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THE CENTER MAGAZINE

A C.I.A. Trip by John Stockwell

ROBERT MAYNARD HUTCHINS CENTER
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THE CENTER MAGAZINE

A Publication of The Robert Maynard Hutchins Center
for the Study of Democratic Institutions

Editor — Donald McDonald *Editorial Associate* — Patricia Garvin Cathcart

REXFORD G. TUGWELL
July 10, 1891 — July 21, 1979

On July 25th, a memorial was held in the courtyard of the Center for Rexford Guy Tugwell, a Center Associate. Following are excerpts from the tributes paid by some of his friends and colleagues.

"His career here was the climax of a long and distinguished life. . . . He kept our attention on the basic issues." — HARRY S. ASHMORE

"Rex was a courageous dissenter from what needed to be disapproved, but he was not a rebel. He never affiliated himself with the undoable in order to satisfy his intellectual fancies. He wanted to get things done, and he got a great many things done." — LEON KEYSERLING

"It was not disrespect for the Constitution of 1787 that led him to write a new constitution. It was, rather, his respect for and his dedication to the basic constitutional idea of the law above all laws, the law whose purpose it is 'to remind citizens of their duties and to hold government to its prescribed course.' " — C. HERMAN PRITCHETT

"Rex had an almost inaudible chuckle and a just noticeable smile. They appeared in my presence when I was guilty of righteous indignation, or strong contempt, or unqualified enthusiasm. They constituted a kind of intelligent *caritas*, an urbane forebearance." — JOSEPH J. SCHWAB

"He came to Washington [in 1933] with a gallant sense of confidence that something should be done, could be done, and would be done. That seems to me to have been what his President needed and what the American people needed. He will always be honored by Americans for just that." — WILLIAM GORMAN

"All his life he felt that his job was to implement — constructively and sensibly — the good idea on which our Republic was founded." — CLIFTON FADIMAN

"His most remarkable and dedicated commitment was to the belief that the public interest could be advanced only by enlightened men and women coming together for concerted work to change their institutions." — OTIS L. GRAHAM, JR.

SEPTEMBER/OCTOBER 1979

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The Center and the University

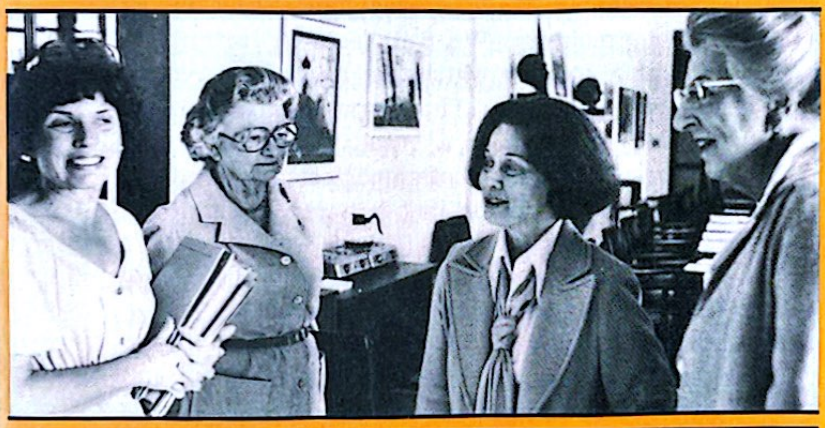
On Monday, June 18, 1979, the Center for the Study of Democratic Institutions merged with the University of California at Santa Barbara. Directors of the Fund for the Republic (parent organization of the Center) elected members of the U.C.S.B. Foundation to the Fund's board, then resigned, leaving the new members in control. Morris L. Levinson, former board chairman, and Vesta Hutchins will remain as directors, with Mr. Levinson also serving as president of the Center. Robert A. Huttenback, Chancellor of the University of California at Santa Barbara, was elected chairman of the board of directors. After the merger, Mr. Huttenback introduced Brian M. Fagan, the new director of the Center, and Walter H. Capps, the new program director. With the approval of the Regents of the University of California, the Center has been re-named the Robert Maynard Hutchins Center for the Study of

