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CONTENTS

	PAGE
The Americans in Vietnam	2
An Introduction to the Work of the Young Lukacs, by Andrew Feenberg.....	18
Poetry.....	19
Escalation in Vietnam, by Senator Vance Hartke.....	29

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THE AMERICANS IN VIETNAM

It was on the fields of battle and carnage of the Spanish Civil War that the struggle for liberty, solidarity, and humanity in the revolutionary sense of the word was fought for the last time....

...for the last time in Europe. The historical heritage of that fight is to be found today in those lands which wage an uncompromising struggle for their freedom against the new colonial forces.

--Herbert Marcuse, "Vorwort," Kultur und Gesellschaft, Suhrkamp Verlag, Frankfurt, 1965, vol. 1, pp. 11 and 169n.

Translated by Michael Neumann

Translator's note: This article (XXX., "Les Americains au Vietnam") appeared in Les Temps Modernes (No. 236, January 1966), the monthly journal edited by Jean-Paul Sartre, with the following note:

Compelled to remain anonymous, the author of this report is a European academician who has lived in South Vietnam for several years. His work puts him in contact with the inhabitants of the cities and the countryside, civilian wounded, Viet Cong prisoners, and Americans.

One month later, the same article ("Amerikaner in Vietnam") appeared in Das Argument: Berliner Hefte für die Probleme der Gesellschaft, a liberal West German publication, (Heft 1, No. 36, February 1966) under the name of Georg W. Alsheimer. Here the note was omitted. The German text is somewhat revised and expanded, especially in the final sections, but I have been unable to determine with any certainty which is the original version. This translation is primarily from the French. Where the French text presents difficulties, and where the German seems to be a significant expansion, I have translated from the German. No alterations of any kind have been performed on the combined texts.

English translation
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The translator, Michael Neumann, is a junior at Columbia University. He is majoring in History and Literature.

The war in Vietnam offers striking parallels with the Spanish Civil War. A small country has become the testing ground of the great powers who, at the cost of some loss of human life and equipment, try out their new weapons. These weapons, in Vietnam, are helicopters, gas, dum-dum bullets, torture, corruption, and welfare work. And since all this has not ended in the anticipated results, the war goes on, with the help of psychological warfare, on a carpet of bombs dropped from 40,000 feet. At the bottom of this situation, in the midst of a society infected by its colonial past, is an elite desperately trying to safeguard prerogatives which a rural proletariat, ever more conscious of its political and revolutionary vocation, now challenges.

Like the Spanish Civil War in its own day, the war in Vietnam has become an international affair. However, its well-known atrocities threaten to eclipse its political significance and to limit protest exclusively to the humanitarian aspects of the situation. Torture, gas, and blanket-bombing deserve the strongest possible condemnation. But the indignation they arouse sometimes makes one forget that these atrocities are not simply the regrettable consequences of war. They are also typical manifestations of an inhumanity, explosions of a barbarism unleashed on the Vietnamese by a social system which must give its members the illusion of perfect integration in order to survive. It is this need alone which can explain the frenzy with which this social system loses itself against "trouble spots" and the passion with which it seeks to persuade itself that it is fighting in Vietnam for the "cause of freedom."

It is not accidental that, during the Spanish Civil War, the liberal democracies tended to sympathize with the Republic, in spite of the aid - very inadequate but none the less considerable - that it received from the USSR. At that time the trouble-makers were not yet the Communists, but the Fascists and Nazis who had openly and barbarously manifested a development of which liberal democracy itself contained the seeds, but did not dare to recognize. Already in 1934, Herbert Marcuse had analyzed this development perfectly in an article entitled "The Struggle against Liberalism in the Totalitarian Conception of the State." There he showed that the right-wing extremists had done nothing more than to show prematurely the hand of the capitalist system of domination without yet having perfected the technological and psychological mechanisms of compensation and justification which would be elaborated later on. The only possible reaction from the Puritan societies, founded on good conscience and the denial of their contradictions, was consequently the radical suppression of the "trouble spot". It is certainly no less accidental that the fascist aspects of Franco's Spain were softened after the war, to the benefit of the

conservative and clerical order, and this especially in as much as the economic ties between Spain and the other Western nations had tightened.

Following the logical development, the most technically advanced industrial power of the Western world has taken up the banner of "anti-communism" from the fascists and Nazis. For it, "communism" is everything that tends to suppress the American system of domination. The other Western nations have rallied to this definition out of horror of everything "extremist", and therefore have done so with a certain reluctance. The struggle for "liberty, solidarity, and humanity in the revolutionary sense of the word" that Vietnam is carrying on almost without external aid against the crushing technical superiority of America can hardly engage the political sympathy of the "liberal democracies" today (or at least of what remains of them). All that they want is that the "problem" be "eliminated" as quickly as possible; because only this swift "elimination" could prevent the moral indignation against this war from being translated into political terms by the under-developed nations.

The terms adaptation and repression, morality and conscience, threaten to give the impression that the civil war in Vietnam has as its principal source a conflict of values. That is obviously not the case. Good conscience, and the desire to pose as a noble defender of humanity against "barbarian subhumanity," are exploited and satisfied in the interest of "products" which are not simply literary and promotional. It is not by chance that at each new stage of military "escalation" - and especially since the use of "blanket bombing" - the reports on communist atrocities become numerous and detailed. (1) "The industry of justification" is working at capacity and distributes its products with particular generosity to the publications destined for American soldiers. We will see further on how the need of the American soldiers to make themselves seem like "good guys", like freedom fighters, brings prosperity to business in Saigon, and to what extremes this leads. The following notes only seek to define, very briefly, the framework within which operate the historical, social, economic, and psychological facts of the war in Vietnam. These remarks attempt less to answer a

group of questions than to ask them: Why does our Western social system need neo-colonial repression and why does it put such great passion into this repression? Why are the thunderbolts of anathema - once hurled at the Soviet "subhuman" - today aimed at Communist Asiatic "subhumanity" and what is the meaning of this transfer? What anxieties are expressed in the need for justification and compensation that pushes the "free world" to pose as a defender of humanity in a war in which it has committed the worst atrocities?

THE PREHISTORY

1. National Unity and Revolutionary Tradition

As everyone knows, Vietnam is an underdeveloped country, freed only fifteen years ago from the yoke of colonialism. It shares with the majority of Afro-Asian and Latin American countries a good number of economic, social, and psychological problems which by themselves already constitute a revolutionary situation. The subject here is not these general problems, but only the particular conditions in Vietnam. Let us begin with the national identity which the country already possessed in the tenth century, in contrast to colonial creations like Indonesia, the Belgian Congo, and Cameroons. The unity of Vietnamese language and civilization goes back a millenium. The same is true of Vietnam's traditional aspiration for social justice. In the past this aspiration was guaranteed by and incarnated in the sovereign, whose immediate "subjects" were the villages, specifically invested with the power of self-administration. The feudal lords were formally excluded from the administrative proceedings of the villages. The imperial functionaries since the 17th century had been recruited by competitive examinations at which all individuals, even the poorest, could present themselves. (2) These functionaries were charged with maintaining direct contact between the village and the sovereign. They were supposed to see that the laws of the empire - laws which expressly prohibited the accumulation of land and the plantation system - were being respected, to levy taxes which the villages owed to the crown, and to organize public works of general interest (construction of dikes, canals, irrigation systems, and roads).

All weakening of the central power resulted in arbitrary conduct of the functionaries, forced labour, anarchy, and a progressive feudalization. The traditional order could be re-established either by imperial reform or by revolution. Le Thanh Khoi writes on this subject:

(1) Up until now, only the Nazis have presented with such precision the written record of the atrocities committed by the other side. The film *Jew Suss*, for example, was shown at the very moment when the mass murder of the Jews came under violent criticism. 2. Since the empire of Chua Nhoung (1635-1648). Le Thanh Khoi writes on this subject: "The great originality of the Nguyens in comparison with the Trinh is that, because of a lack of cadres, they opened their examinations to all inhabitants, regardless of nationality or origin: Dao Duy Tu, the son of a comedian, is made a minister" (Le Thanh Khoi, *Le Vietnam, Histoire et Civilization*, Editions de Minuit, Paris, 1955, pp. 263-264).





A prisoner is given the centuries-old water torture.

"The emperor is the son of heaven. From heaven he received a mandate to govern his people with a view toward their welfare. He has the mission of maintaining the social order, which is the earthly aspect of the universal order. If he does not fulfill his function, if he oppresses the people and lets prosperity wane, he loses his "mandate from heaven" and popular revolt becomes legitimate. This is why history records so many changes of dynasty: The State is the common good; any champion can seize it." (3)

None of the reforms or revolutions which put an end to the many periods of decline of the central power and of feudalism were radical enough to restore the "original" relations. (4) The revolutionary leaders who finally replaced the deposed sovereign were almost all products of the bureaucracy and their fiscal and agrarian reforms usually remained a dead letter. (5) In practice, the power of the functionaries was gradually consolidated. They took over all the privileges of the feudal order and soon found themselves face to face with a proletariat and a landless peasantry, with an inexhaustible reserve of men who could be hired on the average for a fistful of rice. This labor force could be put to work on the plantations or made to serve in the private armies of ambitious courtiers and local mandarins. (6) The parcelling out of land due to overpopulation and the growing debts of the peasants further aggravated social antagonisms during the 18th and 19th centuries.

3. Le Thanh Khoi, op. cit., p. 232. On this subject, Pham Huy Thong writes: "If the sovereign oppressed the people, he no longer deserved to be treated like a sovereign. His person was no longer sacred and regicide was no longer a crime. Revolt against tyranny was not only reasonable, it was commendable and conferred on its author the right of legitimately assuming sovereign power" (L'esprit public vietnamien hier et aujourd'hui, Union culturelle des Vietnamiens en France, Paris, 1959, p. 10).

4. The original social conditions were already a myth during the era of the first dynasties and revolutions were made in its name.

5. Le Thanh Khoi, op. cit., pp. 232 and 258.

6. cf. Paul Isoart, *Le Phenomene national vietnamien*, Bibliotheque de droit international, v. XV, Paris, 1961, p. 28; as well as A. Schreiner, *Les institutions annamites de la basse Cochinchine*, three volumes, Claude et Cie., Saigon 1900-1902.

But the numerous attempts at reform or revolution, although they never succeeded, each time rekindled the hopes of the sharecroppers and the wretched day-labourers. These hopes were also maintained by rebel bands (7) which were constantly reforming, supported by a broad popular base during periods of crisis and ever-present in the poorest provinces. All these factors have created in Vietnam a genuine tradition of social revolution, if one is willing to accept a notion with such a contradictory name. This explains how, in the first Indochinese war, the Vietminh and, in our own day, the National Liberation Front could establish their safest bases in the same areas which, under the monarchy and then during the first colonial period, were decried as hotbeds of revolution and pockets of national resistance (8) - Nghe An, Quang Ngai and Binh Dinh, the Transbassac and the Plaine des Joncs.

2. Colonization

Under the monarchy, the peasants still believed - rightly or not - that they could fight for social justice or at least escape the worst extremes of misery. The poorest masses of overpopulated Tonkin, of Thang Hoa and Nghe An, sought a relief for their misery in emigration south, which resulted in the "Vietnamisation" of the whole Indo-chinese coastal area at the expense of the Champas and the Khmers. But this relief was soon cut off by French domination. There was no longer any question of imperial reform: The colonial regime took all substance out of the imperial power and gave itself the discretionary right of changing the chief executive. (9) The positive aspect of the imperial system - the control of the sovereign over relations between the villages and the mandarinat - had vanished. It had become impossible to envisage any sort of dynastic revolution and, moreover, such a revolution would not in any case have been able to alter any aspect of the situation. A new era of social justice, in the sense that Vietnamese tradition gives to the words - that of an image of the order of the world - was now conceivable only through a struggle for liberation and a reconquest of the independence of the State.

For the sake of conciseness we will consider only some effects of colonization which have helped to create the situation in today's Vietnam. These effects, of an institutional, economic, and psychological nature, express themselves dialectically in the system of colonialist exploitation. However unthinking were its founders, nevertheless it served their interests marvellously.

7. Le Thanh Khoi writes: "Of all the rebels, the greatest was Nguyen Huu Cou, surnamed Quan He. He took over the whole coastline of Do son and in 1743 declared himself "Great General Protector of the People." With the fruits of his piracy, he organized rice distribution for the poor. Everywhere, in addition, enthusiastic masses escorted him and brought him the aid he needed..." It took ten years "to hunt him from province to province and finally to capture him on the coast of Nghe An" (p. 261).

8. cf. Isoart, op. cit., pp. 104, 147, 148. Le Thanh Khoi, op. cit., p. 297.

9. The emperors exiled by the French were for example Ham Nghi (1885) and Duy Tan (1916).

How did the colonial system work in Vietnam? In agriculture it increased the dual tendency on the one hand to feudalization and on the other to the formation of a proletariat. This was not only due to the increase in large landed properties which the already abolished authority of the sovereign no longer limited. To maintain a local administration, the French had to recruit the services of a part of the mandarinat, and found themselves obliged to buy this collaboration by granting land at the expense of the peasant proprietors. Thus from one day to the next, independent peasants found themselves sharecroppers or even agricultural labourers.

Towards the end of the French rule, 45% of the rice paddies in Indochina, 20% in Tonkin, and 10% in Annam were in the hands of big proprietors living in the city, who, in the three regions cited above, represented respectively 2%, 0.02%, and 0.008% of the total number of proprietors.⁽¹⁰⁾ Impoverishment linked to the multiplication of the great estates and population growth provoked the enormous aggravation of two evils - usury on the loans and on the pastures of the peasant.

The disproportion between the innumerable dispossessed peasants and the inadequate amount of cultivable land was all to the advantage of the great proprietors; they could dictate their terms to the farmers. Tenant farms generally accounted for 50%, sometimes even 75%, of the harvests. ⁽¹¹⁾ Pests, flooding, and drought often obliged the farmer or the peasant with small holdings to mortgage his crop with a usurer in order to borrow money with which to feed his family until the next harvest. ⁽¹²⁾ Little by little, the peasants left all their belongings with the moneylenders. Often the usurers were in the pay of a landed proprietor.

Whereas in the period of national independence the imperial government's agrarian reforms were often accompanied by exemption from mortgage payments ⁽¹³⁾ and the functionaries were empowered to annul receipts of debts in cases of manifest usury, the "liberal" law introduced by the French stipulated on the contrary the compulsory repayment of all debts. The complete dependence of the agricultural workers on the farms, and of the day labourers on the proprietors, the moneylenders, the policemen, and the cruel mandarins, became one of the central themes in the story of Vietnam in the thirties. ^(13*) To enforce the new legal and juridical norms it was first necessary to abolish the Confucian ethic of the Vietnamese mandarins, an ethic which demanded service not only to

the crown, but also to the community. The first step in this direction was to suppress the competition which had up until then at least theoretically linked the acquisition of a functionary's status with individual merit and achievement, and especially with passing the examination. Under the colonial system, the functionaries were appointed and dismissed directly by the French, with or without the approval of the powerless crown. In most cases the only required qualification was docility with respect to French national or private interests. What had once been a mandarin's system of rights and duties now became a privilege, gained and kept through servility to the coloniser. ⁽¹⁴⁾

Misery on the one hand and the victors' paternalism on the other contributed to the growing perversion of social relations. Belief in the possibility of bettering one's level of living by work and even of providing for one's family vanished in the process of colonization. Chance and favor rather than merit and achievement became the accepted means to well-being and personal security. This explains why vices like prostitution and servility (to gain favor) or like cards and astrology (to try one's luck) are now so widespread at all levels of society. On top of all this the colonisers destroyed the whole traditional education based on the moral values of Confucianism, in order to break the last centers of national resistance. In place of this traditional education (eliminated by the French even in the many small villages where it had been established) there prevailed a system which tolerated on the one hand access of some few privileged students to French lycees and on the other general illiteracy. The policy of cultural export begun in the last ten years of colonization changed almost nothing, because it benefited only a small privileged stratum.

Thus the colonial power attached itself to a servile class of privileged collaborators and submissive vassals. At the same time these flunkies managed an inexhaustible reservoir of cheap unskilled labour.

Moreover, their dependence on the French incited the functionaries to arbitrary conduct and illegality, especially during the first decades of colonization. From this followed a development of tendencies toward irresponsibility and dissimulation, attitudes which were already current in the entourage of the sovereign. One carried out a mission according to the letter without bothering to find out what was intended, for private initiative could only make trouble for its author. The Vietnamese administration entrenched itself in an impenetrable jungle of inertia and confusion to such an extent that when the French wanted to locate wrongdoers in the labyrinth of procedure, they had to give up, unable to find those responsible for their mistakes.

10. P. Gourou, *L'utilisation du sol en Indochine*, Paris 1940. According to the Rapport de la sous-commission de modernisation de l'Indochine (Report of the subcommission on the modernization of Indochina), Paris 1947, 24% of the rural population were the families of landless farmers, who are not even taken into consideration in Gourou's statistics.

11. Le Thanh Khoi, op. cit., p. 243.

12. Interest rates were from 3 to 10% per month (Le Thanh Khoi, op. cit., p. 433).

13. Such reforms were promulgated by Ho Qui Ly in 1397, Le Loi in 1428, Le Thanh Ton in 1470, Trinh Guong in 1711, Tsy Son in 1778, and finally Minh Mang in 1830.

13.* For example Tgho Tat To, *When the Light is Out*, Hguyen Cong Hoan, Nam Cao, Chi Phao.

14. G. Tajasque writes: "Those who collaborated with us yielded to the lure of money or, still worse, to a boundless and unscrupulous ambition. Their loyalties gained them the hate and scorn of the people. Nobility of spirit, unselfishness, and courage are with the opposition. There is nothing to be done against such a coalition of moral forces." (*Indochine, vielle (sic) idoles, nouveaux dieux*, Paris 1944, p. 221). One might repeat this passage, written during the conquest of Vietnam by the French, from 1863 to 1885, word for word to apply it to the present situation - provided one replaced "French" by "Americans."

Flattery and ceremonious phrases enabled the French to relieve tensions without losing face. Finally, most French did not know the Vietnamese language which formed a kind of preserve in which the most ancient vices such as corruption, nepotism, and favoritism could roam at will, sheltered from any eventual influence of a Western spirit of egalitarianism. This allowed the French, who were at times indignant over the abuses, to justify their paternalist attitude by the irresponsible conduct of the proteges. (15)

The colonial system of domination was not uniformly applied. While in the protectorates of Tonkin and Annam, the ceremonies and titles were left to a shadow mandarinat, the South of Cochinchina passed directly under the French colonial administration. In the first fifty years of colonization (Cochin-China was conquered in 1862, Tonkin and Annam in 1885), the Vietnamese in the South occupied only subordinate positions, void of all social prestige. Money became the only path to success. The policy of assimilation later followed in Cochinchina allowed the sons and grandsons of wealthy merchants to share in the benefits of French culture. They went to study at Paris or Montpellier, became doctors, pharmacists, architects, or jurists. In this manner there arose in Saigon a commercial bourgeoisie, caught between cosmopolitanism and nationalism, hard work and hedonism, but also lacking the affectations, the niceties, and the fundamentally hypocritical ceremony proper to the elites of Central and North Vietnam.

