

radical mysticism which finds its outlets in political revolutions. That something like this has been happening seems to me evident. What it ultimately means is that our politics and our economics will be prevented from performing their natural tasks because they become infused with the theological and religious uncertainties and enthusiasms of a people that has no longer a religious realization about the limits of man and of his earthly life. In the end, then, politics is not a spirituality, but it cannot survive without one.

What is heresy in our tradition is that we can discover our spiritual reality and justification in political movements designed to transform the world. What is orthodox is that the world is a place for man and that

it can be made into a better place for him and his fellows. In other words, paradoxically, the political and spiritual dignity of man is safer and more valid when there is some injustice and inefficiency, and even corruption in the human city. The only real alternative to this is the advent of the "holy city" on earth. There are many of our contemporaries who are prophesying that it is about to come through their new-found political vision. On the *Via Lattea*, on the pilgrimage to Compostella, this too is one of the heresies: "*Quod homo potest ita finalem beatitudinem secundum omnem gradum perfectionis in praesenti assequi, sicut eam in vita obtinebit beata*" (Denziger, #894). I wonder if Buñuel remembered to quote it.

VIETNAM — — AND BEYOND

Donald Brandon

The military utility of the limited Cambodian campaign should be clear to those capable of assessing the facts. It will help protect the withdrawal of American troops, and reduce the Communist capability to launch attacks in the southern half of South Vietnam. It will, in short, help the process of Vietnamization. On the other hand, the fate of the Lon Nol regime in Phnompenh remains in doubt. Should South Vietnam, and perhaps other countries in Southeast Asia, help the new Cambodian government after American withdrawal, it could withstand the efforts of Sihanouk, Hanoi et al. The venture gained time at least to shore up the Lon Nol regime, while not assuring its survival. Nixon's expressed hope that the venture might prod Hanoi into serious negotiations can be dismissed in the light of North Vietnamese patience and determination.

One of the most important and least commented on aspects of the Nixon decision concerns his effort to signal Moscow, Peking, and Hanoi that America is not a "paper tiger." In the Middle East as well as in Southeast Asia, Nixon's "low profile" has been responded to by "high profile" efforts by the Communist countries. The President recalls the miscalculations which led to World War II, and more recently the

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mistaken impression of President Kennedy's weakness which led Khrushchev to precipitate the Cuban missile crisis. He wants to avoid similar miscalculations at present, and his Cambodian venture was in part designed to achieve this obviously important objective. Informed students of contemporary history should understand this, although university students who are ignorant of the nature of international politics and foreign policy of course don't get the point.

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Shortly after the second world war, Herbert Agar wrote in his *Price of Power* that "America's long preserved virginity of mind has at last been deflowered by the facts of international life." It is apparent from the history of the cold war that a large number of adults as well as young people today have not in fact lost their illusions. Senator Fulbright continues on his bizarre path, Senator Mansfield wins majority support in the Senate for a resolution calling for a substantial reduction in American forces in Western Europe. Other examples abound at present. Old myths persist in the face of old realities of international politics. It is possible that the Vietnamization gamble will fail, and Indochina will be taken over by Hanoi. This would result in more "wars of liberation" in that area and elsewhere in the Third World. It is possible that the American people, regardless of the outcome in Indochina, will move irrationally to a general withdrawal from international responsibility. Worst of all, though less likely, Moscow and/or Peking could make a major miscalculation which would result in general disaster for all mankind.

With so much attention and deference being given to public opinion in general and student opinion in particular these days, it is perhaps worth recalling what Walter Lippmann said in his *Public Philosophy*: "The unhappy truth is that the prevailing public opinion has been destructively wrong at the critical junctures. The people have imposed a veto upon the judgment of informed and responsible officials. They have compelled the governments, which usually knew what would have been wiser, or was necessary, or was more expedient, to be too late with too little, or too long with too much, too pacifist in peace and too bellicose in war, too neutralist or appeasing in negotiation or too intransigent. Mass opinion has acquired mounting power in this century. It has shown itself to be a dangerous master of decisions when the stakes are life and death."

Lippmann continued, "There is no mystery about why there is such a tendency for popular opinion to be wrong in judging war and peace. Strategic and diplomatic decisions call for a kind of knowledge—not to speak of an experience and a seasoned judgment—which cannot be had by glancing at newspapers, listening to snatches of radio comment, watching politicians perform on television, hearing occasional lectures, and reading a few books. It would not be enough to make a man competent to decide whether to amputate a leg, and it is not enough to qualify him to choose war or peace, to arm or not to arm, to intervene or to withdraw, to fight on or to negotiate."

Even if one thinks there is a large measure of truth in Lippmann's assessment, public opinion in America will determine whether there will or will not be a significantly lower United States profile after Vietnam. Hopefully, President Nixon will stick to his stated determination to see Vietnamization through regardless of his political fate. Hopefully, he will not reduce the American presence in Western Europe, Asia and elsewhere prior to other allied and neutral nations moving to fill the vacuums of power which such an American withdrawal would create. Hopefully, the Congress will not engage in major surgery on needed military, foreign aid and other programs in emotional over-reaction to the trauma and mistakes of Vietnam—and to the Cambodian venture.

It has often been said that the greatest danger from the Vietnam tragedy is to the confidence of the American people in their system. Some, like William Shirer, have even compared the divisions in America today to those which led to the downfall of the French Third Republic in 1940. Surely this is an example of a false analogy. America's democratic tradition is

much more deeply rooted; America lacks the threat from the radical Left and radical Right which plagued the Third Republic in the 1920's and especially in the 1930's; most people in this country, despite Vietnam, racial discord, riots et al, demonstrate at elections and in opinion polls and in their daily lives that, unlike some intellectual Cassandras, they are not about to abandon democracy in the present period of tumult. As for the young, they are getting older every day. Even now, the vast majority of students are pro-democratic, although naive about the possibility of completely eliminating the gap between ideals and practice.

The greatest danger stemming from the Vietnam fiasco is to the future steadiness and responsibility of American foreign policy. The cold war and Have Not conflicts continue unabated. The prospects for a stronger United Nations and more effective international law remain dim in light of the facts of international politics. "How long, oh Lord, how long!": as long as evidence and rational analysis dictate the continuing need for a significant American presence in world affairs. The basic alternatives of either surrender on the installment plan or a nuclear holocaust are unthinkable.

in the magazines . . .

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Ask-me-another department:

"Mr. Spivak: Mr. Ambassador, may I ask you a question? There are many students who insist that whether Cambodia is a success or failure has nothing to do with the issue; that it was morally wrong for us to go into Cambodia. How do you answer such students?"

"Ambassador Bunker: Well, this is a matter, I suppose, of opinion. I don't think it was morally wrong to go into Cambodia. After all, Cambodia is a neutral country, supposedly, whose neutrality had been violated for the last five years. The Cambodian Government was trying to re-establish neutrality, trying to get the North Vietnamese out—unsuccessfully. As a matter of fact, I think it is an understood principle of international law that a country who is neutral is bound to try, when its neutrality is violated, to get the violator out. If it cannot do so, the belligerent country who is threatened by the violation of that neutrality has the right to defend itself." (From the transcript of an interview with Ellsworth Bunker on NBC's "Meet the Press," May 10, as it appeared in *The Department of State Bulletin*, June 1, 1970.)

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