TOP: *The three principals in the merger at the Center are (left to right): Douglas Schmidt, chairman of the U.C.S.B. Foundation; Robert A. Huttenback, Chancellor of the university and chairman of the board of the Fund for the Republic; and Morris L. Levinson, former chairman of the board of the Fund for the Republic, now a member of the board and president of the Center.*

CENTER: *Robert Huttenback, Brian Fagan, the new Center director, and Vesta Hutchins meet after the merger was accomplished.*

BOTTOM: *Three former Fund for the Republic board members, Frederick M. Nicholas, Eulah Laucks, and Seniel Ostrow, (left to right) look over the merger documents.*

Historic Merger, June 18, 1979



Democratic Institutions in honor of the man who founded it twenty years ago.

In a statement to the press, Mr. Huttenback said, "The fusing of the Center's tradition of dialogue among the best minds in the world with the University of California's tradition of excellence in research will make the Center an even more influential intellectual force than it has been in the past."

Maurice Mitchell, former president of the Center, said, "We believe that the Center's full potential may be reached as a result of this association."

The Center will continue to be largely self-supporting, depending principally upon contributions from its more than twenty-five thousand members throughout the world. But it will now be able to draw on the intellectual resources of the University of California system.

The Center's building and eleven acres atop Eucalyptus Hill in Montecito will be sold and the net assets used for the Center's dialogue program.

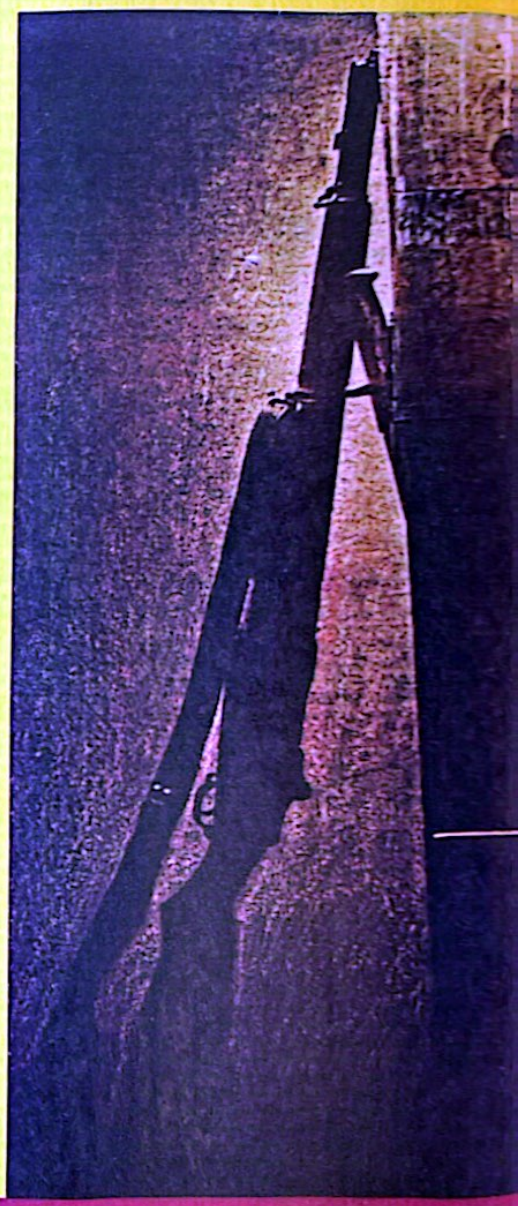
The Center's William O. Douglas Inquiry into the State of Individual Freedom will continue. A national Douglas convocation will be held in Los Angeles in December under the direction of Mr. Mitchell. Its theme: "Science, Technology, and Individual Freedom."