On the morrow of the First World War, the ever-increasing role of Saigon, main depot and great port, gave birth in this capital of Cochinchina to a flourishing luxury trade which spread to other big cities: Hanoi, Danang, Tourane and Hue. Thus the base of the colonial system was brought to completion - on the one hand the big cities with their opulent consumption, and on the other a wretched rural proletariat, a reserve

army for the mines, the rubber plantations and the big estates. The incompatibility of the two elites set up according to different conceptions, the feudal mandarinat of North and Central Vietnam, and the "liberal" merchants of the South, went deeper than psychological antagonism and still has certain repercussions on the regionalism and the internal politics of Vietnam. In all appointments to positions of responsibility a rigorous balance between the two sectors is observed in order not to open the way to the reactions which arouse their mutual mistrust.

On the one hand: an inescapable hardening of already strict class lines, and debasement and corruption of the elites, to whom was refused any real political responsibility. On the other: the rural population subjected to increasing exploitation and impoverishment, regionalism, mental mutilation and stultification; such were the effects of French colonialism in Vietnam. The social and psychological existence of the South Vietnamese retains its marks, more than ten years after the end of that domination. Instead of orienting itself toward radical social change and taking steps in this direction (fiscal and agrarian reforms, industrialization, planning in the spheres of education and public health), the South Vietnamese elite has preserved the socio-economic structures it inherited from the occupier, purely and simply turning colonial exploitation to their own advantage, under a form often more odious than that imposed by their French predecessors. Let us also realize that

15. It is from Louvet that the following testimony on the Vietnamese character is borrowed: "He is of a capricious and frivolous nature, of a childish race, with the changeability and the whims of a child. One must treat him as such, with a mixture of severity and indulgence." (*La Cochinchine religieuse*, Paris 1885, p. 211).



the situation in South Vietnam has not gotten any better after ten years of independence. Corruption, favoritism, administrative high-handedness, and usurious rents oppress the underfed and unemployed countryside. Shameless luxury, the absence of investments, the flight of capital, and administrative chaos are spreading in the cities with the familiar consequences - arbitrariness and irresponsibility, fear and servility. In this society which methodically forbids man to determine his life conditions by labour, and which condemns him to depend entirely on chance and favour, it is hardly surprising that magic and irrationalism are greatly in vogue even in "Westernized" social strata, while logic, rationality, and reflection are discredited.

3. The Indochina War and the Regime of the Ngo.

We will not dwell on the factors that led to the Indochinese War (1946-1954). Though it began as a Communist-run war of liberation, later (1951-1954) it took on the aspect of a genuine civil war. But the intellectual elite, the bourgeoisie, and the religious minorities, Cao-Dai, Hoa-Hao, and the Catholics, who had joined in on the side of the Vietminh in 1946, quickly broke off when in 1951 radical social and economic reforms were effected, sometimes accompanied by violence against prominent citizens and landed proprietors. The South Vietnamese elite has yet to recover from the shock it received from this "liquidation of the proprietary classes" and since then has never ceased harping on the misdeeds of the communists.(16)

It was then that former Vietminh from the bourgeoisie and landed gentry began to collaborate with the French, who in the same year sharply abridged the powers of Bao Dai's government and began to recruit a national Vietnamese army.(17) The rural masses who had benefitted from the Vietminh reforms, thanks to which they recovered their dignity and self-respect, immediately and unconditionally went over to the Vietminh, while in the Vietminh, the bourgeois officers who had gone over to the French were replaced by cadres selected and formed from the rural proletariat. The new cadres rose to the occasion and increased the effectiveness of the guerilla army. In July 1954 the French expeditionary force, despite the disaster of Dien Bien Phu, was not yet decisively defeated, but weak and very tired. France abandoned the struggle after she had failed to provoke American military intervention.(18)

The Geneva accords fixed the 17th parallel as the provisional demarcation line between the "communist" North and the "nationalist" South. In the South the prime minister, later to become president, was Ngo Dinh Diem, a Catholic called out of exile by the Americans. His extreme anti-communism, (19) based on ideological as well as familial motives, seemed to assure the State Department that the policy of "rolling back the Iron Curtain" would go into operation.

Let us pass over the internal contradictions of the Diem regime, his attempt to monopolize still nascent industry and commerce, and to create a mass movement in the service of nepotism, anti-liberalism, and anti-communism, even though all this may have led to actual war, to what is called the "second resistance." It was these contradictions that drove the bourgeoisie of Saigon, a considerable number of liberal politicians, and finally even the Buddhists into the opposition. At the same time, the development of an omnipresent police apparatus subjected the poor peasants to the most relentless terror and administrative high-handed-

ness, especially in the remote provinces where, in the absence of any foreigners, there was no need for "democratic" decorum. But the "personalist" rule of the Ngo brothers (20) found a certain amount of support among the small businessmen and the peasants with middle incomes, who suddenly had the opportunity to amass - in all loyalty to the Ngo brothers - huge fortunes in the contraband trade in rice, opium, and arms. For reasons of denominational solidarity the regime also enjoyed the support of Catholic political and religious leaders of North Vietnam, who had organized the massive evacuation of 800,000 Catholics towards the South, fearing as much the end of the feudal and obscurantist rule they had maintained as political repression on the part of the Vietminh.

Diem, assured of American aid (motivated by numerous interests) and the support of the Catholic refugees (the "Vietnam lobby" included a portion of the clergy, with the blessing of Cardinal Spellman), could afford to treat the Geneva accords like a scrap of paper. His government had not signed them. These accords had scheduled general and internationally supervised elections in both parts of the country for 1956, as well as offering protection for belligerents of both camps. An international control commission was, moreover, charged with supervising entries of arms and war materials.(21)

But in 1955 Diem succeeded in breaking the resistance of the politico-religious sects (Cao Dai, Hoa-Hao, and Binh Xuyen) and their private armies, cleverly pitting

16. It did actually happen that big landlords and comfortable peasants, without being guilty of anything, were condemned and executed by popular tribunals. This was an attempt to show the countryside the downfall of its old masters and to invite it to become conscious of its political interests; only one who has seen the power and influence of Vietnamese village notables can measure the difficulty of this task.

17. In 1949, the French named the former emperor, Bao Dai, chief of state and recognized in theory if not in fact the independence of Vietnam.

18. This attempt was supposed to have begun by "operation Vautour," a massive bombardment of Vietminh positions around Dien Bien Phu. cf. Jean Lacouture and Philippe Devillers, *La fin de la guerre: Indochine 1954*, Editions du Seuil, Paris 1960.

19. His brother Ngo Dinh Khoi, governor of Quang Nam province and collaborator with the French, who had a great number of nationalist rebels killed, was shot by the Vietminh during the insurrection of 1945. Diem's bloody repression of the communists had all the characteristics of a medieval vendetta. Bernard Fall reports that Diem refused a minister's portfolio in Ho Chi Minh's government, not for political reasons, but with the simple question, "What have you done with my brother?" For this brother he built a mausoleum at Hue which lacks no splendour of the imperial tombs that surround it.

20. The personalist ideology (Khan Vi), inflated into a political theory by Ngo Dinh Nhu, was a bad popularization of the philosophy of the same name expounded by Emmanuel Mounier.

21. The best report on this era is by Donald Lancaster, *The Emancipation of French Indochina*, Oxford University Press, 1961.

them against each other. Then he openly undertook, in defiance of the Geneva accords, the elimination of all former Anti-French resistance fighters.⁽²²⁾ At the same time, on the advice of his American protectors, he publicly proclaimed his refusal to go along with the elections envisaged in the Geneva agreement, and decided to replace the remaining French military advisors by those of the "Military Assistance and Advisory Group" (M.A.A.G). It was then that American military and economic aid poured into the country. The campaign of "denunciation of the communists" started by Diem in 1956 was carried out with especial ferocity in the regions formerly controlled by the Vietminh.

Village chiefs, instructors, old militiamen, and simple peasants who had participated in the redistribution of the land, were torn from their villages, thrown into reeducation camps, or killed on the spot. The more or less rudimentary organization of the police force permitted everyone to get rid of a rival rather cheaply. Some of those outlawed by the new campaign fled to the jungle and the swamps.

During this same time, the big landowners, compromised by their collaboration with the French, tried to regain their "rights," of which they had been stripped by Vietminh authorities either in 1946 or during the "liquidation of big landed property." The landlords again claimed, retroactively, rents on land which the Vietminh had distributed eight years earlier, and imposed on the farmers, under threat of eviction, new contracts under usurious rates of interest. Anyone who refused to sign could expect to be pursued as a communist.

The land reform (23) decreed by Diem in 1957 but never in fact implemented limited tenant farming and the size of landholdings (the latter to 250 acres). For the parcels of land allotted them, the peasants were all the same required to pay to the State an indemnification destined to the landlords, over a six to ten year period. It was only after the payment of this sum that the peasants could consider themselves proprietors. As they were already holders of titles to the land conferred on them by the Vietminh - that is to say by an administration that was at one point recognized even by the French as the legal government of South Vietnam - they justly felt themselves robbed and deceived. For this reason they were very understandably ready to make common cause with the refugees, communist and non-communist, who had hidden in the countryside, victims of Diem's witch-hunt.

22. According to the reports of the International Control Commission which go from 7/20/55 to 2/6/59. On 4/11/57, the South Vietnamese government announced that it would no longer reply to questions concerning the application of Article 14 of the Geneva Accords, the article referring to the reciprocal protection of former belligerents.

23. The agrarian policy of Diem is remarkably well presented in the books of Bernard Fall, *The Two Vietnams*, Praeger, New York, 1963, and Wilfred Burchett, *La seconde resistance, Vietnam 1965*, Gallimard, Paris 1965. *Vietnam: Inside Story of the Guerilla War*, International Publishers, New York 1965. Since 1957 the American economist David Wurfel had warned the government against the consequences of this agrarian policy, all of whose effects he had clearly foreseen.

Ex-villagers in favour of the Vietminh, nationalists desiring radical reforms and the objects of Diem's repression, peasants chased off their rice-paddies - such was the nucleus of those who were getting themselves killed by the Americans as "VC" (24) and who, in 1960, named themselves the National Liberation Front of South Vietnam. After the hope of general elections and a reunification with the Vietnam of Ho Chi Minh had definitely disappeared, and after Diem's repression had reached an incredible intensity, there began in the autumn of 1957 the first isolated actions of the "second resistance" - attacks against village chiefs, Diem supporters, police. And for several years these actions remained isolated.

The first really military assaults were not launched until 1960, a little after North Vietnam had decided to lend political and moral support by training the guerillas and forming cadres. By autumn of 1961, the South Vietnamese army was completely demoralized and near disintegration despite its advanced weaponry and the presence of over 3000 American advisors (Note that the Geneva accords only authorized a few more than 500). In 1962 the situation was stabilized by the massive employment of helicopters and by increasing the number of "advisors" to 20,000. By the end of 1962 and the beginning of the next year the NLF recovered its effectiveness and at Ap Bac won its first pitched battle. Afterwards it was able to extend its operations over 80% of the country and to control 60% of the population.

The fall of Diem in November 1963 and the destruction of his fairly efficient police and intelligence network were circumstances favourable to the "VC", who took advantage of the administrative chaos. The number of deserters among the soldiers, militiamen, and draftees went into the tens of thousands per month. To prevent a complete collapse of the Saigon regime and its army, the Americans, in February 1965, took the war into their own hands, landing combat troops and intensifying land and sea operations. The number of American soldiers in South Vietnam today (i.e., the end of 1965) is far greater than the resources of the French expeditionary force in 1953 (24*). The new tactics of the Strategic Air Command - daily saturation bombings, constant strafing by fighter-bombers of the areas under Vietcong control and the disputed zones, occupation of key positions by Marines and American paratroopers - has for the moment prevented military catastrophe. But this tactic also takes its toll among the civilian population,⁽²⁵⁾ and the number of men who have fled their devastated villages for the cities where there are no bombings to fear is over several million. These unemployed masses, designated as "escapees from communist terror," live only on begging, American aid, and

24. "VC" is the American abbreviation for Viet-Cong and it is also the official and pejorative term that the Saigon government applies to the communists. The exact translation of "communists" would be "cong san." 24*. Which contained in May 1953: 54,000 Frenchmen, 20,000 foreign legion troops, 30,000 North Africans, 10,000 air force, and 5,000 marines. cf. V.E. Ballance, *The Indochina War*, London 1964.

25. Especially since the attacks of the Strategic Air Command and its B-52 superfortresses have been extended over the overpopulated plains of the Mekong Delta and the coast of Quang Ngai.

the good-will of Vietnamese society ladies and American brass. They constitute a tourist attraction for Vietnamese ministers, Washington subcommittees, and the delegations of some friendly nations.

Several weeks ago an official at the American embassy told a European reporter: "Let them come, we've already seen to it that they won't die of hunger. We want to detach the population from the VC. The people should realize that living near the communists can mean nothing but death and the destruction of their property. These three ideas should become synonymous for them. That's why we send out bombers everywhere the VC are spotted or might show their faces." (26) The NLF cannot watch the escalation passively. Until the end of 1964 it provided for its needs in war material out of the latest American weapons, left behind by the nationalists, and out of old stockpiles dating from the Indochina War, composed of French, Russian, Chinese, Czech, and even German (Nazi) arms. It was only after the first American bombings of North Vietnam in August 1964 that Ho Chi Minh's Democratic Republic of Vietnam and communist China began to play a more important role in the arming and equipping of the South. It has never been established - and it is even doubtful - that with the landing of American marines in April, 1965, regular units of the North Vietnamese Army came to support the troops of the NLF in its operations in the highlands. Yet this is a "fact" which the Americans have never tired of affirming to justify their bombings of the North. But it is certain that many Vietminh soldiers, born in the South and withdrawn North in 1954, have returned to their home provinces for the "liberation struggle" against the Saigon regime and the Americans.

For those observers who refuse to stick to the cold war slogans and who want to get their own idea of the situation in Viet Nam, it is indisputable that the political orientation as well as the organization and military leadership of the NLF poses real problems. The former British foreign minister, Patrick Gordon Walker, declared after an information-gathering tour through Southeast Asia that the organization of the NLF is not essentially different from that of the European resistance movements in World War II. In these movements, in fact, the bourgeoisie was united with the communists while leaving the more active role to the latter. But one cannot help suspecting, despite the contradictory pronouncements of the central committee, that the leadership of the movement has a primarily revolutionary and Marxist orientation.

It is impossible to know whether the objective of this combat is conceived by the leaders of the NLF as a

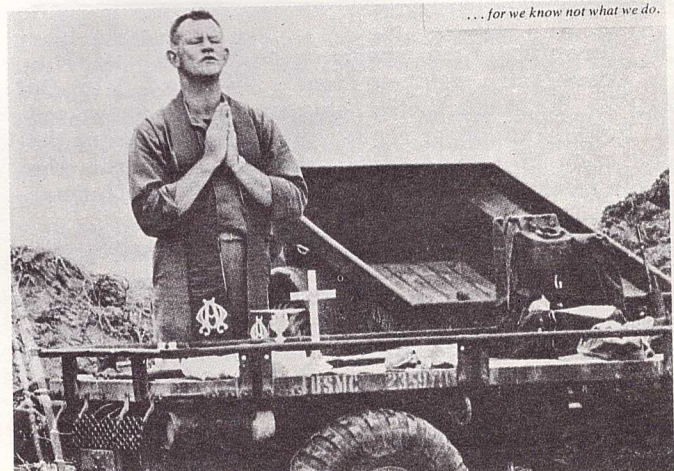
dogmatic and institutional socialism or as an open socialism of Marxist inspiration. The more the NLF is compelled to seek the support of Communist China - support that will become more and more pervasive as the Americans enter the struggle on a massive scale - the greater, of course, will be its dependence on the dogma and system of its giant neighbor. And the more the Americans confirm the Chinese position by illustrating trait for trait in their conduct the Chinese caricature of neo-colonialist imperialism, the more the politicized youth of Vietnam will be attracted by the theses of Asiatic communism. This development will become more pronounced to the extent that Asiatic communism becomes the only force to assume without reservation the revolutionary task in its most traditional form - the reestablishment of social justice. The complete degeneration of Vietnamese power, which is in any case without will or responsibility in the hands of the American authorities, and the release, in the light of the present situation of nationalist sentiments imbued with racism and xenophobia, will only accelerate this pro-Chinese evolution.

THE PRESENT SITUATION

1. War and Peace

Since the massive American intervention in Vietnam, all the "non-aligned" nations have been pressing for negotiations which will put an end to hostilities and lead to a political solution acceptable to all. Although the Americans say they are ready for negotiations without preliminaries, the only obstacle to talks is their refusal to recognize the NLF delegation as autonomous and representative. Just as the French did not want to deal with Ho Chi Minh but rather with his supposed chiefs in Moscow and Peking, and repented only after Dien Bien Phu, the Americans will accept at best the inclusion of the "VC" in the North Vietnamese delegation, under the pretext that the United States can deal only with the representatives of sovereign states and not with a bunch of bandits, thieves, and murderers who are trying to overthrow the established order.

Clearly, rational arguments can do nothing against passionate "convictions." The logic of events and the lessons of colonial history should make America desire an end to the war out of enlightened self-interest, if only to prevent for a time an international wave of anti-Americanism and the total dependence of Ho Chi Minh



... for we know not what we do.

26. The name of the reporter must be kept secret for security reasons: He risks expulsion. Collective punishments of the same type, although not as bloody, were inflicted by the French during the repression of the "Revolte des Lettres" (1885-1898): "A village which has given refuge to a band of rebels or which has not told of its passage is declared responsible and guilty. Therefore the village chief and three or four of the leading inhabitants have their heads cut off and the village is burned and razed to the ground." (De Lanessan, *Principes de la Colonisation*, Paris 1897). Thanks to the perfection of techniques of extermination, today the victims are more numerous.



and the NLF on Communist China. But on the contrary American vanity refuses to accept the inevitable, to wit: social revolution in South Vietnam and the resulting break in the American encirclement of communist China. In the same vein, America refuses to admit partial defeat before a colored people. "The honor of the United States is at stake," says President Johnson.

