

U.S. AND CANADA

NEIGHBORS IN TROUBLE

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CONTENTS

In the Magazines	2
U.S. and Canada: Neighbors in Trouble	3
Winding Down in Laos	4
<i>Editorials</i>	
The New Style in U.S. Foreign Policy	6
<i>Cynthia H. Enloe and Mostafa Rejal</i>	
Reckless Rhetoric and Foreign Policy	9
<i>Ernest W. Lefever</i>	
A Decade of African Independence	13
<i>Ross K. Baker</i>	
Cuba: A New Church in a New Society	15
<i>Other Voices</i>	
"A Need for Nationhood" And Still More on "Reform Intervention"	18
<i>Correspondence</i>	
Of Power and Its Defense	19
<i>Guy G. Davis</i>	

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Canada has now been visited with acts of terrorism similar to those with which the United States has grown familiar. And it has responded in a significantly different fashion.

For some years now, the United States has been in turmoil, if not crisis. Our involvement in Vietnam and our various domestic crises have dislocated not only our own concepts and feelings about America, but also those attitudes that other peoples, other nations, have long felt about the United States. The things that couldn't happen here *are* happening here.

Canada, our neighbor to the North, has seemed to be free of many of our troubles. It is not simply that it is a less powerful country and therefore less involved in international affairs, or that its internal problems attract less attention—although both these things are true. It is, rather, that for many people in the United States, Canada has been seen in recent years as a haven, a place of refuge, a retreat from the severe political and social pressures of American life. And the swinging style of Canada's Prime Minister, Pierre Elliott Trudeau, held out promise that life in Canada could be lively as well as pleasant.

In a few short weeks our standard ideas of Canada have been severely wrenched. The kidnappings of James Richard Cross, the British Trade Commissioner, and of Pierre Laporte, the Quebec provincial Labor Minister, seemed, initially, to be out of keeping with Canada's temper, and more like techniques imported from other countries to which they were more appropriate. But the kidnappings made clear that the Front de Libération du Québec (F.L.Q.), which claims credit for them, was not to be dismissed as a negligible terrorist group. Canada, and its friends, were little prepared for the strangling of Mr. Laporte, but even less prepared for the War Measures Act invoked by Prime Minister Trudeau in mid-October.

Under the War Measures Act, the government of Canada can search without warrant, arrest without charge, censor material and deport persons. It can, in fact, impose almost any regulation it deems necessary. Never before imposed in peacetime, the Act allows the government to do whatever it decides is necessary to oppose and overcome the terrorists. In the week since the Act was invoked, for example, over 1000 premises were invaded, and almost 400 persons arrested. Extreme? Measures beyond the occasion? Some Canadians think so and have said so publicly and loudly. Faced with the terrorism of the F.L.Q. (which seeks the political separation of Quebec from Canada and the over-

throw of capitalism), and the wartime measures of Trudeau's Government, three major Quebec labor organizations have denounced both, declaring that the latter threatens democracy and the exercise of civil liberties. But the Trudeau Government has received support for its measures from the political opposition and from former Conservative Prime Minister John Diefenbaker, who said the crisis was "far more serious than anything we have faced in peacetime."

Without attempting to pass judgment on the crisis which is Canada's and the measures which her government has taken to combat it, Americans can ask themselves: What would justify the imposition of similar restrictions in the United States? Would we accept such restrictions with the relative ease that the Canadians have shown? The answer to the second question is "Not bloody likely." The answer to the first question is more difficult, since the answer depends upon one's present estimate of American life, and it is on this estimate that Americans are most deeply divided. Any attempt to heal or overcome or anneal that division by force could only extend it.

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What, if anything, does the present example of Canada tell us about ourselves? A number of things worth reflection might be mentioned. However severe we judge the present crisis in America, we do not believe that it justifies the suspension of our traditional democratic processes or civil liberties. And those few who do—and who attempt to show by terrorist attacks that the system is hollow—are becoming increasingly isolated. Although the deep confidence in ourselves as a people, as a nation, has been shaken, our actions show that we expect to muddle our way through without extreme measures.

For many people, of course, that is cause for denunciation, not self-gratulation; for extreme measures, they would argue, are what we need. Not, of course, those adopted by the Canadian Government, not repressive police measures, but something rough enough to shift our priorities so that we can *really* combat poverty, racism, undue military expenditures, so that we can improve the quality of our housing, our education, our medical treatment. And there we are, back in the political arena, making the hard, unpleasant, long-drawn-out struggle to effect social and political change. Confrontation politics, sometimes. Arduous electoral politics, all the time. J.F.

WINDING DOWN IN LAOS?

Since October 8th, U.S. B-52 bombers have been unloading 900 tons of explosives per day on the Ho Chi Minh Trail region at a time when the war is supposed to be "winding down" and becoming Vietnamized. The war in Vietnam *has* been scaled down, but it has become increasingly difficult to follow in the press. So has *one* of the wars in Laos, the struggle for the colonial succession, where things have gone well for the Pathet Lao (who seem in a position to demand a larger role in any future coalition than they have had in the past). But the *other* Laotian war, the air war over eastern Laos, is once again in full swing. As integral parts of the Vietnamese conflict, events in that war shed important light on Washington's posture towards Vietnam.

Laos' eastern provinces have, especially since 1968, been important sanctuaries for North Vietnamese and Viet Cong troops and supply forces. Consequently, the command sanctuaries in southeastern Laos and the Ho Chi Minh Trail have been key "targets" in the eyes of U.S. military strategists. But, having been restrained—by Washington and Vientianne—from "cleaning out" these sanctuaries, military efforts have been limited to C.I.A. subversion and to Air Force strikes. The air effort is significant in tactics, size, and in its relationship to a possible end of the war.

For, at a time when Washington is talking peace, emphasizing negotiations, and hinting at victory, it is still meeting the politics of insurgency with the strategies of firepower. This tells us something about the military soul of the doctrine of Vietnamization, its reliance on force (American), and its inability to match solution to problem. In this context one might have expected that the bombing of Laos, being the direct continuation of the tactics and strategy of the Johnson Administration in dealing with infiltration from North Vietnam, would have received some of the moral and strategic criticisms levelled against that President's military analysis. But, despite much talk of peace, the war continues. And in view of the murderous power under consideration, as well as its real irrelevance to the political struggle that is the war in Vietnam, it is important to realize that, in October, 1970, "virtually all the operational B-52's in the war zone" (*New York Times*, October 17) are spending all their time over Laos. K.Z.