TOP: *Members of the board of the Fund for the Republic and the U.C.S.B. Foundation gather in the Center's dialogue room for the merger.*

CENTER: *Vesta Hutchins and Eulah Laucks with new board member Betty McDermott (left) and U.C.S.B. Foundation board member Jean S. Menzies (right).*

BOTTOM: *Mrs. Hutchins points out the view from the Center's terrace to Mr. Levinson and Mr. Huttenback.*

THE IMPACT OF VIETNAM
Part Two



This is the second part of a two-part report of a recent Center meeting on the impact of the Vietnam war on American life and institutions. The meeting was organized by Walter H. Capps, the Director of Program for the Center, and was funded with a grant from Eulah Laucks, a former Center director. A book containing the full proceedings of this conference and one held last year at the Center is being planned by Mr. Capps.

The Drawing of Conclusions

Have We Learned Anything?

CYNTHIA W. FREY
Program Officer
Division of Education
National Endowment for the Humanities

The term, Vietnam, has been with us since the war. It continues to be with us. A recent editorial in the Washington *Post* was entitled "Harrisburg: the Vietnam Syndrome." A recent "Doonesbury" cartoon showed us an ex-Viet Cong now in the United Nations discussing what "Vietnam" means to "Vietnam." The habit of taking a place name and turning it into a cultural symbol is not new. Munich had meaning for a whole generation. But just because we name a phenomenon, we do not necessarily draw lessons from it.

We are less inclined now to believe that we have a command over the laws of history. Marxists, for example, are less inclined today than they were about certain necessary causes and effects in history. Leon Trotsky used to talk about the whip of external necessity. A lot of Marxist revisionists are now saying that, even if we can determine what the laws of history are, that does not help us to formulate plans for the future. An Eastern European Marxist has said that the atomic bomb will not start producing edible mushrooms the moment we affix a socialist label to it.

We need to ask, first, how can any single event change things? Or can it? Second, how can we know? That is, what tests can we apply to determine whether Vietnam changed anything?

In fact, single events may not change things at all. What they do is act as catalysts on propensities, on pre-existing conditions. And so what the Vietnam war did was not teach us something new. Rather, it caused us to rethink old ideas, and perhaps call up old values so that for the first time they became operative in the culture instead of being residues in ideology.

In her biography of Picasso, Gertrude Stein said that it wasn't until the First World War ended that Picasso, personally, and Cubism, as a style, were accepted. She said wars are only a means of publicizing the things already accomplished. A complete change has come about, people no longer think as they did, but no one knows it, no one recognizes it except the creators of those changes. War, Stein said, is only a publicity agent which makes everyone know what has happened. My own research on ideological change in Eastern Europe confirms that.

So, social systems are, in fact, made up of various kinds of strains. The cultural web is not seamless; it is weaker at some points than it is at others. And wars, it seems, can cause ruptures in the cultural web. I think that in the case of the American culture, the Vietnam war has done that. But that means that when we look for evidence of change in a culture, we must look in a variety of places.

I am pleased that in this conference we are exploring not only private phenomena, such as religious conversion of one kind or another, but also the socially organizable changes that research can elicit. But we have to look very explicitly to find the links between cultural change and policy change. Although much has been written on this subject, I have found almost nothing persuasive.

Where do we look? What sorts of tests are there? People tell stories about themselves. We have them in autobiographies about war; we have them in statements about what it meant to make a great discovery, or what it meant when something astounding happened to someone in a position to change the direction of a country. Lately we have heard a lot, because it is the centennial of his birth, about Albert Einstein's testimony that he felt the ground was pulled out from under him. Erik Erikson's book on Mohandas Gandhi says much the same thing about Gandhi's understanding of the role he was to play in India. Philip Johnson, the architect, recently received an award for a building that was widely regarded as ugly, a throwback, inappropriate. In his speech accepting the award, Johnson tried to justify his design. He argued within a context of general cultural change. He tried to persuade his critics that, in fact,

ILLUSTRATIONS: BELLE OSIPOW

he was not doing anything new, but merely reflecting changes that he felt had already taken place.