Without going any further into international politics (to find out, for example, in what measure a partial defeat of America by a national liberation movement could decisively undermine the semi-colonial system of the U.S. in Latin America), we will now consider what is happening in Vietnam itself. How have the Americans behaved? Of what is their system of self-justification composed? How does their presence and aid make itself felt in the social tensions of the country? And who has what interest in the pursuit of the massacre?

2. Misery and the business cycle.

The war and the American presence have produced in Saigon, Danang, and (less visibly) in the other major cities, a situation that Vietnam has never known before even in the balmiest days of the French Expeditionary Force. Dollars are pouring in. Barracks for 130,000 American soldiers have to be built. Staff officers, technicians, and administrative experts, arriving in greater numbers every day, are looking for air-conditioned villas and native personnel in Saigon and Danang. Hotels, bars, and restaurants are opening for soldiers on leave, recovering from the fatigue of combat in the pleasure-spots of the capital. There is an enormous demand for servants, houseboys, chambermaids, and rickshaw-drivers, as well as for message-boys, secretaries, porters, and workers. Houses have to be built and apartments remodeled. Masons, artisans, entrepreneurs and architects are so busy they don't know what to do first. Taxi-drivers are now taking only the "Whites" who give generous tips and often pay, in dollars, ten times the sum on the meter. Prices are rising.

Who gets something out of it? First, in a small way, everyone who knows how to take money out of the pockets of the Americans - shoeshine-boys, beggars, and taxi-drivers, bartenders and bargirls, artisans and small businessmen. Much greater amounts of money go to landlords of apartment houses or property, bar-owners, investors in transportation companies, and contractors. Finally, those who play the black market in gold or currency gain millions. Thus a whole society

of profiteers, with an interest in the maintenance of the Americans and the pursuit of the combat, flowers in the filthy windowboxes of the war.

It is interesting and instructive to note the collusion between the cream of this crop of profiteers and the military and political authorities. A great many wives, mothers, and aunts of high ministerial officials, generals and colonels, direct import houses and transportation and construction enterprises, and do not refuse government contracts. Ministers - irreproachable in certain areas and financially incorruptible - have cousins who own the biggest bars and dancehalls in town. Passed over in shamefaced silence and somewhat condemned by their influential relatives, they are still protected when the tax collectors or the police put too much pressure on them. The "business" breaks down only after the fall of the regime in power. The big fish in this group of profiteers always enjoy political protection. Moreover, good relations with the public agencies always bring in profitable contracts. Undoubtedly the economic prosperity of the cities could, despite innumerable abuses, prove useful to the whole country if the money earned were invested in Vietnam and created new industries, jobs, etc.: not a chance. The development never goes beyond the needs of the Americans, which determine its limits. It will never lead to any economic "break-through," for the greater part of what is earned disappears through two familiar channels - the export of capital and the hoarding of gold.

It is not easy to get an exact idea of the volume of capital exported or hoarded. But the 100,000 American soldiers in the country as of June 1965 spent two hundred dollars monthly, per capita, which makes a total of 20,000,000 dollars, all of which disappears on the black market.⁽²⁷⁾ The greater part of this money was "invested" in wine and women, the rest spent on restaurant meals, hotel rooms, and souvenirs. In one year, this adds up to 240 million dollars - enough to get an economy running, provided it is invested productively. But the bar owners and restaurateurs immediately deposit this money in French and Swiss banks. The taxi girls and prostitutes, who do not usually have the connections for this operation, buy gold and jewelry.

And yet this sum represents only a small part of the war profits exported or hoarded. It does not include the gains of transportation and construction companies, real estate owners, wholesalers in food products and other furnishers, in short, all the beneficiaries from contracts connected with the Vietnamese and American "war effort." These sums are undoubtedly even greater. The transactions in question are in any event also regulated by bank transfers; this is why the Vietnamese entrepreneur sells the piasters he has earned to a currency holder with a foreign account, and has himself credited with an equivalent sum in francs or dollars. With the complicity of ships' captains and customs men, piasters are exchanged against "hard money" by the buyer, often a professional currency speculator, on the Hong Kong exchange, where the

27. According to the information furnished by a high official in the South Vietnamese ministry of finance, before the introduction of scrip the national bank received no more than a few thousand dollars a month, furnished by the exchange operations conducted at the official rates.

piasters are worth at least twenty points more on the dollars than in Saigon.

Almost as profitable but totally exempt from any risk - for the good reason that it doesn't necessitate the export of paper money - is the circular franc-piaster-dollar-franc exchange, which profits from the particularly high standing of the franc on the black market of Saigon, a rate of exchange due to looser fiscal control of France, as well as to the greater possibility of use for the exported money. (28) The piaster traffic is revived here under a different form. (29) Thus one can estimate without much chance of error that 80% of the one and one-half billion dollars annually distributed by the Americans in Vietnam in one form or another - for economic aid, the maintenance of personnel and of their other military charges - returns to open bank accounts in Western nations, where this sum further enlarged by advantageous financial transactions will be invested to make the economy run at an ever more rapid rate.

Let us pass over the other possibilities of making money in South Vietnam and of transferring it to a country with a stable currency. The only official American program of commercial imports - the best endowed form of economic aid - also deserves mention. This is how it works: through the channels of American economic aid, a certain sum of dollars is put at the disposal of the Vietnamese government each year for imports, and divided among the import firms according to a scheme which they have imposed upon themselves after much struggle. This enormous sum is expended according to the "Buy American" rule. The importers pay the Vietnamese government 60 piasters on the dollar according to the "official rate," lower by half than the black market rate (145 piasters) and even considerably lower than what the tourists (73 piasters) and the American GI's (118 piasters) obtain from the national bank. For their imports, the firms are compelled to follow certain governmental directives. For example, a fixed sum must be spent on products of vital interest, like medicines. But apart from these restrictions, the importers may freely choose what they want to import, and they naturally decide in favour of products that find the greatest profits and the best market - luxury items like cars, refrigerators, air conditioners, whiskey, wine, etc. And even the most indispensable products like medicines are imported for profit, not for real need. The result: Some medicines are permanently lacking in the state hospitals and the pharmacies.

The Americans justify the scandalous outcome of this program - one must realize that on the one hand no products are imported which are within the reach of the rural population, while on the other the bourgeoisie of Saigon is deluged with American luxury goods at subsidized prices - by the need to make piasters for military purposes (the expenses of soldiers, police, the financing of programs of population transfer). Inflation, under these conditions, can be avoided only by the importation of products for which there is a solvent demand. The brilliant logic of this explanation needs no comment

28. Many Vietnamese belong to "respectable" families with friends or relatives residing in France.

29. Jaques Despuech, *Le Trafic des piastres*, Editions des Deux Rives, Paris 1953.

The fragility of the business cycle in Vietnam is obvious. We need only ask what will become of the numerous bars, hotels, restaurants, transportation and construction enterprises, and also of the innumerable labourers and soldiers, when the Americans leave. Even now difficulties are arising. In September 1965, for example, under the pressure of international opinion, the Americans introduced scrip and forbade American soldiers to exchange it on the black market against "greenbacks." This scrip is honored by the Vietnamese National Bank at the preferential rate of 118 piasters, a compromise between the black market (145) and the tourist (73) rates. The money thus obtained could finance imports. One might have thought that this measure, requested for three years, could help strangle rising prices.

The results were exactly the opposite. As soon as it was announced, all prices rose 20%, and so did the black market rate for the suddenly scarce "greenback." Since those who made money in Vietnam desired above all the export of capital, and since that capital became more expensive after the scrip issue, it was logical that they should try to recoup their losses at the expense of the consumer. It was not only the luxury products whose prices increased, but also the essentials - rice, vegetables, cloth, sandals, etc. Thus this measure too struck at the poorest peasants and agricultural workers.

The counterpart of this galloping business cycle is frenzied money-making and spending. The sum which the bourgeoisie of Saigon loses in gambling or dissipates in the nightclubs equals an important percentage of the official earnings of the upper middle class - professors, doctors, lawyers, officials and civil servants. Almost all the money which is not transferred abroad is spent on pleasure and luxury items and thus ends up abroad anyway. The economic inequalities find strong confirmation in the debauchery and frivolity of the big city.

The other side, or rather the necessary condition of prosperity in Saigon, Danang, and one or two other cities, is the misery which the rural population suffers. Aerial bombing, artillery barrages, "pacification operations," the use of defoliants and arbitrary arrest have provoked indescribable misery. Rice production has fallen so low that Vietnam must today import from America (1965: 200,000 tons) a food of which it had for a long time produced a surplus. The number of civilian wounded keeps mounting. In a provincial hospital where only serious limb injuries are treated, the number of admissions has almost doubled over the last year. The increase in the number of women and children wounded is particularly striking. Out of 813 wounded, only three said they were victims of Viet-Cong actions. The rest must be added to the score of the Americans and the national Vietnamese army. Thus it is hardly astonishing if thousands of refugees, fleeing the "no-man's land" continually bombed by the Americans, come to vegetate in the suburbs of the big cities - underfed, unemployed, and in rags, living on the dole that those responsible for their misery have finally decided to distribute to these supposed victims of "communist terror." Out of men who up to now had earned their living by their own labour, beggars and professional relief cases have been made. The degradation and moral mutilation to which this condition leads are obvious.

3. The Battle against Parasites and Cleanliness.

"...and you have remained in spite of everything clean and attractive beings..." - Heinrich Himmler in 1943, on the return of a particularly efficient extermination commando.

In the midst of all this misery, the Americans flaunt their good conscience. Their sense of mission remains intact. How? It is well-known that Americans often have a horror of any kind of dirtiness, or, to put it more precisely, of a "lack of cleanliness." This horror manifests itself manifoldly - in rituals, in symbolic and active modes of thought: a hygiene complex; sphincter morality; concealment of body odors, sickness, age, and death; and an aseptic, sterilized sex-life reduced to a sperm-free relaxation. The result of these taboos is the aggressive and even hateful repression of abnormal social activities, especially in the domain of sexual relations but also of the most inoffensive acts such as loitering (thus it is that in some quarters of Los Angeles the act of walking is considered an offense). And, lastly, there is the taste of Americans for every-



The village of Ba Gia was hit by bombers, rockets and cannon fire in a three day siege.

thing uncomplicated, everything whose operation is quickly understood and qualified by "clear and simple" facts, not so much because of the rationality and empirical value of these facts, as of their general and "direct" obviousness.

For the average American, "evil" is often something with an opaque appearance simply from an hygienic point of view, with an opacity behind which flourishes uncleanness, inconveniences, instinct, incorrectness, everything that menaces right and morality, threatening to spread like mildew or vermin if it is not suppressed in time. Thus the global struggle for good is for the American the "extermination" of evil - it is this which Puritan morality has demanded for centuries and centuries. This is why the American intervention in Vietnam is above all reminiscent of a clean-up campaign, an

operation of extermination against insects and weeds by crop-dusting, the goal being to re-establish a "clear and transparent" situation in a country set back on the road to prosperity, after the extinction of the greatest possible number of "communist parasites." This image becomes reality when the Americans insist on using herbicides of proven military uselessness, to clear roads and canals, in spite of the fact that these chemicals are extremely poisonous - a "side effect" which operates, according to the Americans, only when the herbicide is too concentrated.

If the Americans have been trying for months to master the military situation by intensifying the air and sea wars, the primary reason is, of course, to reduce to a minimum the loss of the precious American lives.

But there is another, unconfessed motive - to dirty one's hands as little as possible. The ideology of "extermination of parasites" is easy to keep up when one does not see the results it produces on the "other side." From a Supersabre or a Starfighter, the machine-gunning of a group of men fleeing across a rice paddy isn't much different from elephant hunting. And from three hundred miles an hour, at one hundred eighty feet, seeing a woman die is nothing like the the same event viewed from up close, with her skull broken open and her chest crushed. The obedient sons of American mothers and the respectful lovers of American coeds who drop tons of bombs from 40,000 feet, killing and mutilating hundreds of civilians in the process, can preserve the illusion that they are doing their patriotic duty. Thus by increasing the potential for annihilation, the advances of technological warfare have also reenforced the capacity for repression necessary to the modern warrior. These advances have permitted Americans to play the ostrich in Vietnam by masking the consequences of their "hygienic" extermination campaigns.

It is in this perspective that the Americans have initiated their systematic effort to underline the demonical character of the "VC," shown off to the world as robbers, bandits, and baby-butchers, sacrificing the population to the realization of their dark designs. This technique of creating demons is of course an efficient psychological weapon. But it seems as if those who are spreading these ideas believe them. The fact is that both sides use the population for their own ends and both sides are ready if necessary to sacrifice even "innocent civilians." The course of a modern war demands that such sacrifices be justified by "a higher necessity." The commandos of the liberation front do not fire on corrupt bureaucrats and police alone. They sometimes impose harsh treatment on an old family that, committed by ancestral prejudice or family interests, propagandizes against social reform. They have also dealt atrocious deaths to political enemies who have predicted their imminent defeat and the victory of the Americans. Their attacks against American installations have involved the deaths of Vietnamese passers-by. Nor do they hesitate at times to execute American prisoners in reprisals following the execution of Viet Cong fighters. Finally, the rebels exhort the inhabitants of villages bombed by the Americans to come demonstrate in the district and provincial towns against the murder of their countrymen and the loss of their possessions, without weighing too heavily the fact that these demonstrations will mean new victims: The "forces of law and order" generally make "use of their weapons" to disperse the "communist mobs."

But on reflection no one can honestly consider these

acts more immoral than the orders from the South Vietnamese generals not to take prisoners ("because the communists are really incorrigible") (30), or than the tortures inflicted in the presence of American advisors on old men and women who perhaps know where the "VC" are hiding; nor are they more immoral than the mass artillery or aviation bombardments of villages, carried out for the purpose of "intimidation," even before ground troops have made contact with the rebels. It is against all reason for the Americans to contend that their blind and massive extermination, conducted hygienically with the push of a button at 40,000 feet, that the misdeeds of their uniformed killers and licensed torturers are less reprehensible than the "individual" crimes, carried out with knife or pistol by "bandits" or "subversive elements" who look their victim in the eye. It is not the murder itself that is judged and condemned with righteous indignation, but its primitive character: "there are bloodstains;" it isn't done "correctly" or "properly". Hypocritically, they contrast the "filth" and obvious cruelty of the crime committed by an individual craftsman, with the mass extermination "correctly" prepared and "properly" executed by a team operating on the industrial scale and allowing everyone to "keep his hands clean."

This attitude, which involves "closing one's eyes and saving appearances," demands a deceptive legitimization of inhuman methods of conduct. The Americans freely admit that the chemical weapons they are testing in Vietnam derive from tear-gas, whose toxic nature is well known. "Properly employed," these weapons cannot provoke more than tears and vomiting, and at most a short fainting spell. The carefully concealed fact is that they are often employed in such massive quantities that their effects resemble those of the classic poison gasses - 2nd or 3rd degree burns, intestinal cramps, and fatal circulatory disorders. When, in a particular case, these arms kill or mutilate not only "VC" but also civilian villagers, and the press or event television takes up the affair, the authorities can always say that this was a regrettable accident due to an oversight.

A complicated scaffolding of legal fictions was needed to justify the new rapid-fire armament that the Americans have been delivering to their South Vietnamese allies for several months. By way of precaution, these weapons and their ammunition were not manufactured in the US itself, but in friendly nations. The projectiles look normal and therefore do not come under the Hague convention against dum-dum bullets; their outside isn't filed but they flatten on impact, causing the same horrible tissue and bone lacerations that the hand-doctored bullets do. Here again a clever manipulation of international law allows the Americans to deny the inhuman nature of the weapon and to keep their good conscience.

With such fine abilities for "scrupulous correction," the Americans can exhibit the Viet-Cong's devices - for example the traps furnished with sharpened bamboo

30. Such orders are issued periodically, especially in the zone held by the 1st Corps. Sometimes it happens that American officers, stricken with remorse, make reports on the consequence of the execution of these orders. The orders recall the famous "instructions to commanders" issued by Hitler in 1941, after which all Russian prisoners who declared themselves communists were shot immediately.



stakes - as supplementary proof of the communist's "perversity."

In its policy, its manner of waging war, and its propaganda, America visibly lets itself be inspired by the tradition of Puritan repression. This tradition first creates intolerable conditions by using force and defending an inhuman system; second, renders the victims who revolt against this system individually responsible for all its cruelties and pursues them with righteous indignation; third, soothes its conscience by mitigating with gifts the most abominable consequences of the oppression. A refusal to recognize its own responsibility, moral indignation, and charity are the three eternal pillars of the justification of any Puritan social repression, from the reeducation of lost women and convicts all the way to neocolonialism, via the missionaries among the Negroes in the 19th century.

Everywhere one extols social "integration" by means of education, humanitarianism, and charity, considered the noblest values. There is a merciless struggle against what is thought to be the root of evil - degraded customs, impiety, and corruption. And everywhere the irresponsibility and a-social tendencies attributed to race or physical constitution are denounced. Thus the weapons are provided to scorn the "incorrigible" rebels or the active and conscious defenders of a "criminal" system (this can mean gangsters, Nazis, beatniks, or communists). If circumstances permit, their physical annihilation follows. This allows the Puritans to glut their murderous and hidden passions in all good conscience, under the pretense of a "merciless struggle against extremists." Doubtless the act of throwing fascists and Marxists into the same sack reveals on what a perilous path modern industrial society advances, hounded by the Scylla of its own suddenly confessed and manifested violence and by the Charybdis of its own destruction.

The many aspects of the American presence in Vietnam - bombings and economic aid, indignation before the "irresponsibility" of the aborigines and the need to educate them, ideology and sentimentality towards beggars, dogs, and children - reveal even in the individual and "private" acts of the occupation troops the main elements of the repression which we have described, a repression whose goal is the preservation of the colonial system.

4. Myth and Consumption.

The actions of American soldiers, tourists, and officials in occupied or "allied" countries always give the

impression that they are running an advertising campaign with insufficient material. The merchandise they hawk is themselves - their sound and uncomplicated exterior, their inner sense of justice, their untiring helpfulness, their disinterested intervention on the behalf of the weak, their willingness to establish the conditions for a neat, clean, and healthy moral life, their respect for the democratic rights of the individual, in short, the American way of life. One could summarize it all by saying that they are eager to please at any price. But this formula would be deceptive. In reality, they do not want to please in order to gain the favour of a partner; this is proven by the fact that they are only rarely willing to modify their own conduct. Most of all they need to look themselves in a mirror, like Narcissus, a need summarized by the expression to sell the image. It is the classic image of the good Western sheriff, strong, honest, righteous, not too smart, protecting the painfully acquired possessions of widows and orphans against drunken outlaws and rustlers, and content for his whole reward to marry the prettiest girl in town.

