start from new premises instead of from the old ideological assumptions that control them now and against which this editorial is directed. There would be no sure and safe road ahead for anyone, but at least those who control policy would be striking out in a different direction—and in that there would be hope. With America turned around, our great power would not threaten the Soviet Union and China and Cuba. We may also hope that the USSR as the other great nuclear power and the other great interventionist power would also be turned around.

John C. Bennett

BACK TO BASICS . . .

That democratic government is founded on public consensus, openly and freely arrived at, has been basic to democratic political theory since the ancient Greeks. History also shows that whenever democratic systems break down, one of the first symptoms manifested is an inability for political and social factions to arrive at consensus and effect compromise. Whether or not the American democracy is in as severe a state of crisis as commonly believed, it is not hard to discern that the compromise-making machinery is functioning very badly all across the political spectrum. The Administration seems as unaware of the need for consensus-based action in conducting its Vietnam policy as the left-liberal opposition seems scornful of any hint of compromise. Yet it should seem clear to all but the most doctrinaire that neither side has the political means to make its will prevail intact. Whether the American body politic can, despite all trends to the contrary, work out a national consensus *and* compromise on Vietnam may determine the future of the U.S., and inevitably, then, the course of world history.

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