Anthropologists tell us that if you add up enough of the stories that people tell about themselves, you will begin to understand what a culture is about. And if you understand what is normal, ordinary, or typical in that culture, you can begin to discern when changes take place in it, and what those changes are. I wonder how much quantity one needs before one does, in fact, know.

If one must experience a trauma in order to learn from it, that may explain why the vast majority of this country found that Vietnam was not a reality for it. It may explain why, once the current trauma fades, we may have more Vietnams. It is interesting that the Panama Canal issue turned out the way it did. Ten years ago, it would not have; ten years from now, perhaps we would do things differently there.

When we ask why it is that some countries remember and others forget, we really must look at what the reality was for the vast number of people in that country. Shad Meshad said America is burying Vietnam. When you think which countries remember, you know that Vietnam is one of those which do. Vietnam remembers. Israel remembers. Armenia remembers. Germany may remember. I am not so sure about the last. Those are peoples who keep alive the notion of what wars can do. I am not at all persuaded that it will happen in our country.

Skepticism About Expertise

BARTON J. BERNSTEIN
Professor of History, Stanford University

Most Americans are not proud of what we did in Vietnam, and so it has rather quickly been put in the category of a mistake. The implication is that more education and better expertise would have persuaded us not to go into Vietnam, or would have helped us do better than we did, maybe even win the war. There is a deep ambivalence among many Americans as to just what more education and better expertise would have achieved.

But for national leaders as well as many Americans, the legacy of the war has meant, among other things, fear of another war, reluctance to intervene in another country, reanalysis of American policy, and fear of overcommitment, a fear which some have too broadly labeled neo-isolationism. But surely, at least in the short run, the lesson has been: Vietnam must not happen again.

However, once one gets to the particulars of Vietnam, it is not clear exactly what has been learned. People with different ideologies, class background, and experience have learned quite different things.

One part of the Vietnam lesson — that labeled neo-isolationism — troubles some intellectuals, including, in particular, those American Jewish intellectuals who are pro-Israel. It is understandable why one of the first publications to trumpet Guenter Lewy's book, *America in Vietnam,* and to publish an advance summary of it, was *Commentary* magazine, a publication of the American Jewish Committee. For almost a decade now, *Commentary* has been worried that Americans would learn the wrong lesson from Vietnam. *Commentary*'s editors feel that if Israel becomes embattled, the American people — fearing another Vietnam — will not go to her defense. This has been labeled a particular case of neo-isolationism. The larger fear is that America will turn away from the world, not intervene in cases when justice demands intervention.

What did we learn from Vietnam? With regard to attitudes, the results have been cynicism, doubt, and guilt. These acids have dissolved an earlier American trust in government that was naive, a complacency that was unwarranted, and an innocence that could have been confuted by evidence, if that evidence had not been disregarded. In the earlier stages, the Vietnam war was attended by massive official deceits. When the deceits multiplied and began slowly to be discerned, when finally those deceits began to resemble an avalanche, a resentful American public challenged government authority and legitimacy, as well as the expertise of all professionals in policy-making positions.

This prepared the way for, and further assisted, an opening in American intellectual dialogue toward the Left. Some fertile thought on the Left had prepared the way for this massive assault on legitimacy and expertise; and the massive assault, in turn, both deepened the Left's own understanding and created for the Left a larger constituency. From the mid-sixties on, one can see in the disciplines of history, political science, and sociology a new salience of issues that previously had been disregarded or tossed out of the American version of European thought. Europeans are taught things like imperialism, class, the domination of class structure. In contrast, modern American historians, political scientists, and sociologists — certainly up until the mid-nineteen-sixties — had regarded imperialism, for example, as a term to apply to other nations. Samuel Flagg Bemis,

a leading diplomatic historian, had described imperialism as a brief venture in America — circa 1898 — and as a "great aberration." In American social analysis, class was not considered an interesting dimension. Regarding power, the pluralists in political science and, to a lesser extent, sociology, held sway. They regarded C. Wright Mills as a maverick, a man of pungent phrase but afflicted with misguided perceptions and sensibilities.