But Vietnam is the last place in the world where this image can be validated and sold. The operation will be costly, very costly. Thus the street scenes and bars of Saigon bring to mind a caricature of *The Maids of Genet*: The venal and illusory realization of the image finds itself inexplicably bound up in brutal returns to reality. To sell the image has become to buy the image. The American can make no gesture of protection, do no good deed without paying. The shoeshine boy will require a five or ten piaster bonus from the GI who tousles his hair. A joke or smile for one of the wretched street-urchins on the side-streets off the rue Catinat will create a sweet complicity which is broken regularly after three minutes by the kid: Gimme five P's. The five P's (piasters) have become a kind of tax which our Western hero, with his colt and gunbelt, must pay to be left alone in the streets of Saigon. If he doesn't pay, he is returned to his unadmirable situation by a strident and incessant cry: Hello OK, OK hello!, a rustic denunciation of his incomprehension of strange civilizations, of his puerile simplicity, his futile joviality, and the sterile sympathy he offers each and everyone. In short, it reminds him of the highly simplified image, the caricature that the average Vietnamese pins on him.

The waitresses in the bars, the taxi-girls, the drivers, the newsboys, and the beggars have all understood that the American will pay them as long as they don't warp too badly the "good-guy" image he is offering them. They have also learned that his heart and wallet will fall wide open if you let him play his heroic scenes of frontier mythology with you. But the Saigonese have also learned that, according to the mood of the client, a cyclical alternation between the cookie of illusions and the caning of disillusion is the surest as well as the swiftest road to a fat wad of dollars. The provocative and shameless gestures of the young widow on the bar stool as well as those of the grubby orphans of the rue Catinat, tend in their own way to exploit the need for illusions. One always pays a lot for protection, but precisely because it makes the price rise, violations of this protection are constant.

Thus a vicious circle is created in which the need for illusions is continually frustrated, and this frustration becomes the best way of encouraging spending. And so the request for five P's often winds up by preceding

the magnanimous gesture of the giver and as soon as the kids have the money in their hands, they run away, crying Hello OK! even before the big fellow can caress or chat with them. In the same vein it is getting rarer and rarer to find pretty bar-girls spending the night with GI's. The American soldier already has to pay just to sit with them, and the same payment gives him no rights to any affection. Then he drowns his sorrows in drink and often, a little before the curfew, has himself led off by an old prostitute, sick and dirty. He sleeps with her wordlessly and with mild disgust.

To the Americans' need to see their fake image reflected in a comedy in which Vietnamese partners are hired to play the other guy, there is now added a tendency for self-punishment whose masochistic character is becoming daily more evident - and which, in its turn, can be exploited lucratively. Thus the "human relations" which the Vietnamese can have with their American protectors are reduced to the level of those a prostitute might have with her most perverse clients.

It would be false and unjust to see in the divorce of ideology and reality a fundamental trait of the American character. Everyone who has had the opportunity to visit the United States has been able to see that at home the Americans often demonstrate an open and honest character, and that sobriety, the democratic spirit of justice, and an attitude of mutual assistance runs in their blood. They act naturally and always try to prove the advantages of their personality and their way of life. The myth of the frontier amuses the young people, but the others have outgrown it: Precisely because it has "internalized" and abstracted a whole series of ideals and norms as universally valid moral maxims, there is no longer any need to conjure up its archaic image. The flowering of the old myths, where it appears, should rather be interpreted as the symptom of an individual, collective, or national crisis of nerves, resulting in an ideological repression by which an attempt is made to reconcile the traditional maxims with the given reality. This is what happens to many Americans abroad when they try to apply their maxims like kitchen recipes to complex and ununderstood situations. The aberration of their conduct then pushes them to insist rather than to retract, which only aggravates the problem. If in addition powerful economic and political interests oppose any correction of their conduct, and if the radio and press attest daily to the "black and white" accuracy of their representations just when they have become untenable, then naive but fundamentally well-intentioned principles are inflated to the proportions of grotesque and perverse myths such as one may observe today in Vietnam.



U.S. Marines fire into the smoking rubble of a village hut.

The ever more patent relationship in the Americans' conduct between their desire to affirm at any cost their self-image and the masochistic tendency to self-punishment - a tendency amplified by the frustration of their vital need to be loved - reveals something more: the first manifestation of a bad conscience, born of the thought that the bombs are hitting not only the evil "VC" and their munitions dumps, and that the war may not be a fight for right after all. Behind the American's "unmotivated" guilt complex which exhausts itself in masochistic frustrations, there is another underlying idea: In the shadow of this complex lurks the spectre of the "dirty war," of a war whose ever nearer and more palpable horror could well destroy the sanctity of the American's self-image. This is the reason for his frantic attempts to preserve this image, even at the price of a comedy in which the supporting role falls to a prostitute. It is again this imperious need to preserve the self-image that explains why the Americans in Saigon spend so freely. Often they do not dare to refuse the goods offered them, nor to haggle over the fantastic prices fixed specially "for the American" - as if the loss of the merchant's shabby and circumstantial sympathy would plunge them into an abyss where the feeling of real guilt dogs them, a guilt which the American tries to conceal day after day by participation in annihilation and extermination campaigns.

Profiting from the climate to sell the "good guy" image and to exploit the Americans' dismay at not corresponding to it, a whole industry manufacturing trinkets, talismans, amulets, confetti, streamers, plumed hats and other accessories for illusionists has grown up. The shabbiest tricks and most perverse manipulations to save the illusion of a "just war" can no longer hide the fragility of the whole system of self-justification. In such a situation there are only three ways out: try to understand (but God only knows where that will lead you!); pursue your private interests cynically and abandon your illusions; or hide in a bad faith that can lead to the total disintegration of thought and action into mad rage. The first two courses presuppose a certain moral confrontation with the situation. As for the third, it implies that, after total exhaustion of their capacity for repression, the Americans go on to repress all consciousness of the social and economic situation.

The first signs of such a "mad rage" came when US marines assigned themselves the task of setting their cigarette lighters to the villages where the "VC" were hiding. Uncontrollable excesses have followed - whole villages burnt and prisoners executed, and anything that moves blindly machinegunned - water-buffaloes, peasants, chickens. This frenzied behaviour is more and more common among the American troops. We have only to think of the two marines who took it upon themselves to bomb Hanoi one fine day and who, only a few moments before takeoff, were dragged out of their fighter-bombers. What will happen if this madness spread to those who are at the controls of the gigantic apparatus of destruction and extermination?

MEANING IN MADNESS

1. The Provisional Score

What are the real or pretended interests of the Ameri-

cans in the Vietnam war? The gamble involved in their policy is a secret to no one. The Defense Department has explained it more than once: A "VC" victory or even their partial success, sanctioned by a treaty, could encourage the communists to launch "wars of national liberation" throughout the world. Here is the real danger for the U.S. international strategy. The Americans express it only in veiled and sophistical terms when they say that their defeat in Vietnam would provoke the collapse of all the other nations of Southeast Asia. This famous "domino theory," invented by John Foster Dulles, is put forward only to mislead and please newspaper readers with a superficial knowledge of the problems of Southeast Asia.

But the United States' political preoccupations also have an economic basis. If we realize that every year one and one-half billion dollars make their way to South Vietnam alone, only to return to their point of departure, we get some idea of the lucrateness of this crusade - and of other crusades in other parts of the underdeveloped world - for American private interests. Moreover, these countries constitute an export market, however limited their capacity for absorption. Finally, nothing is more instructive for understanding the war fever in the US than a glance at the future: What would the great powers of the "free world" say if 30 or 40 industrial nations of Africa, Asia, and Latin America came one day to dispute markets with relatively cheap products - as Japan and Hong-Kong are already doing? There is no lack of arguments to demonstrate the necessity of defending the "free world" in Vietnam. What is at stake is the unchallenged system of neocolonialist exploitation and domination of the Western world.

Neocolonialism distinguishes itself from "classic" colonialism by two essential characteristics: first, by the ever greater participation of the indigenous bourgeoisie in the profits realized (this bourgeoisie finds itself integrated into the Western economic system by virtue of the capital it has invested in the "free world" and therefore defends the same interests); second, neocolonialism must justify itself by a complicated ideology which the colonialism of the 19th century could do without; it is this ideological function that economic aid, the crusading spirit against "socialist barbarism," and the humanitarian and charitable enterprises fulfill. Economic aid will prove beneficial to the Western economy, to which it will return in the form of exported capital; and, by its mode of redistribution, it will serve to perpetuate social conditions incompatible with any real economic "takeoff." Thus foreign aid becomes a permanent institution, assured of its own continuity.

Such are the forces interested in suppressing the revolutionary tendencies in Vietnam - the Western economy and the South Vietnamese bourgeoisie. The latter also wish to prolong indefinitely a massacre which alone can keep the Americans in Vietnam and perpetuate the excellent urban economic situation there. By maintaining administrative chaos and a political vacuum - which has incidentally contributed to the military defeats of the last few years - this bourgeoisie has effectively succeeded in forcing the Americans to send a whole expeditionary force. Now the bourgeoisie has decided to do everything to see that the war against the "VC" can neither be won nor lost, so as to conserve for the country the "benefits" of the American military presence.



2. Psychological Warfare and Fetishism

In a Puritan society like America, the violent pursuit of economic interests always provides itself with a Manichean justification. The members of the society willingly accept struggle provided that their adversary can be portrayed as Satan and their own cause as the defense of innocent victims.

The psychological means to this end are very simple. The main device is taken from magic, a characteristic form of regression. One might formulate it like this: Nothing is real but what I have before my eyes. This device fragments reality into isolated perceptions from which disparate and disjointed conclusions are drawn: It is the renowned and typically American "matter of fact."⁽³¹⁾ Here the social, economic, and historical context which produces the "fact" is ignored, as is one's own responsibility for the creation of this context. This allows misery and luxury, as well as saturation bombings, to be considered simply as facts of nature or destiny, as if one were talking about the weather, or natural disasters, or mutations, for which "no one" is responsible and which must be accepted humbly, like a judgment of God. This humility in turn demands a charitable effort to succor with good works the most cruelly stricken victims.

Thus the animist ideology of the American "matter of fact" permits, under the aspect of strict objectivity, the consolidation of existing relations of domination, and gives an epistemological basis to the American's good conscience. The emotional arrogance with which many average Americans reject any thought that is a little complex - immediately labelled fallacious, a bunch of foreign gibberish - testifies to the power of the interests who have created in the "fact" a national fetish. This parcelling up of reality into "facts" not only validates the idea that the Americans are fighting a "clean" war, like "well-balanced and honest" men, for the noblest of causes. It also permits identification of the adversary with the Devil. Doesn't he in fact commit sacrilege by touching a social order willed by God and nature? Isn't it sacrilege to trouble America's good 31. Perhaps it is no accident if Joseph Alsop, one of the most fanatical firebrands of the cold war, defender of Johnson's policies in Vietnam, entitles his column in the Herald Tribune "Matter of Fact."

conscience by imputing to her the responsibility for that social order? Why, he must be the Devil Himself!

Aside from the primary "metaphysical" evidence, we can orient our researches around "empirical" proofs of his infamy. The ideology of "matter of fact" may dispense with any consideration of the adversary's revolutionary measures in the perspective of a reasoned and necessary transformation of social conditions. These measures are far from being "facts" in the American sense of the word. Thus one cannot ever count them among the realities created by the acts of men. Isolated from their social context and seen from the viewpoint of a social order conforming to the "laws of nature," the unavoidable severity and avoidable errors that accompany any revolutionary change appear as nothing more than sacrilegious excesses committed by a band of assassins and brigands specially recruited for this purpose.

If the consequences of a system of exploitation - sickness, hunger, death, bombs fallen "out of the sky" - cannot be attributed to anyone in particular, communist atrocities are quite another story: The expropriation of "legitimate" landowners, the assassination of "very worthy" notables, the agitation of "peaceful" peasants etc., are "objectively" abominable individual actions committed by the minions of an inhuman system which tramples underfoot the order "willed by God" and the "rights of the individual." In all this one need not take into account the rarity or the frequency with which these injustices are actually committed. The whole trick is to stigmatize each one of them as a violation of the "natural" order and the rights of the "individual," thereby enabling us to hide from the victims of these acts the realization that the system of domination under which they live tends to reduce these "rights of individuals" it is reputed to guarantee to zero.

Better yet: The discontent of the victims of the present system, and their aggressiveness, is habitually directed against those who propose to end the causes of their discontent by a rationalization of productive forces and of the relations of production. The cult of the "matter of fact" makes possible - by its own regressive content and by links with the psychology of development - not only the self-justification of the American "good guy" but also the mobilization of public opinion against the "VC"; it succeeds in harnessing the aggressiveness of

the American and Vietnamese victims of the "natural order" in the service of that very domination to which they are forced to submit. Nor is this animistic argument the only one that the Americans use in their psychological warfare. The magical belief that only "impure" beings can attract death, misfortune, and terror also forms a part of their arsenal: By bombings (see above) they try to convince the civilian population that the Vietcong attracts punishment from heaven, that the "Vietcong" and "death" are synonymous.

Conclusion: Castration and Domination

The regressions we have described - atavistic reflexes in the service of a "higher" interest and the creation of an ad-hoc system of self-justification - are obviously not rational processes. On the contrary, their efficiency derives from the fact that they play on the American's infantile complexes, the heritage of Puritan society. What threatens to engulf the GI when someone contests his "good guy" role is not only his very real guilt. It is also those childhood anxieties in which the horror and fear of the flesh overcome themselves towards the sanctification of physical strength in the service of some noble cause (St. George and the Dragon, cowboy vs. vicious Indian). Later, the feeling of sins of the flesh, a lack of sexual assurance and doubts concerning virility tend to develop into a power-complex. The muscular exhibitionism of American soldiers, college boys, and baseball champions who want to be worshipped as "tough guys," and the incapability of the "biggest power of the world" to accept the fact or even the idea that it might occasionally suffer military or political defeat, are some typical manifestations of this potency complex. Here is the source of anxiety from which has sprung the regression to atavistic forms of conduct and the mythological ideology of self-justification. It would be worth the effort to investigate whether such primitive forms of compensation for castration-anxiety as boasting, conviction of invincibility, and "tough guy" idolatry first arose after the end of the heroic frontier epoch, which has in the meantime been magnified into a myth.(32)

The American potency complex, which is the regressive answer to the castration threat actualized in Puritanism, has still another interesting implication. In this complex "physical superiority" and therefore domination appears as mental obsessions, which must incessantly prove themselves in order to suffocate emerging sexual anxiety. The insistence on the principle of domination as the law and order of human relationships - a principle which is translated into reality in the modern capitalist industrial society as well as in the American foreign policy of the Johnson era - would thus find in the potency complex the instinctual dynamics of its effective motor power.

This motor power can equally well be mobilized for the struggle against those who seek to abolish the principle of domination itself: First of all, for the

32. The fatal element in collective neuroses and psychoses is that the paranoia and exaggeration do not remain in the subjective representations of the "sick," but from the beginning operate in reality. Reality itself is here the experiential and conscious representations of the "sick".



"The war in Vietnam is one of the most barbarous wars in history." U THANT

struggle against Marxian socialism; from this perspective, it is perhaps no accident that it was precisely Puritan America which, after the settlement of the Wild West, and after the annihilation of the "uncivilized" and "bloodthirsty" Indians, grew into the greatest capitalist industrial and military power on earth. Nor is it an accident that this America now defends its primacy with all the means of domination, including the instinctual release of a visceral and murderous (in a non-metaphorical sense) anti-communism.

Our conclusion will be short: In no case should we let ourselves be intimidated by the supposed "vitality" of the United States, which rests in large part on a collective castration anxiety and potency complex. The Vietnamese bargirls and kids have understood that to unnerve their protector or to extort a few piasters from him, they must attack him at his (literally) tenderest part.

Thus there is no point in amassing on our side productive forces equal or superior to those which a dark and anguished will to power has accumulated. The only result would be waste and sterile competition. Moreover, the menace of American imperialism would not be removed for all that. The question is whether reason can one day reveal the absurdity of the American potency complex as efficiently as the conduct of the young Vietnamese.

The self-caricature which the Americans will make of themselves in Vietnam, if they fail to maintain their myths and prove their superiority (i.e., the capacity to win), could contribute to such a debunking. Perhaps it could even lead the Americans to revise their attitude a little. This is why the partisans of a free society should do everything in their power, at the side of the Vietnamese himself, to check the gigantic American enterprise of repression.

AN INTRODUCTION TO THE YOUNG LUKACS

by ANDREW FEENBERG

George Lukacs, a Hungarian born in Budapest in 1885, was educated in Germany during the liveliest and most creative period of German philosophy since the first half of the nineteenth century. Max Weber, Lask, Husserl and Dilthey were the great teachers of the time, breaking new ground in the study of Kantianism, phenomenology, sociology and cultural history. Heidegger, Jaspers, Thomas Mann and many others who have since become leading lights in the intellectual world were contemporaries and fellow students of Lukacs'. He was among the most brilliant. Already in 1911 he published a short book called *The Soul and the Forms* which foreshadowed the later development of Existentialism in its concern for authenticity and the philosophy of death. In 1916, Lukacs published *The Theory of the Novel*, a fundamental work of literary criticism, which in many respects culminates the development of the German aesthetic theory of Schiller, Schlegel and especially Hegel.

After the war, Lukacs joined the Communist Party and returned to Hungary to serve as Minister of Culture under Bela Kun. There he brought his early work to a close with the publication in 1923 of his most important book, *History and Class Consciousness*, perhaps the most valuable contribution to Marxist theory since the time of Marx and Engels themselves. In this last book, Lukacs attempted to show the fundamental connection between Marxist theory and the proletarian revolution. In the course of this analysis, he demonstrated for the first time the profound importance of Hegelian dialectic for the thought of Marx.

It is primarily *History and Class Consciousness* with which I will be concerned here. The book itself has had an interesting history. In 1924 the Fifth Congress of the Communist International condemned it as idealist and revisionist. Shortly thereafter, the German Social Democrats also denounced it, thus isolating it completely from the world socialist movement. On both sides the authorities preferred to stick to a positivist and pseudo-scientific interpretation of Marx. Lukacs silenced himself and continued to work privately for many years, limiting his interests exclusively to Marxist literary criticism. His early work was not reprinted. After the initial stir died down it lay forgotten by all but a few social theorists and Marxist philosophers in Western Europe, became more and more difficult to find, and, until its translation into French in 1960, was known mainly by reputation. As the French translators of the book say, "*History and Class Consciousness*, one of the masterpieces of twentieth century Marxist thought, was expelled from history and consciousness without gaining the slightest hold on the (proletarian) class."

Although we in the United States know practically nothing of the early work of George Lukacs, the few

obscure books of his youth, written shortly before and after the First World War, have been of crucial importance for the intellectual development of contemporary Europe. Many of the most interesting ideas in recent European thought stem directly from Lukacs, particularly in the field of Marxist philosophy and scholarship. The list of writers influenced by one or another of the protean transformations of his youthful genius includes some of the most brilliant names in French and German literary criticism, philosophy, and sociology: Maurice Merleau-Ponty, Lucien Goldmann, Karl Korsch, Herbert Marcuse, Karl Mannheim, etc.

Europe found in Lukacs a profoundly creative thinker who was able to bring aesthetics, philosophy and social theory alive in new and fruitful ways, infused with political consciousness and moral concern. In this same period, radical thought in America suffered under the weight of heated ideological debates that were neither creative nor realistic. Perhaps one significant cause of the general theoretical vacuity of the radicalism of our unhappy thirties was the absence of an intellectual influence like Lukacs. But then we scarcely read Marx, so little were we prepared to move on to advanced developments of Marxist theory such as one finds in the work of Lukacs.

Today, as we enter a new phase of Leftist activism in America, we must strive to avoid the errors of the thirties. The "New Left" is largely aware of this problem, but so far it has tried to solve it merely by renouncing ideology and cooperation with the Communist Party. But few ever believed that ideology or Party were ends in themselves. Their sole value to radical action is their ability to instruct and guide action toward a better society. The assumption that the failure of a particular theory and a particular political group signifies the failure of all theory and all groups is singularly unimaginative. Furthermore, the basic problems of radical action are not even touched by these dogmatic refusals of everything vaguely resembling the past of Leftist politics in the United States. For the refusal of all ideology and theory that is so prevalent on the Left today is just the other side of the substitution of ideology for reality in the thirties.

We do not move towards concrete reality by merely refusing, however self-consciously, to understand its basic structure through the application of social theory. A strong political position cannot be built on muckraking appeals to the "facts" and an unreflective commitment to democratic and human values. We do not, of course, need party ideologues prepared to espouse a given line in pseudo-philosophical language, and unfortunately a certain amount of this persists. But we do need to think clearly and deeply about the basic theo-

continued on page 21

IN THIS CENTURY NO METAPHOR
I'M NOT A POLITICAL THING. IN THIS CENTURY NO
METAPHOR CAN APPROACH THE ENORMITY OF THE
CONTINUOUS UNIVERSAL SLAUGHTER WHICH SUR-
ROUNDS US, THE SLAUGHTER OF THE POOR BY THE
RICH, YET I BELIEVE MY LAUGHTER IS NOT OB-
SCENE NOR MY HAPPINESS AN ATROCITY; EACH
OF US BEARS THE BURDEN OF THIS PARADOX, AND
WE MOVE ON. NOTHING IS FULLY MEANING-
FUL BUT REVOLT, I ESCAPE ALL CATEGORIES AND
MY LIFE AS MUCH AS ANYONE'S IS A LIFE OF
DEVOTION: I SHINE MY LIGHT EVERYWHERE AND AS
OFTEN AS I CAN. TAKE ME FOR WHAT I AM,
YOU'LL GET NOTHING ELSE.

A RELIEF, EVERYTHING IN OPPOSITES, EVERYTHING TORN.
DO THE GREAT SHIPS STILL SAIL WITH THE TIDE?
DOES THE SON OF A THIEF SOAR ON A MAGIC CARPET?
I WRITE THIS, I WRITE THIS

IN A PLACID EVENING ON THE THRESHOLD OF JUNE.
THE LOVERS. I WEEP AT THE THOUGHT OF THE LOVERS,
LOOKING UP AT THE BRANCHES SWAYING AGAINST THE SKY:
ONCE WHEN WE MADE LOVE WE WERE THE WHOLE WORLD.
IT STILL HAPPENS THAT WAY, ONLY NOW
THERE'S NO ROOM IN IT FOR OUR UNDERSTANDING.
NO ROOM FOR THE FLESH AND THE BREEZE, THE SHUDDER.

DO NOT LINGER HERE.
THIS WAS A POEM FOR THE SPRINGTIME.

MARTIN GLASS FROM LIP-SERVICE

HERE ARE STILL LIFE:
THE THINGS
WITHIN REACH:
THE PINEWOOD
TABLE, THE SOUP
PLATE (FOR INSTANCE)
SUCH IS LIFE, THE FORK
BY THE SIDE,
WHERE THE PIECE OF CLOTH IS,
FREEDOM THROWN ABOUT ON THE FLOOR;

*BLAS DE OTERO, LEADING BASQUE POET OF THE LEFT, TRANSLATED BY

SEVEN STEPS DOWN MIDDLE PATH

- I. I CANNOT TELL YOU WHERE OHIO IS, EXCEPT/
I REMEMBER DRIVING BY THE LAKE SHORE
MILES NORTH OF HERE/
IN THAT CRAPPY CHEVROLET/
IN OCTOBER.
- II. HE ASKED, "ARE YOU A FAMOUS POET?"/
CHRIST, KID! EVEN MY MOTHER/
DOESN'T KNOW ME.
- III. TURNING AROUND FROM THE TOILET/
I AM SO SURPRISED TO SEE THE HILLS GOING OFF
DOWN INTO THE RIVER/
THE TWO HORSES WITH THEIR BIG HEADS OVER THE WIRE FENCE/
AND THE CAST-IRON PUMP IN THE BACKYARD/
I FORGET TO WASH MY HANDS.
- IV. YOU'VE TOLD ME SO OFTEN ABOUT THE OLD SOUTHERN
BASEBALL CAP/
POET'S/
I BEGIN TO BELIEVE YOU.
- V. IS THIS THE PLACE? I CAME MILES INTO THIS
GODFORSAKEN COUNTRY/
JUST TO SEE THE BANK OLD JOHNNY
DILLINGER ROBBED BUT/
IS THIS THE PLACE/
WHERE IT HAPPENED?
- VI. BIG LOUIS HAS ONE MORE LEG/
THAN PAUL'S LITTLE BLACK CAT DOES AND/
IT'S HOLLOW.
- VII. THIS ROBIN IS FULL OF OHIO OR WHAT/
I MEAN TO SAY IS SOMETHING ABOUT HOW IT IS SINGING.
DAVID O'SS MAN

ZURBARÁN 1957

AND YET
THERE LIVES
SOMETHING,
FOR AS IT HAPPENS
THEY GATHER AROUND A GLASS,
THEY KNOW
TOMORROW
WILL BE SATURDAY,
IN SPAIN AS IT IS IN HUNGER, A FREE
AND REDEEMED SATURDAY.

BLAS DE OTERO

CARLOS BLANCO, PROFESSOR OF SPANISH LITERATURE, U. C. S. D.

continued from page 18

rectical and philosophical questions that arise in the context of radical action in an advanced society. From this point of view, it may be of great value to return now to the work of the man who, more than any other, contributed to the creation of a sophisticated and important school of Marxist thought in Europe, one capable - if not of overthrowing bourgeois culture - at least of holding its own within it.

THE NEW SCIENCE OF GEORGE LUKACS

Yet in spite of the failure of Lukacs' work, and in spite of the far more serious failure (for Marxist thought) of the Western European Communist movement to make a revolution, History and Class Consciousness served as the principle source of an intellectual movement in Europe which continues to produce an extremely significant challenge to traditional thought and scholarship. The irony is perfect: the radical young Communist, Lukacs, devotes his best energies to creating a Marxist theory that would definitively and decisively tie Marxist thought to the revolutionary action of a proletariat that was to transform all of Europe in short order; but the work of this same revolutionary becomes instead the inspiration for an intellectual movement which is more and more conscious of the fact that it is impotent to lead a revolution. Yet it was precisely this conversion of Marxism into a scientific tool of cultural scholarship that Lukacs had hoped to combat by turning social theory toward its revolutionary function! How can this be explained?

Partly, of course, by the fact that once expelled from history, class, and consciousness, Lukacs' ideas could only be influential as ideas and not as practical guidelines of revolutionary action. Partly also because the Party failed to grasp or was unable to act upon his grim warning of the danger of the embourgeoisement of the Western proletariat, and stuck to a naive view of the

revolutionary potential of Europe. But most importantly because Lukacs brought to bear on the problems which concerned him a formidable knowledge of Marxist thought and methodology, an understanding which could be built on for many years afterwards in the construction of a highly developed Marxist cultural thought. This contribution centers primarily around the connected ideas of Marxist dialectic, and a concept of the radically creative function of class consciousness in social life.

Those engaged in historical, literary and philosophical studies have often been more repulsed by the crudity than by the materialism of typical Marxist scholarship. Marxists tend to become "vulgar" Marxists when they write on cultural problems, reducing the spiritual life of society to rough schematizations of economic structure. It is obvious that something is wrong when Dostoevsky becomes a "petty bourgeois obscurantist" whose work is to be explained by his adherence to the ideologically "reactionary" theories of Russian populism. But Marxist cultural research does not necessarily involve attacking a delicate and complex organism with a blunt instrument. A long section of History and Class Consciousness is devoted to an exploration of the place of Marxism in the classical German philosophical tradition of Kant, Fichte and Hegel. In the course of these analyses, Lukacs demonstrated in practice that Marxism is not limited to mere schematizations of "reactionary" and "progressive" cultural achievements in relation to economics.

Marx believed that economic production is not simply an economic activity, but is in fact the total production of a whole form of life, of a way of understanding the world and of acting in it. This far the vulgar Marxists Lukacs so vigorously opposed were able to go, but they could not grasp Marx's deepest insights into the nature of the economy itself. Marx saw this economy which lay at the root of social life as itself a social form, a system of relations between men and men and between men and things. Lukacs revived and expanded this theory, showing that even technology depends essentially

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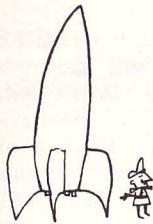
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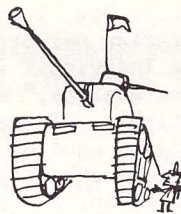
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on the basic forms of human relations within society. Assembly line production, for example, cannot be understood without studying the class structure of the society which invented it and which permitted and encouraged its use. Because Lukacs saw class consciousness as fundamental to the material basis of society, he did not attempt to reduce culture to purely economic categories, but instead viewed the economy as an integral and fundamental part of culture.

It is from this point of view that Lukacs asserts that society is the product of human thought and action, and not an unconscious and determined part of nature. This means that the truth of society lies not in abstract scientific laws, but in the concrete historical activity of men. Culture too appears as a historical product and not as an ahistorical originality or a mere adjunct of technology. Because it is through culture that each class brings to consciousness and fulfills its own historical role within the limits set for it by its place in the process of production. Lukacs insists on the dynamic, historical character of human society, on the development of newness and change in history through the conscious and unconscious activity of man.

Thus Lukacs opposed the spontaneous, historical life of society to the dead movements of the inorganic world, in which atemporal scientific laws reign over the process of change. This great emphasis on the place of class consciousness, class activity and class relations in the historical development of society allowed him to create analyses of social phenomena that were both materialist in orientation and yet not schematic and pseudo-scientific reductions of the human world to economics. He placed consciousness at the very center of economics and history, refusing to consider it as a "spiritual" epiphenomenon of economic production as so many Marxists have. The result was a profound clarification of the relations of values and facts in history, of thought and action, of the production of material and spiritual life. From this point of view, Marxism as a serious cultural science became possible for the first time.

THE IRONIC VISION

Happy is the age which can read in the starry heavens the mapped out paths which are open to it and which it may follow! Happy is the age whose paths are lit by the light of the stars! For it everything is both new and familiar; everything is adventure, but everything belongs to it. The world is vast, and yet it finds itself at ease there, because the fire which burns in the soul is of the same nature as the stars. The world and the self, light and fire are clearly distinguished, but they are nevertheless not really strangers to each



and a third stockpile
of clubs and stones.



Whatever history holds
for us, we are ready.

other, because fire is the soul of all light and all fire is decked out in light. Thus no act of the soul fails to find its meaning and its completion in this duality: perfect in its sense and perfect for the senses; perfect because the soul's act separates off from it, and become autonomous, finds its own meaning and draws this same meaning around itself like a circle.

from *The Theory of the Novel*

These first sentences of *The Theory of the Novel* describe ancient Greece, a society which, Lukacs believed, lived in the immanent and immediate presence of the totality. This concept of the totality which is central to History and Class Consciousness must be understood in its original significance for the author in his earlier work on literature. Such unfortunate attempts at social theory as Karl Popper's *Poverty of Historicism* have struggled unsuccessfully with the idea of the totality because they have failed to see that it is not merely a collection of knowledge, a sum total, but rather a form and structure of life itself.

The Theory of the Novel was an attempt to produce a general theory of the function and evolution of literature in the West since the time of the Greeks, with primary attention centered on the novel, the form of modern literature. This was no doubt too much to ask from a short essay of 135 pages, but in spite of its limits the book contains both genial analyses of specific literary works and a vision of life that bore fruit in all of Lukacs' later writings. Lukacs worked with three basic concepts here: the totality, life, and essence. The relations of these terms in literature was supposed to reflect the real character of the life-forms of the periods in which literary works appeared. Lukacs described his task as the study of these "transcendental topographies", atemporal forms of literature and life. To each topography corresponded a particular form of literary expression, the novel, tragedy, etc., which was a purified reflection on the real structure of life.

The totality is the relation of life and its meaning. When essence, the meaning of life, can be discovered in things just as they are, when life offers an objective meaning in which men discover themselves, then there is a totality. The proper literary form of this age is epic poetry, the poetry of Homer and Hesiod. Here life, the ordinary existence of men, is already infused with a meaning and a grace which can become art or virtue or happiness simply in a heightened consciousness of existing. In this world there is no opposition between duty and reality, between art and mundane existence, between the individual and the community, between,

ultimately, the human soul and the world in which it finds itself. Every act and every object in this world are, just as they are, artistic and ethical in their natural form. The gods are companions, not judges of men. The tools and the speech of everyday life are poetic, and find literary expression as they really are, without lyrical or illusionary aesthetic transformation. This is the world in which the totality is immediately given in life: "The totality of being invested with form, where the forms are not constraints, but simply the taking consciousness of, the bringing into the light of day of that which sleeps as obscure aspiration at the heart of everything which should receive form. The totality exists there where knowledge is virtue and virtue happiness, there where beauty manifests the meaning of the world."

The novel is an epic form and therefore like the classical epic poems it too must be based on a fundamental community of the hero and his world, essence and life. The Greek epic showed the commensurability of man and his life by revealing the already perfected form of this life, raising reality to the ideal effortlessly and honestly. But the novel moves in precisely the opposite direction: it demonstrates the unity of man and the world by showing that both are degraded and false, that whatever essential meaning man opposes to the degradation of reality is itself degraded. The world of the novel, the modern world, is defined by a set of hardened and rigidified conventions which once had a meaning in which man could express himself but which have now become dead obstacles to human freedom. Essence and meaning are no longer immanent to life, but exist only in the soul of the hero as ethical demands which he opposes to this social life that has lost its truth, this "second nature." Thus Emma Bovary judges and condemns the restricted and banal life of the provincial bourgeoisie which surrounds her in terms of romantic ideas of love and freedom.

But if the world has lost its poetry and become prosaic, the poetry of the hero's soul is a lie. Modern man has discovered that the forms of art and life are not objective realities, but creations of the soul. This discovery deprives the forms themselves of their application to reality. They are no longer true, but have become simple dreams. And since the hero must nevertheless live and act in the world, these dreams can only enter reality in the degraded form of illusions. The ideals of the hero are abstract and false, no more true than the degraded world to which they are opposed. Hence the importance of the theme of disillusionment in so many great novels.

Corresponding to every illusion is inevitably a disillusionment, and thus the search of the hero of the novel for the totality is a constant process of gaining and losing illusions in the experiences of life. But even though the ideals of the hero are untrue, they are still capable of revealing the inadequacy of reality. The ideals which the hero opposes to the world are false, but they express that nostalgic yearning of man for an age in which the totality is immediately given in life, and therefore the failure of the hero condemns the world to nothingness. This condemnation cannot be ethical, however, for the ideals of the hero are false. Instead, the novel is a form in which ethics is converted into its aesthetic basis, in which the conflict of the hero and reality highlights the origin of ethics in the aesthetic structure of the totality.

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The ideals of the hero, in their necessary failure, show that for the individual reality denies its proper aesthetic form, the totality. But the search of the hero in which this is discovered can still be given aesthetic form: the novel can be written. The totality, the life in which man's destiny is objectively present in reality, is absent from the world of fact, but it is still available in art in the form of the novel. But the totality of life and its meaning on which the novel is based is an abstract totality, made possible only by the abandonment of every ideal in the absolute disillusionment of the hero at the end of the novel. The totality only exists in the form of the novel and the mind of its author, and not in reality.

Because the novel is the history of the failure of a search for the secret totality of life in which man and the world are not alienated, but exist in harmony, its hero must live in opposition to reality as it is. He must be a "criminal or a madman", and the author must view him ironically. The hero's actions are constantly set off by the narrator of the novel in irony. The novelist, having already attained the ironic vision of reality in which every ideal is devalued, must see his hero's life in the light of its inevitable failure. Irony is the pure aesthetic possibility of freedom and the aesthetic form in a world in which both man and society are degraded and false. Irony shows the ideals of the hero to be false gods, demons, which possess him and drive him to assert himself against a brutal reality. It is only by this asceticism of irony that the ground can be cleared for a new world, for new forms, for the true gods of the future.

The Theory of the Novel ends with a chapter on "The Transcendence of Social Forms of Life", a utopian reflection on the work of Tolstoy and Dostoevsky. Lukacs considers these Russian novelists as striving to go beyond the form of the novel toward a new transcendental topography in which the totality will be restored in its pure immediacy. But there is no appreciation here of the requirements of a real material practice in the world to create this form in reality itself. As Lukacs later explained, The Theory of the Novel, like Existentialism, was a combination of leftist ethics and rightist metaphysics, of political idealism and the traditional concept of reality before which consciousness was a helpless spectator, unable to actively create a new world. Thus like Existentialism today, this book was unable to indicate a real means to suppress the "world of the novel" and pass on to a more fulfilling form of life.

THE REIFIED SOCIETY

History and Class Consciousness resolved this difficulty by converting the aesthetic categories of The Theory of the Novel into historical categories of Marxist revolution.

At the time Lukacs wrote History and Class Consciousness, Marx's Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts of 1844 had not yet been published by the Russians. The manuscripts showed clearly the dependence of Marxist thought on Hegel and provided a possible foundation for a non-positivist Marxist science of society. But its basic problem, the analysis of "alienation," was scarcely glimpsed by later Marxists who possessed only scattered references to it in Marx's mature writings. It was Lukacs who first drew attention to the fundamental importance of alienation, or "reification" as he called it, for Marxist thought. The validity of this extraordinarily brilliant insight, which led Lukacs to an extremely Hegelian formulation of Marxism, was later confirmed when the Manuscripts were published, revealing the background to the section on the "Fetishism of Commodities" in Capital and the "Theses on Feuerbach" which had been Lukacs' inspiration.

Lukacs takes as his point of departure the idea that merchandise, commodities, are the central concern of the analysis of capitalist society, because merchandise is not simply one aspect of this society, a limited economic category, but the basic form of objectivity for the society as a whole. Every manifestation of bourgeois social life assumes the form of merchandise or some correlate of this form. In the commodity market human relations are converted unconsciously into objective things. The basis of this process is what Marx called "the fetishism of commodities." Every commodity in bourgeois society is at once a thing made by human labor to fulfill definite human needs, and an object which confronts the individual as possessing in itself a purely quantitative value indicated by its price. Although production is really a human relation between the producer and the consumer, in capitalist society this relation is hidden behind the more obvious relation of the producer to his salary and the consumer to the commodity and its price. Thus the concrete connection between production and consumption is replaced by the abstract medium of the market, both of labor and of products. The commodity appears in this process as a thing which has an objective value, apart from the human relations in which it is involved. This objective value, this price, is of course not real in any scientific sense, but it does rule the process of exchange because society has formed itself in accord with it.

This fetishism of commodities Lukacs calls "reification," which in its general character is the form of objectivity within bourgeois society as a whole. In a reified society, human activity and the goods produced by this activity are alienated from the actor and the producer. The commodity that is placed on the market, be it the personality of the individual which he "sells" to another, or the product of the individual's labor, or the thing he buys, is viewed as a part of an objective system of laws and relations between it and other commodities. The personality which one sells is not a free human being, but a limited and restricted "product" which is set up more or less successfully in terms of the social requirements of society. The product of the individual's labor does not belong to him, nor does it

fulfill his needs, but is simply the means to receiving a wage. In itself, this product belongs to another, to the capitalist, who is equally uninterested in it, having decided to produce it in order to make profits. The object on the market is given a price in terms of the competitive necessity of selling it for approximately the price of other similar items. Thus its value is set not so much by human need as by its relations with other commodities.

Everywhere the same structure rules: social objects, based on human relations, are transformed into natural objects, independent of man, things ruled not by human freedom and choice, but by eternal and unchanging laws of nature. Production itself and the process of exchange on the market are viewed as alien and self-moving, following their own "scientific" laws. The individual confronting this society is at best capable of using its laws manipulatively to his own advantage, but never of changing them. At worst he is even denied this minimum creativity of seeking profit and becomes himself the pure object of the laws which rule production and distribution, obeying them constantly in his work and in his daily life. And this structure actually holds objectively as well as subjectively within bourgeois society. The reality of reification allows human activity, production, distribution, etc. to be rigidly quantified and controlled in terms of the laws they obey. Thus the basic trait of bourgeois society is its constant attempt to calculate and rationalize the whole social world.

This attempt, however, fragments the traditional irrational unity of the commodity, the work which produces it and the use to which it is put. It generates specialization and the division of labor into its rational elements. But this transformation of the meaning of the object from something a man makes by himself and for himself into an assembly line product belonging to someone else also transforms the subject which produces it. In the rational process of capitalist production, individual human qualities of the worker become simple sources of error. Man no longer appears as the real motor force of production but becomes simply an element within the productive process, and since this latter is primarily mechanical, man too must take on mechanical attributes to participate in production.

The worker's machines face him in their completion and their independence. They determine the type and

Cody's

"After we had had our fifth of Gordon's Dry Gin, we would go to bed. One morning, I went to bed and set the whole place on fire. We were living above an undertaking parlor. When I woke up, a fireman was squirting water in my face. We burnt the whole apartment up, and everything

— Ohe, prince Aage! Prince Aage! Prince Aaaaage!

— Plus fort! On ne t'entend pas. Qu'est-ce

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quality of his work, not vice versa. The worker must submit to the discipline imposed on him by the machine, and the more advanced is the mechanization of the worker's factory, the more this discipline consists in simply contemplating and controlling from the outside the nearly self-sufficient productive activity of the machine. Work becomes a contemplative attitude in relation to a mechanical process governed by the laws of nature and wholly independent of consciousness. Not even the work of the entrepreneur can escape this reified form. Although he appears to be active and original, in fact this activity amounts to nothing more than another form of calculation and contemplation, the object being profit rather than production.

The unique character of capitalism lies in the fact that for it reification is a universal form of life. There is no socially significant enclave that is above reification, either spiritually in the form of a mystical or religious dogma, or socially in the form of an unproductive aristocracy. Vestiges of these phenomena remain in capitalist societies, but the driving tendency is to enforce rationalism and a formal equality of all men, tying them in some fashion to the productive process, and defining every kind of knowledge as rational. The universality of capitalist reification stems from the fact that only in bourgeois society is all labor free labor. Here the worker submits to oppression out of his own freedom, thereby defining the destiny of mankind as a whole in terms of the structure of work. Work is no longer the fate of animals and slaves, but becomes the unique human possibility. Thus mechanization and calculation embrace every aspect of life and for the first time in history the economy assumes a unitary appearance, under a unified set of laws, affecting the whole of social life.

Consciousness in this society is itself reified. It cannot provide a real liberation from reification because it approaches its objects "immediately", that is, because it fails to discover underneath reification the real human relations which have projected it forth. Instead of mediating its reified objects in the totality of relations and actions out of which they emerge, it accepts the fundamental reality of reification. On the

one hand reified consciousness may oppose "values" to the world of fact - duties, ethical obligations, ideals. But in doing so it sets up an insurmountable barrier between what is and what ought to be. For these values find their being in their pure subjectivity, in the fact that they represent precisely what does not exist. Once they enter the real world, through ethical action, progress or whatever, they too become part of the reified reality which it is the function of value to reject and transcend. Thus in the mechanical, atomistic world of capitalist society subject and object, value and fact appear in radical opposition to each other. On the other hand, reified consciousness can content itself with elaborating the laws of reified life. By abandoning the empirical, qualitative aspects of experience, it can formulate more or less exact calculations and predictions in every sphere. Partial, abstract systems of laws can be constructed, each one embracing a specific segment of social life in a form that allows it to be successfully manipulated and used for individual advantage. But then human faculties, both spiritual and material, appear not as parts of an organically united person, but as commodities in a world of objects, to be exchanged for other commodities. The inner freedom and unity of the person is completely lost.

Thus the rationality of bourgeois society is not itself rational. Each system of laws developed to calculate and control reality must suppress the unique and the individual in its field. Since it is only in the qualitative and historical aspect of experience that the real necessary connections between different kinds of experience can be made, the relations between the different systems of laws cannot be found. Moral values are incapable of humanizing this dehumanized world, and become wholly irrelevant to its movements. All this comes out most clearly in the economic crises of capitalism. Here the irrationality of the total process of society, the inner connections of which remain inevitably hidden, breaks out in a dramatic manner. The totality escapes the reified consciousness and fails to rule its forms of life and its institutions, but it is the absent reality of the society and it makes its absence felt constantly in unseen ways and more obviously in the crises.

At this point it is necessary to forestall a possible misunderstanding. If the totality is lost for bourgeois society, this is no accident, no simple failure of vision on the part of the bourgeoisie themselves. The mediation of reified society by the real historical and human relations on which it is founded is not a simple scientific question, to be resolved at the level of methodological disputes. Nor for that matter is this loss of the totality simply a question of the class interests of the bourgeoisie. Capitalist society is reified not only for consciousness, but in fact. Its institutions, its economic structure, its social relations themselves really assume the form of natural things. Thus the application of the method of the natural sciences to society, which Lukacs deplors, is not altogether wrong. The only way to refute this procedure is to show that bourgeois society, behind the veil of reification, contains a creative force prepared to suppress reification in fact, in reality, a class prepared by revolutionary means to restore the totality. Short of this, the demonstration of the human meaning of society is if not impossible, of no practical importance or interest at all. But this means that to transcend reification intellectually, bourgeois society must be left behind, not only in theory, but also in



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practice; because, "On the ground of bourgeois society, a radical modification of point of view is impossible."

TOTALITY REGAINED

Lukacs insists that reification is an appearance, but not, as we have seen, because it is philosophically false or factually unreal. Reification is appearance because reified society, by its very nature, must generate its own contradiction in the proletariat. It is at this point that the significance of Hegelian dialectic for Lukacs becomes clear. Hegel's thought is based on the idea that things do not exist independently of their relations. The being of any object is a mediated being in the sense that the relations in which this object finds itself define it as a thing. The totality, the ultimate horizon of relations in which particular things arise, is essentially historical, a process of structuration and destructuration of relations and objects in time. The object is a combination of realized actuality and unrealized potentiality; it is only part of what it could and should be by its very nature, as a seed is both actually a seed and potentially a blooming plant. It is this which Hegel calls the negativity and the falsehood of the object. Historical movement in this totality is motivated by this inadequacy and negativity of the object.

It is in relation to "negativity" that history appears in its full metaphysical importance for Hegelianism. For the process in which the thing struggles with its limited, false actuality in realizing its potentialities is an historical process. The object carries in itself in its relation to the totality the power to evolve toward its true form. The study of history is the study of the internal mediations within the totality that drive this evolution forward. Thus mediation cannot be applied to objects intellectually, but must be discovered in their immanent, real structure as they exist in the totality. And, similarly, this totality is not a mere intellectual tool, but is the actual reality of history and objects.

Lukacs interprets Marxism from this point of view, placing the relations and the historical tendencies of things in the fore and demanding that the mediation of capitalist reality rest on the real negativity of bour-

geois society and not simply on an intellectual construction. Reification provides the key to this analysis, because it is the material expression of the negativity of bourgeois society for the proletariat.

Reification, the social reality of capitalism, confronts both the proletariat and the bourgeoisie, but their points of view on this reality are radically different. The bourgeois sees himself as an object within the reified world of production in so far as he recognizes his impotence to really alter this world. He must accept it and "adjust" to its demands. But at the same time, he feels that he is the active subject of this process of adjustment; he feels that he has the ability to act in the capitalist world, to create and destroy, by accepting its premises and manipulating it to whatever extent he is able. This illusion of activity hides the real truth of his existence from the bourgeois. Unconsciously, behind this individualist facade, the real subject of the activity which each bourgeois claims as his own is the bourgeoisie as a class. It is the class as a whole which produces and reproduces capitalist reality, that reality within which the individual bourgeois acts.

On the other hand, the proletariat apprehends himself as a pure object within this same society, because whenever he is tempted to regard himself as the active creator of his own life, society brings him up short and shows him that he is simply another cog in the productive apparatus. He is thus forced to recognize that his whole existence is part and parcel of the production of capital. All the bourgeois categories of abstract quantity and reification appear to him in their most universal form, as applying to him, as defining his place within a finished world of things of which he becomes a part by selling his labor. And this sale of his own labor, this surrender of a part of his life to another is as abstract and reified as possible. Unlike the bourgeois who sees his work not so much as the sale of himself as "intellectual activity" or "responsibility", the worker sells only his physical strength. The human essence of the worker is of no economic value and therefore does not have to become a commodity for him. Unlike the bourgeois, whose deepest human possibilities are put at the service of capitalism, the worker retains an unreified reserve within himself.

It is this unfree freedom of the worker which creates the possibility of a transcendence of reification, in theory and in practice. Labor is a commodity like any other in capitalist society. The work of the worker belongs to the capitalist to whom it is sold. But this alienation of the worker's work is a conscious act on the part of the worker, who, unlike the material products of capitalism, must transform himself, out of his freedom, into a commodity. Yet his humanity rebels against this transformation; it refuses to accept oppression, degradation, humiliation as a simple fact of nature, imposed on the whole working class by laws as uncontrollable as those which rule the weather. Thus the worker turns towards his own position in society and perceives it as at once that of a thing and that of a person compelled by other persons to become a thing. The worker becomes conscious of himself as a commodity, as merchandise, and at the same time recognizes that this reified self which he assumes within bourgeois society is not his full reality. The worker becomes the self-consciousness of commodities and also the consciousness that the whole reified structure of bourgeois society is an appearance behind which acts, unconscious-

ly, the bourgeoisie as a class.

As the self-consciousness of commodities, the proletariat is also the self-consciousness of the whole commodity society. Because proletarian knowledge is in immediate relation to its object, the class consciousness of the proletariat has the inherent power to attain knowledge of the totality of bourgeois society. The proletariat, as the self-consciousness of bourgeois society, is both object and subject of its knowledge. The proletariat is thus able to break through the veil of reification and discover behind it the concrete historical process in which the bourgeoisie imposes reified forms on society. Reality is understood, and every particular fact of daily life finds its true meaning in its dialectical relations to the whole evolving structure of society. No isolated, reified things appear for this consciousness which cannot be understood in their true basis in the totality of human relations and historical processes of which reality is composed.

It is from this point of view that the proletariat opposes its dialectical science to the bourgeois, naturalistic sciences of society. This latter works with "facts" which it discovers immediately in experience, and draws these facts together under specialized laws having the form of eternal principles. But society is a constant process of evolution and within this process it is change itself which is the highest reality. The facts gathered by bourgeois social science are already out of date by the time they can be subsumed under laws, for the laws themselves are changing as society evolves, and it is from out of these laws, understood now not as atemporal rational principles, but as immanent, real historical tendencies, that the specific facts emerge. Thus a true science of society cannot imitate natural science. Nature is not a process of consciousness and history and therefore is not dialectical. Society, on the contrary, is fundamentally dialectical, and therefore the only way to understand it is to place oneself directly in the center of the process of history. No purely contemplative knowledge of society is possible.

It is for this reason that the class consciousness of the proletariat is not simply a contemplative knowledge of the scientific conditions of bourgeois society. This class consciousness is the self-consciousness of bourgeois society, and as such it stands not only in an immediate theoretical relation to it, but is also, as knowledge, a practical modification of it. For once the proletariat recognizes that reification is appearance, it dedicates itself to abolishing reification. It transforms itself from the passive object of the historical process into the active, revolutionary object of this same process. And in this passage of theoretical knowledge into practice, the proletariat takes possession of history, not in an intellectual knowledge of the past, but in practical power over the present. History becomes the stage on which the proletariat plays out its destiny, and the present, as the moment of decision in which this destiny is appropriated, becomes the central concern of proletarian thought and action. For, "Only he who has the vocation and the will to give birth to the future can see the concrete truth of the present."

It is this that is meant by Lukacs when he speaks of the unity of theory and practice. Theoretical knowledge, in the case of the proletariat, passes over immediately into practical action and the power of consciousness within (not against) society is suddenly revealed. Consciousness becomes here a creative force within history, not an external spectator. And with this discovery,

a radical alteration of the concept of truth must be admitted. For if things cannot be understood in their truth except in so far as they are seen as becoming; if this becoming is itself incomplete and unfinished; and if within this becoming, consciousness of becoming itself plays a role in the final result, then the older notion of truth as the correspondence of the idea with reality must be abandoned. That is to say, if the truth of reality lies not in its present state of existence as reification, but in some future state which is being created, in part by human activity and thought, then for the individual in the present, true knowledge of reality is not a mere idea, but is dependent on his own active contribution to the future. Thus truth cannot be known except in the active commitment of the proletariat to the creation of the future.

It is of vital importance to grasp clearly the relation of the class consciousness of the proletariat and the historical world in this theory. The proletariat is the self-consciousness of history and its creative force, but this does not mean that the proletariat fulfills its destiny by realizing an ideal in the future. The "final goal" of the revolution does not lie outside or beyond reality in some ethical realm unconnected with experience in the present. On the contrary, revolution is only possible in the present because already the "final goal" is immanent in bourgeois society. The totality of real relations and processes which is the truth, this totality in which reification dissolves and humanity is restored, is already available to the proletariat within bourgeois society. It is the ruling principle of its thought and action. It is, if not fully known in its whole extent and meaning, already discovered as the Archimedean point from which the social world is controlled. Thus the proletariat is in a unique historical position: it serves the function of liberating the forces of the future, which without its conscious intervention would continue to lie dormant, and these forces of the future are precisely its own liberation.

But it must not be forgotten that the totality is not something external to the proletariat. The proletariat is both the central fact within the totality and the self-consciousness of the totality. From this point of view, the class consciousness of the proletariat is the reality of the totality, because without this consciousness, the future cannot emerge in its true form. Without the conscious act of the proletariat there is no totality, but only the fragmented, reified world of capitalism. Thus the destruction of bourgeois society "is only possible if the contradictions immanent in the historical process become conscious. The dialectic of this evolution moves objectively toward this stage without, however, being able to attain it by virtue of its own dynamic. It is only if the consciousness of the proletariat is able to reach this level that the consciousness of the proletariat first becomes the consciousness of the historical process itself, that the proletariat emerges as the identical subject-object of history, that its praxis becomes capable of transforming reality. If the proletariat is incapable of accomplishing this step, the contradictions will remain unresolved and the dialectical mechanism of development will reproduce them at a higher level, in a modified form with an increased intensity. There lies the objective necessity of the evolutionary process. The action of the proletariat can never be anything but the concrete practical realization of the next step in the evolution of history." The totality, the guiding in-

tention of revolutionary action, in accordance with the actual reality of society, thus reigns over the whole revolutionary process in the class consciousness of the proletariat.

THE FINAL IRONY

With *History and Class Consciousness* Lukacs found the path that led beyond the world of the novel into a new realm of classical perfection in which the totality is again given immediately in life. Now the golden age reappears in the creative action of the proletariat as it builds the future within the present. The novel, in despair of ethics, converted it into aesthetic form, but the proletariat succeeds in transforming ethics into historical action. The proletariat, a successor to the criminals and madmen who are the heroes of the great novels, actually succeeds in realizing its ideal, in rediscovering its soul in the totality, against reified society. That irony with which the narrator of the novel treated his hero now becomes the final irony of bourgeois society and the world of the novel as a whole: that its most despised element, the working class, should perform an absolute and revolutionary critique of it in theory and in practice. And this irony has a positive content. It is not purely aesthetic, having no direct relation to life, but exhibits the totality again in a society of free and universal men, a society in which essence and life finally meet again in the totality. In a sense, the proletariat is the epic community itself arising in the world of the novel as the true subject of revolutionary irony.

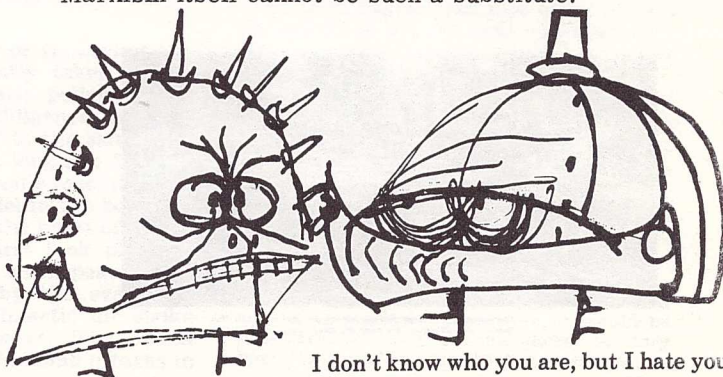
In the Twenties Lukacs scarcely foresaw the failure of communism in the West, but already he had provided for this possibility theoretically by connecting the revolution to the free action of the proletariat and not to blind economic forces. This free action was to be based not simply on the actual level of class consciousness possessed by the proletariat in 1923, but on its possible consciousness, the limits of its possible understanding of society set by its place within the productive process. But, even if the proletariat fails to attain this maximum of possible consciousness in fact, even if it fails to make a revolution, these outer limits of proletarian thought still represent the outer limits of knowledge of society within bourgeois society. And in fact the proletariat did fail in the West, but for that space of time within which its possible consciousness is the knowledge of reality, before bourgeois society passes on to a higher level of contradiction, it is still possible for certain individuals to appropriate this possible consciousness of the proletariat and on its ground to build a scientific Marxist cultural theory to complement the economic and social theory developed by Marx himself.

This is what has been happening in Europe since the writing of *History and Class Consciousness*. It was Lukacs' great sensitivity to the life of forms, to "transcendental topographies", and his understanding of social reality, that permitted him to initiate this movement. His work made it possible for others to use Marxism concretely and significantly in the unveiling of reification, of tradition, of every obstacle to a clear view of the human basis of society, in the study of the relation of culture to class consciousness and social reality. For behind every one of his specific ideas and analyses lay the dialectical method, and this method retains its validity in the face of the collapse of specific ideas on history and society. In a sense, then,

the failure of the theory as a practical movement becomes irrelevant in so far as it has achieved scientific success. But this success not only confirms the theoretical validity of the theory; it is also conditioned by the practical exigencies of the realities the theory describes. As the situation in which the proletariat might attain the maximum possible consciousness of the whole society disappears, so will the intellectual possibility of producing scientific Marxism. Thus Marxism in Europe will suffer the final irony of presiding scientifically over its own demise.

What then is the ultimate value of the theory? In the United States we have probably already passed the point where the proletariat is a progressive force, much less a revolutionary one. Already the historical process is attaining a higher stage of contradiction in which the proletariat will not play a central role. In this new situation, the method of Marxism remains a possible method of radical social theory, but very little of Marx's or even of Lukacs' specific ideas will still be acceptable. At one point in *History and Class Consciousness*, Lukacs explains the relation between this method and the facts it brings to light. "If one assumed, even without admitting it, that contemporary research had proven the 'factual' inaccuracy of every particular affirmation of Marx, a serious orthodox Marxist could unconditionally recognize all these new results, reject every individual Marxist thesis, without for an instant being compelled to renounce his Marxist orthodoxy. Orthodox Marxism does not, therefore, signify an uncritical belief in the results of Marx's research, a 'faith' in one thesis or another, nor is it the exegesis of a 'sacred' text. On the contrary, orthodoxy in the Marxist sense, refers exclusively to method. It implies the scientific conviction that dialectical Marxism is the correct method of research, that this method can only be developed, perfected and deepened along the lines set out by its founders; and that all attempts to transcend or improve it have only led to its trivialization, have only made of it an eclecticism, and could only lead to this."

Thus the study of the great dialectical thinkers, Hegel, Marx, Lukacs, is as necessary today as in the past. But now we are compelled to return to the essence of the dialectical method, in the attempt to apply it to our contemporary situation, free from those of its past results which have been outdated. Even though we must still attempt to create a dialectical theory uniting the divergent aspects of the totality, this theory will have to be original, and for it Marxism will be, for the most part, past history. There can be no substitute for informed and deep reflection on the present state of our society. If Lukacs can teach us anything, it is that Marxism itself cannot be such a substitute.



I don't know who you are, but I hate you!

ESCALATION IN VIETNAM

EDITOR'S NOTE:

As the November elections draw near, we are treated to another round of irrelevant peace-mongering by the Administration and its British flunkies. Judging by the results of past peace "offensives" we can expect little from this new one, and this failure will of course be turned into another weapon in the already overflowing arsenal of self-justification employed by our government against its critics. But who really is to blame for the continuation of the War? Only a serious look at the history of peace initiatives and escalation on both sides in the Vietnamese conflict can tell us.

The following article is the text of a speech delivered by Senator Vance Hartke of Indiana on the day of the first bombings of the Hanoi-Haiphong area. The main body of the speech recapitulates the evidence and arguments of a Citizen's White Paper written by three faculty members of the University of California at Berkeley with the cooperation and aid of members of the faculty and staff of Washington University in St. Louis. One of the authors, Franz Schurmann, is an expert on Asian affairs. Another, Reginald Zelnick, is a professional historian. The third, Peter Scott, has a first-hand knowledge of diplomatic language and procedure from the days when he served in the Canadian diplomatic corps. The White Paper, presented in the form of a letter and challenge addressed to the President of the United States, is signed by such distinguished Americans as Martin Luther King, Robert M. Hutchins, and Maxwell Geismar, among many others. The paper itself is a scholarly investigation of the facts surrounding each American escalation of the war. It will be generally available in October in a Fawcett Press edition.

The burden of the White Paper is that for rea-



The government of north Vietnam expects that sooner or later Hanoi also will be bombed. Air-raid shelters are being dug along most of the city streets.

sons and causes unknown, every offer of negotiations from every source, including the United States, has been sabotaged by American escalation of the War. The argument shows that not only have there been several indications of a very serious will to peace from both Hanoi and the NLF, but every such indication has been countered by our country with military actions guaranteed to prevent any real development of peace talks. Although the White Paper does not say so in so many words, it tends to prove that Johnson's supposedly unwanted dove of peace really hides a double lie: there have been hopeful signs of a desire for negotiations from Hanoi, and we and not they have been responsible for the political impasse which has consistently made negotiation impossible.

Throughout the history of the Vietnamese conflict, our government has tenaciously stuck to the narrowest possible interpretation of the political problems of South Vietnam, refusing to admit the popular nature of the revolution we are dedicated to destroy, rejecting the plea of the NLF that it be allowed to form a "government of National and democratic union...composed of all classes, of all Nationalities, of the various political parties of all regimes," (White Paper, p.91, Program of the NLF), and seeking ever more clearly to impose a military solution on what it essentially a complex of social problems. Whatever the intentions of President Johnson, the result of this know-nothing approach to the War has been to invalidate his stated concern for peace. Thus at every turn we find American policy in Southeast Asia falling in line with the militaristic counsel of those who would like to see us resolve the "Asian problem" by war, war in Vietnam, war in Thailand, war, ultimately, with China itself.

In view of the facts analysed in detail for the first time in the White Paper, it is not surprising that all over the world those not exposed to constant bombardment with American propaganda have come to hate our war in Vietnam. In view of these same facts it is clear why the Chinese, in expectation of imminent American invasion, are attempting to reorganize their society around the most militant of Mao's theses. Again, in view of these facts, we in the United States must once and for all accept the possibility that the attempt to extend the Cold War to the borders of China may lead to catastrophic consequences. In this country where the average texture of daily life is so placid and reassuring, it is difficult to mobilize inner moral resources for political goals. But this we must do if we are not to follow our misguided leader to Armageddon.

Mr. HARTKE. Mr. President, yesterday's news from Saigon confirmed what had been rumored for several days. We have now moved into a new phase of the escalation which continues ever upward, as for the first time we have loosed our bombs in the very outskirts of Hanoi. The decision has been taken to bomb oil and supply depots so close to the centers of population that civilian casualties in the north are bound to result. This is the policy which the hawks have advocated, including Barry Goldwater during the campaign of 2 years ago:

What will be the results?

I have asked this question before. In an address on April 19 at Ball State University in Muncie, Ind., I asked what would be the response to just such an action. I said:

Do we know what the response will be? We are told that Hanoi has available, not yet committed to any action, Russian MIG's of the latest design, capable of outflying our Skyhawks. At what point will the decision be made to put them into battle? As time goes on will the Chinese send not only non-combatant work crews to aid Hanoi, not only technicians but actual combat troops? If this happens, what will be our response? It is our announced endeavor, each time we step up the pace, to make the results too costly, to halt the response from the other side. But the history of the case, and not in Vietnam only, is that escalation breeds escalation.

Are we truly looking for peace? Or are we obsessed with the need to keep pushing ever further and further the military escalation whose results are a stiffening of morale and a constant deterioration of the purported search for peace?

Listen to the words of a great leader, Winston Churchill, who was certainly no "nervous Nellie," concerning the use of military force properly and when needed. In the first volume of his six-volume classic on World War II, "The Gathering Storm," Churchill had this to say:

Those who are prone by temperament and character to seek sharp and clear-cut solutions of difficult and obscure problems, who are ready to fight whenever some challenge comes from a foreign power, have not always been right. On the other hand, those whose inclination is to bow their heads, to seek patiently and faithfully for peaceful compromise, are not always wrong. On the contrary, in the majority of instances, they might be right not only morally but from a practical standpoint . . .

How many wars have been precipitated by firebrands! How many misunderstandings which led to war could have been removed by temporizing!

I am fearful that there are among the President's advisers, at least, are those who, in Churchill's words, "are prone by temperament and character" to plunge impatiently for the way of the firebrand rather than exercise the patience needed for the peaceful compromise.

Last week I distributed to each Member of the Senate a copy of a citizens' white paper entitled "The Politics of Escalation." This publication was initiated by a personal investment of \$100 each by 10 professors of Washington University in St. Louis, who were joined in its preparation by a group of professors from other schools, particularly the

University of California at Berkeley. They have not sought to adduce new facts, but they have made an examination of what has occurred in the twin realms of military escalation and diplomatic peace efforts during the period November 1963, through January 1966.

In the tradition of scholarship, they have footnoted and documented their work thoroughly. Likewise, they have sought objectivity in their report, refraining in the recounting from expressions of conclusions or opinions which could not be substantiated. I must confess that their material tends to become bogged down in the recital of facts, statements and dates to the point where it is not always easy to follow.

But this historical study of facts and events, including some peace proposals which did not come to light until weeks or months later, brings to attention an apparent pattern of action which I fear is once more being repeated. The authors have not charged, nor do I, that our increases in military pressure, in escalation, have time after time been the response to new pressures for that "peaceful compromise" of which Churchill spoke. But the fact is inescapable that, in the juxtaposition of events on the peace front and on the military front, time and time again just as there appeared some possibility of movement toward a negotiated reduction of the conflict, our military escalation has been tightened another notch. In the careful words of the professor-authors in their summary and conclusions, in citizens' white paper entitled "The Politics of Escalation," it is stated:

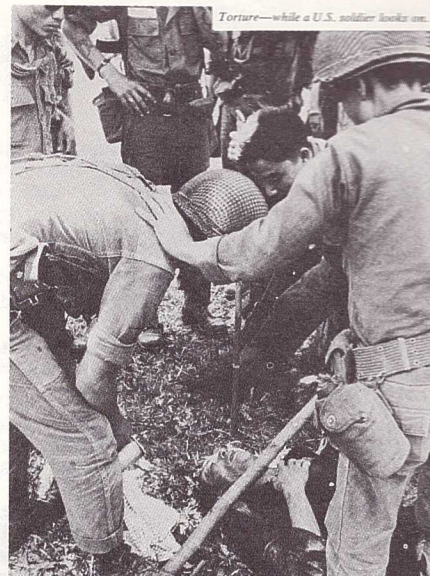
Available evidence does not prove that escalations were intended solely or primarily to counter efforts at compromise or negotiation. A study of the chronology of American escalations within the political context reveals, however, that the major American intensifications of the war have been preceded less by substantially increased military opposition than by periods of mounting pressure for a political settlement of the war.

It is not possible to find the road to peace by escalating war. But because that has been our policy, enunciated by the President in his Baltimore speech of April 7, 1965, and because other nations of the world do not agree with that policy, our supposed search for a way out of the dilemma has been met with increasing skepticism by those traditionally our friends. In the Baltimore speech, President Johnson said of our objectives:

We know that air attacks alone will not accomplish all of these purposes. But it is our best and prayerful judgment that they are a necessary part of the surest road to peace.

Our military policy of nullifying aggression has consistently taken precedence over a diplomatic policy of exploring with earnest diligence the avenues which could lead to the same end, and which must in the long run do so.

Let me cite some specific case histories which find their parallel in the bombing now 2 or 3 miles from the heart of Hanoi and Haiphong. The first took place in July and August 1964, when peace pressures were followed by the events of Tonkin Bay and a climactic air strike against three coastal bases. The second was the opening of U.S. bomb attacks in



Torture—while a U.S. soldier looks on.

the north on February 7, 1965, during the visit to Hanoi of Premier Kosygin. The third escalation, following a peace effort by interested third parties, was the bombing of a major power station a dozen miles from Haiphong, closer than any bombing until yesterday's.

On July 23, 1964, President de Gaulle called for a meeting "of the same order and including, in principle, the same participants as the former Geneva Conference." The foregoing is a quotation from his statement.

On July 25 the Soviet Government addressed a communication to the 14 nations that had participated in the Geneva Conference on Laos in 1961-62, urgently suggesting reconvening of the Conference. Here was the voice of Russia added to the voice of France.

On July 26, according to the French publication *Le Monde*, Nguyen Huu Tho, leader of the National Liberation Front, stated the willingness of the Vietcong political arm "to enter into negotiations with all parties, groups, sects, and patriotic individuals. The NLF is not opposed to the convening of an international conference in order to facilitate the search for a solution."

Hanoi endorsed the proposal and appealed for reconvening "as rapidly as possible to preserve the independence, peace, and neutrality of Laos and to preserve the peace of Indochina and southeast Asia." Here was added, on August 4, the voice of North Vietnam.

By then Peking had also given its endorsement to the proposal, speaking with the voice of one more vitally interested nation.

Within the same period, Secretary General U Thant put forward the same suggestion for reconvening of the Geneva Conference. U Thant referred to his frequent reiteration of that view stated on May 24, 1966, when, in a speech to the convention of the Amalgamated Clothing Workers, he said:

I have said that peace can only be restored by a return to the Geneva Agreements and that, as a preparatory measure, it would be necessary to start scaling down military operations, and to agree to discussions which

include the actual combatants. . . . The solution lies in the hands of those who have the power, and the responsibility, to decide. If they seek a peaceful solution, the United Nations and many of its Members stand ready to help them in all possible ways.

What was the U.S. response to all this growing pressure for a Geneva-type conference, to the proposal for such a conference by President de Gaulle, by Russia, and by U Thant, with the support of Hanoi and Peking?

On July 24, the day after De Gaulle's statement, President Johnson said in his press conference:

We do not believe in conferences called to ratify terror, so our policy is unchanged.

On the following day, July 25, an order was issued dispatching an additional 5,000 to 6,000 U.S. troops to Vietnam. Our unchanged policy was that of escalation, not negotiation, it would seem.

A about the same time, the United States was being accused of aggression in several incidents in the Tonkin Bay area. Hanoi protested to the International Control Commission on the 27th of July that Americans and their "lackeys" had fired on North Vietnamese fishing vessels. On July 30, they claimed that South Vietnamese patrol boats had not only raided North Vietnamese fishing vessels in the Tonkin Gulf but had also bombarded the islands of Hon Me and Hon Ngu under protective cover from the U.S. destroyer *Maddox*, and again lodged a complaint with the Control Commission. On August 2 came the first of two inci-

dents that resulted in the famous Tonkin Bay resolution, which many of us now regret.

According to the North Vietnamese, the *Maddox* entered their territorial waters which, like many nations, they contend extend to a 12-mile limit. Three North Vietnamese torpedo boats engaged the *Maddox*, which was undamaged, and U.S. planes sank one of the torpedo boats, damaging the other two. According to the official U.S. version, this was an unprovoked attack because we held to a 3-mile limit on territorial waters.

I am not charging that the sequence of events proves a causative relationship between the pressures for peace and the actions of the United States which followed. I am merely stating the facts as reported. But among those facts are the dispatch of more troops ordered on July 25, and elevation to great importance of the Tonkin Bay incidents. The climax here was caused by further action on August 4, when the *Maddox* and the *Turner Joy*, another destroyer, were reported to have been attacked by North Vietnamese PT boats, two of which were sunk. The next day came retaliation— heavy U.S. air attacks on three major North Vietnam coastal bases, which were demolished along with destruction or damage to 25 boats. President Johnson issued a directive. Where standing orders to U.S. warships had been to "repel" enemy attackers, they were now ordered to "destroy" them.

This instance of peace pressures as a prelude to hard military action came at a time when Premier Khanh was tottering, and one result of the dramatic show

of power, a use of power out of proportion to the size of the provocation, was to shore up his regime and lessen the chance of peace talks.

II

Everyone now acknowledges that a vital decision in the war was taken when the United States, on February 7, 1965, began the bombing of North Vietnam which has taken another turn of intensification in the last 24 hours. What were the circumstances and the facts?

Premier Kosygin was in Hanoi at the time. The New York Times on February 2 reported that there was "developing speculation in the administration that Mr. Kosygin's trip might be the opening move in a broad Soviet attempt to mediate between the United States and the Hanoi regime for a settlement of the Vietnamese war."

In the previous month of January, there had been a great deal of internal unrest in Vietnam, an outbreak of pro-neutralist and anti-government, and anti-American demonstrations. On January 7, a general strike was called in Hue, and by the 13th it had spread to Danang, where Vietnamese civilians failed to report for work at the U.S. air base. Editorials appeared in Saigon papers demanding negotiations and deploring continuation of the war. Police on January 17 fired on demonstrators in Hue and Dalat, wounding four students. Shortly after, 30 were wounded in a demonstration by 5,000 Buddhists in Saigon. The U.S. Information Service library was sacked at Hue. And on January 27, the civilian regime was overthrown by



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Nguyen Khanh.

So, before the first North Vietnam bombing raid of February 7, there was a climate ripe for the kind of peace effort speculation accorded to Kosygin. On February 16, Russia did propose to North Vietnam and China the convening of a new international conference based on "unconditional negotiations" which would have met President Johnson's call for "unconditional discussions." A week later De Gaulle publicly called for negotiations without preconditions, and a day afterward, U Thant again made a similar appeal. At the time he said, significantly, since the Russian overtures to Hanoi and Peking were not made public until months later:

The great American people, if only they know the true fact and the background to the developments in South Vietnam, will agree with me that further bloodshed is unnecessary.

We were told that the bombing of the north on February 7 was our retaliatory response to the guerrilla raid on Pleiku in which eight Americans were killed. But in view of the climate toward peace, the unrest in South Vietnam, is it possible that the decision had been taken and the bombing planned and that only a sufficient cause for public consumption was needed?

Again, I do not make the charge that the United States was eagerly awaiting an opportunity for escalation in order to stall off the possibilities of negotiation leading to retirement or de-escalation. But the Pleiku attack occurred early in the morning of Sunday, February 7, Vietnam time, which was Saturday afternoon in Washington. And the American plane strike started with 12 hours afterward. Had the attack been planned in advance, and was Pleiku a suddenly suitable pretext?

Two days earlier, on February 5, the New York Times had called the turn:

Now again the Asian Communists, this time in South Vietnam, seem ready to bid for power through a negotiated settlement. The Soviet Union, apparently fearful that a continuation of the war in South Vietnam may lead to United States bombing of North Vietnam, is reappearing in the role of a diplomatic agent.

While the Russians were fearful of our bombing escalation to the North, were we afraid of their peacemaking de-escalation and seeking to forestall it?

III

Let me relate now a third instance in which there occurred a juxtaposition of peace efforts and escalation.

As Senator MANSFIELD's report early this year made clear, the 34,000 American troops of May 1965, had increased to 165,700 in November. There had been a stepped-up response by the Vietcong, with increasing numbers of North Vietnamese regulars coming into the battle area. Incidents initiated by the Vietcong had also escalated, as the Mansfield report shows on page 3:

The Vietcong initiated 1,038 incidents during the last week in November and the total number of incidents which had increased steadily throughout 1965, reached 3,588 in that month.

Our escalation of the war, obviously, was being met by escalation. The north was supplying more and more support, although according to the Mansfield report North Vietnam still accounted for only about 14,000 out of the total 230,000

on that side.

On December 17, it was revealed by the St. Louis Post Dispatch that Washington had received a month earlier, on November 20, a message delivered to Ambassador Goldberg by Italian Foreign Minister Fanfani. It reported the interview of Prof. La Pira with Ho Chi Minh and Pham Van Dong, who expressed a strong desire for a peaceful solution—specifically, a cease-fire, a halt to the landing of American troops, and acceptance of Hanoi's four points, which Ho Chi Minh characterized as "application, in other words, of the Geneva accords."

Prof. La Pira's discussions were on November 11. Our reply by Secretary Rusk to Foreign Minister Fanfani's November 20 letter was delivered to him in New York on December 6, and on December 13 Mr. Fanfani notified Secretary Rusk that his own summary of the reply had been delivered to Hanoi. This was an escalation of peace efforts.

On December 15, American planes for the first time bombed the Haiphong area, destroying a power station 14 miles from the city. Of this, the San Francisco Chronicle on December 20 noted:

Some U. N. delegates . . . pointed out that the war had been escalated after the States reply was related to Hanoi.

A few days later, the St. Louis Post-Dispatch stated that on December 8, Ambassador Goldberg had been explicitly warned "that Ho would not enter peace negotiations with the U.S. if the Hanoi-Haiphong area were bombed."

Now, again, I am not charging that we deliberately sabotaged another peace effort. But facts are facts, and it is my firm belief that it is essential for the American people to have the facts.

Too often we have learned, as in this case in mid-December, that events of great significance in the area of peace possibilities, occurred a month earlier.

IV

But what, it might be asked, about the bombing lull of 37 days early this year, from December 24 to January 31, 1966?

Was this not a true effort for peace, they will say?

During the same time there was a 12-hour cease-fire from 7 p.m. Christmas Eve until 7 a.m. Christmas Day, and later the New Year—"Tet"—cease-fire of January 20 to January 24. Otherwise the ground war continued. One cannot but ask why, if these cease-fires could be arranged for such short special occasions, a cease-fire for negotiation of peace could not also be developed, if escalation of peace were as much our concern as escalation of military action.

The lull in the bombing raids was accompanied by well-publicized travelings about the world by our emissaries on announced peace missions—which in the case of the Philippines and Korea included urgent invitations to step up the size of their troop contingents. But aside from the short cease-fires, as I have said, ground action did not halt.

We cited the buildup of forces on the other side as a major ground for the decision to resume bombing. At the same time, we continued with a more rapid buildup of our own forces. And on January 27 we launched Operation Masher.

This, said the New York Times, was



"the largest amphibious operation by the United States since the 1950 Inchon landing in Korea."

The plan—

Said the times—

is to move three infantry and three artillery battalions repeatedly across a 450 square-mile section of Binh Dinh Province to look for a battle.

"To look for a battle," is the phrase used by the paper.

On January 28, they found it. Near Anhai, on a sandy beach, 300 U.S. 1st Cavalrymen reported meeting 500 or so of the enemy and killing 103 in a 2-day battle. The next day the order went to Pearl Harbor which led to resumed bombing raids on January 31.

As the bombing was resumed, it was stated that we had not seen signs of response from Hanoi to our policy of lull. Yet, until our Operation Masher, there had been a remarkable absence of clashes with North Vietnamese regulars.

Were we sincere in our charges against Hanoi for its troop buildup during the pause? Secretary Rusk said on February 1, the day after bombing resumed, that the Vietcong and North Vietnam "made clear their negative view by deeds as well as words throughout the period of the suspension of bombing. Infiltration of men and material from the North into South Vietnam continued at a high level"—New York Times, February 1, 1966, page 12.

In the same report of his press conference, the question was asked:

Mr. Secretary, how do you interpret the fact that there's been no large-scale direct contact with North Vietnamese troops since the latter part of November?

In his reply the Secretary spoke of "indications at the present time that there is very active contact with North Vietnamese forces there." This very active contact was the result of the Operation Masher action "to look for battle." The "high level" of infiltration was estimated at from 1,700 to 4,500 men a month. But during the 37 days of the bombing pause our own increase of men entering the area was a buildup of more than 14,000, with 6,000 men arriving during the 10-day period of January 18-28.

Were our apparently frantic and highly publicized peace missions by any

chance giving to the world a picture such as Mr. Rusk painted of the North Vietnamese? Did we, by any chance, at least as much as the North Vietnamese, present a "negative view by deeds as well as words throughout the period of the suspension of bombing"? Could it have been said of us that we acted in the same good faith we charged Hanoi with breaking when our own "infiltration of men and material continued at a high level"? Were we then already irrevocably committed, and had we been a long time so committed, to complete reliance on military power and to ignoring the bright potentials for peace whenever they appeared?

As one of a group of Senators who sought by a letter to the President for a decision to extend the bombing pause, I believed that we needed to present a positive, not a negative, view "by deeds as well as words." The answer to our letter was a citation of the Tonkin Bay resolution, which at the time of its passage certainly did not envision any use as justification in these circumstances of what the Senate believed was a specific narrow endorsement. We were not alone, and while we may still be a minority of those who speak aloud, although there has been a rising chorus of those who cry for the firebrand policy of more and more escalation—a cry rooted in the same desire I hold to end the conflict—there has also been a rising demand for cessation of this policy in favor of a negotiated peace.

That demand, by those of us who in Churchill's words desire to "seek patiently and faithfully for peaceful compromise," was being voiced at the time by other nations than our own. Said the New York Times on January 20:

The Governments of Britain, France, and Japan, all allies of the United States, and the Communist Governments of Europe as well as the governments of a number of non-aligned nations are said to be pleading for several weeks or even months of restraint.

But again the opportunity passed. We chose the road of escalation.

v

Now we have chosen the road of escalation again, as our 46 planes swung in over the close-in targets at Hanoi and Haiphong. Is there any parallel of juxtaposition now with a preceding peace-making effort carrying the danger of success? Or is it merely coincidence that once again, as late as Sunday, there have been articles analyzing the possibilities of success inherent in the efforts of Canadian diplomat Chester Ronning?

Regardless of what the answer may be, it is worth noting that a dispatch by David Kraslow, of the Los Angeles Times, datelined from Ottawa on last Saturday, June 25, and appearing in the Washington Post on Sunday, stated as a point "readily acknowledged by high Washington sources" that—

Canada has opened up, through Ronning, a unique and useful channel to Hanoi.

The Johnson Administration has not lost sight of the fact that the Hanoi regime readily receives Ronning and is willing, to talk to him, even though he represents a nation closely allied with the United States. We recognize the potential importance of this—

A Washington official said.

Then later in the article comes this statement, which perhaps deserves to be

italicized as importantly prophetic:

The question of further American escalation of the war, it is felt here, is closely related to the Ronning missions. The Canadians are extremely sensitive on this point. Major military escalation by the United States, informed sources here suggest, could torpedo the Ronning operation and deeply embarrass the Canadian government.

It is believed that Ottawa has discussed the matter of escalation with Washington in connection with the Ronning probes.

Again I ask, is it only coincidence that such a report appears on Sunday and our new escalation takes place on Wednesday? Or is there here a recurrence of a familiar pattern, a pattern in which professions of peace interest are only words while the deeds which follow are a hard application of military force through increased escalation?

One can not be sure—

Wrote Mr. Kraslow, concerning what the prospects of Mr. Ronning's efforts might be—

a speck of hope, a possible opening. We cannot tell—

He said—

because Ronning's findings are being closely held. The Canadian and North Vietnam governments agreed there would be no public disclosure of the details of Ronning's conversations with the leaders in Hanoi.

But the ground for hope lay in the fact that:

Few Westerners have the access that Ronning has to senior officials in North Viet Nam. From his long service in China and in other parts of Asia, Ronning is personally well acquainted with many leaders in Peking and Hanoi.

Ronning is considered one of the ablest Asian hands in the Western world. Now 71, he was summoned from retirement in western Canada for the Viet Nam assignment. . . .

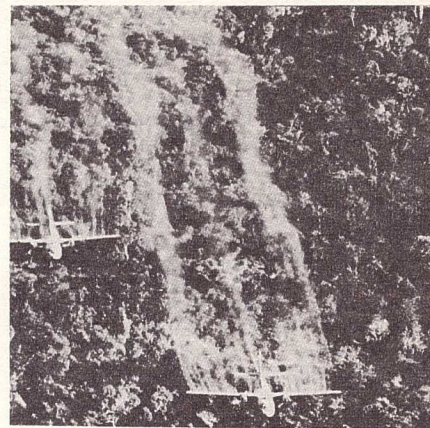
Ronning had important roles in both the 1954 Geneva Conference on Viet Nam and the 1962 Geneva Conference on Laos. He was in charge of the Canadian mission in Red China from 1949 to 1951.

The recent trip was Mr. Ronning's second to Hanoi—the first was in March—in a Canadian effort which has special significance when it is recalled that Canada is one of the three members of the International Control Commission established by the 1954 Geneva Conference. The Canadian operation is described as "a long-range, infinitely complex and delicate diplomatic probe that involves a number of governments besides the warring parties."

What chance will Chester Ronning have to complete this delicate mission, now that our military escalation has loosed a torpedo against it? Have we by design, by purpose, by commitment to expanding military action ever further and more dangerously, closed another door looking on the garden of peace? When, if ever, will we know?

Yesterday the wires and the cables were humming with the adverse reactions, as well as others favorable, from at home and abroad. Or perhaps that statement is not quite correct—there seem to have been no really favorable cables from abroad. Even Prime Minister Wilson, whose policies with the United States are tempered by the fact that he is a supplicant for support from us for bolstering of the pound sterling, was not deterred from expressing regret and stating:

Nevertheless, we have made it clear on



many occasions that we cannot support an extension of the bombing in such areas.

Russia's reaction bears out the wisdom of the judgment of our majority leader, Senator MANSFIELD, when he said:

The action will bring about greater amounts of aid from the Soviet Union and Peking.

Moscow said as much when they said:

Our country and the other Socialist states are providing, and will continue to provide, the necessary aid in the just struggle of the Viet Nameese people.

I have noted before the erosion of our friendship with other nations caused by our actions in Vietnam. By our go-it-alone policy, disregarding the overtures of those who would initiate helpful moves toward peace, by our disregard for world opinion, we have increasingly cut ourselves off from a leadership traditionally based on moral qualities of compassion and generosity and true democracy rather than military might. Now we are engaged in an undeclared war against half of a small nation all of whose people, after 20 years of constant struggle, want to find a way out of their morass of civil conflict.

We played a leading role in founding the United Nations. We gave it a home in Manhattan. We developed the Marshall plan. We supported UNRRA and UNICEF, and with a just cause in Korea we secured its moral and military support. But now we defy the principles of the U.N. Charter, and we move out of step, as a cartoon in the Washington Post on Sunday devastatingly portrayed while charging that our lack of allies comes about because they are all out of step with us.

We have sought with billions in our military pocketbook, billions which we in the Senate have helped too eagerly to provide, and with the big stick of unchallengeable power, to make clear in Vietnam that "father knows best." We are determined to fasten the blessings of democracy on everyone, whether they want it or not, and nowhere more so than in Vietnam. Our escalation is costing a very high price in world opinion. We are no longer isolationist by rejecting the rest of the world, but we are becoming isolated because the rest of the world now rejects us.

We stand all but alone in Vietnam.

Most of what token help we are receiving is reluctant, as with the Philippines

whose President has had such difficulty in securing commitment of his legislature to the troops he has promised.

In Korea, our only substantial ally, the troops are bought. We are paying all the costs for the 20,000-man contingent in Vietnam, and we will pay for any new commitments and contingents.

Except for the few hundred Australians and New Zealanders involved, other nations have confined themselves to humanitarian measures such as sending medical teams, flood relief, or hospital equipment.

A consortium of West German businessmen has provided China with the promise of a steel mill.

It is rumored that some of their contacts for financial support have run back to our own country. It is significant for us to remember that not one country in North or South America has troops by our side. In all the continent of Europe, not one country has troops by our side. In all the continent of Africa, not one country has troops by our side. Excluding Korea—unless we want to count the Philippines—in all of Asia, not one country has troops by our side.

The major countries in all the continents of the world are against us.

I cannot help repeating what the Japanese told me when I was there. They said:

We have been in Southeast Asia once. We are not going back. Besides, we want your military bases out of Okinawa. We want Okinawa returned to Japan. We want your military bases out of Japan.

I asked at that time what I thought was a pertinent question:

Who will then defend you against the Chinese Communists?

Their very easy reply was:

You must remember that we are second cousins to the Chinese, and we are trading with them.

I asked how much they traded with them and if there was any restriction on the items. They said:

We are trading with them to the extent that we think it is best to do so, and when it is profitable. We do not intend to let their

business go by the wayside.

We think of Peking as our enemy. Our friends are selling their surplus wheat to China, a country that we say is directing the activities of North Vietnam.

Our neighboring country to the north, with whom we have friendly relations and a common boundary, Canada, has just recently completed a long-term agreement to sell their surplus wheat to China.

The grain bins on the northern border of the United States have been discovered to be depleted of their surplus grain. It might be interesting to find out how much of that surplus wheat has found its way across the border and over to the enemy, Peking.

VI

The earth-bound politics of Vietnam cannot be solved by the airborne cavalry of America.

The anonymous southeast Asia statesman who made that memorable summing up to Emmet John Hughes, as he reported it in the May 30 Newsweek, put our hard choice clearly when he continued:

You now have probably a last decision to make. You may try to smother all forces in Vietnam seeking compromise and peace—thus pitting them all against you. Or you may try to work with the best of these forces in their confused attempts at negotiation, so that the very imperfect end of it all still will allow you to leave with dignity.

Have we now made our last decision, the decision that, come what peace opportunities there may, our way shall be irrevocably that of military escalation, of might that loses us our tradition of right, of acceding one after another to the successive unsuccessful next steps which pave the road to atomic holocaust in the sacred cause of anticommunism?

It takes no courage to do what we are doing today. We drifted into the situation at first, without planning. But to plan escalation of what has been called this "dirty little war" into an ever larger, dirtier, more tragic conflict is worse than no planning at all.

Secretary General U Thant has portrayed what is happening when he said:

Little by little, larger forces and more powerful armaments have been introduced, until an anguished and perplexed world has suddenly found that a limited and local conflict is threatening to turn into a major confrontation. And though the fear—

I want to emphasize this—

and though the fear of a much larger conflict may still have a restraining influence upon the demands of military strategy, the temptation to win a military success may still prove stronger than the more prudent call to reason.

U Thant has long since, and repeatedly, set forth three measures by which we must proceed for peace. With these I agree: return to the Geneva agreements; include the actual combatants in the discussions; and "start scaling down military operations" rather than escalation.

To do these things instead of what we are now doing requires courage. We must resolve, in the words of John Emmet Hughes, "to ignore all zealots who still shout their preposterous prescription that a little more military medicine can cure political sickness." We must give up the mythology that says the National Liberation Front is a figment of

the imagination. The Geneva accords were signed by France and by the Vietnam, not by the state of Vietnam whose delegate stood by protesting. The willingness to deal with such an entity as the NLF, a nongovernment, requires courage, but its recognition appears the major sticking point in much of the discussion about negotiation.

And we must deescalate rather than move always as inexorably as a juggernaut toward the horrors of conflict with China and the dropping of the hydrogen bomb. We should follow the sage advice of General Gavin, and in moving back to enclaves we should hold and negotiate.

When we in Congress consider proposals for watersheds and dams and projects of the Corps of Engineers, we rely heavily on the careful calculation of what the corps calls the cost-benefit ratio.

What is the cost-benefit ratio in Vietnam? A truthful answer to that question, including the costs of our go-it-alone policy in the loss of America's now tarnished moral leadership among the nations, is too great for persistent escalation. Let us work as diligently for peace.

One final proposal. Russia is a co-chairman of the Geneva Conferences of both 1954 and 1962. Britain is the other co-chairman. As a first step, I propose that they together demand a convening of a third Geneva Conference to bring us back to an implementing of the Geneva accords, with whatever modifications may be found necessary. I shall reiterate this proposal directly to the British people in a BBC satellite broadcast this evening. I propose that the situation has become so serious that it is the duty of the other nations concerned to answer such a call, and that the process must be strengthened and implemented in whatever way is possible through the United Nations, to whom our unilateral action is doing all but irreparable damage by the destruction of its usefulness.

For the problem is one of self-discipline. We have not found it hard to call for United Nations action in the Congo, in Cyprus, in Israel, and in Jordan. But we in the United States, who are able by our power to act in a different way from the small powers, must also subject ourselves to the good judgment and the co-operative appraisal of the world community. Otherwise, we have perhaps once and for all lost our right to moral leadership and become only another in the long parade of powers, from Alexander's Greece to our own day, who have trusted to might instead of right.

U Thant said in his speech last month:

The solution lies in the hands of those who have the power and the responsibility, to decide. If they seek a peaceful solution, the United Nations and many of its members stand ready to help them in all possible ways.

It is we who have the responsibility, it is we who have the power. It is we who must turn toward a peaceful solution and withdraw from this pattern of escalation, courageous in the right, to find the answer in peace at the bargaining table.



A suspected guerrilla is strung up by his feet during interrogation.

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Esto es peor

(This is still worse)

from

"The Disasters of War"

by

Francisco de Goya