Because of Vietnam, however, these terms and the theories relating to them came back. New proponents emerged. There was an assault — at first *ad hoc*, ultimately somewhat more systematic — upon liberal notions, upon pluralism, upon neo-conservatism, upon the notion that America was nonideological. A man like George Kennan, a proponent of realism, had taught a generation of students that America's failure in foreign policy was its inability to bring its policy into accord with its means; and further, that the American people, including American policymakers, were foolishly and unnecessarily addicted to moralism and legalism. Kennan said that what was necessary was a sense of national interest. Radical theorists argued that, indeed, America did have a heightened conception of its national interest, and that there was an American ideology which, if it did not dictate, at least shaped and influenced foreign policy. According to these theorists, the Vietnam war verified their judgments.

The war also led to an assault on professionalism and expertise in America. Would more expertise in the American government up to 1966 have made any difference in the war in Vietnam? The answer has to be — and on this we have firm evidence — no. Of the leaders of American academic professions — those whose expertise brought them closer to the arena of war — i.e., our leading Asian scholars, modern American historians, historians of American foreign policy, political scientists specializing in foreign policy, scholars in international relations, very few opposed the war in Vietnam; many of them ardently supported the war. They supported it on the basis of liberal social theory, and that, in turn, shaped their own particular work, which, they argued, was nonideological. This encouraged the assault on the intellectual professions in the latter part of the nineteen-sixties and into the nineteen-seventies. Those assaults came in part from younger scholars, in part from people outside of the academy or in non-allied fields. The linguist Noam Chomsky, for example, began "doing" foreign policy because he was so unhappy with the work of American historians and political scientists.

Vietnam also led to an assault upon the university. Again, it was the liberal paradigm that was massively assailed. Earlier, the universities had argued that they were either purveyors of truth or "marketplaces for ideas" where all could purchase what seemed most commanding. But suddenly in the latter part of the nineteen-sixties, with the rise of a new consciousness and a new critical understanding, many became aware that the university was no such thing. Major universities, in particular, were deeply involved in the war. While they were describing themselves as marketplaces of ideas, they were being shaped to a significant extent by the Department of Defense and related interests.

I need not focus on the obvious example of defense contracts in the universities. One can look at the rise of area studies in the American university, a rise conceived primarily in the nineteen-fifties — beginning with Russian studies — as an anti-Soviet and anti-Communist initiative. That development reflected, not the free mind, without ideology, in quest of truth, but a directed mind, funded by foundations and government, in quest of particular conclusions in order more effectively to combat Communism. It was, if you will, a liberal anti-Communist response, an alternative to what was viewed as McCarthyite know-nothingism. The latter held that nothing on Communism should be taught. The former said that what was needed was greater perception and better theory — normally liberal in nature — to understand Communist societies, the better to combat and ultimately overthrow them.

These battles continue in the universities today, although with the end of the war and the contraction of government funding, what is interesting is that more often it is the scars, rather than the dialogue, that one sees. Civility has once more returned, but only to provide a surface closure. Vietnam has resulted, at least in part, in a broadened intellectual dialogue, but also in deep psychic wounds in many sectors where, when new issues arise, people are likely to argue again with some degree of incivility.

If we compare the Korean and Vietnam wars, we may understand why the latter had such a striking and different impact on us. Both wars were civil wars; both involved massive American intervention, without a declaration of war; both were stalemated for years; both were conducted substantially through

massive bombing, which killed countless civilians.

But there were at least four differences which may help to explain why the Vietnam experience of the nineteen-sixties yielded such a different impact on ideology than the Korean experience of the nineteen-fifties.

Most important, the Vietnam war was a guerrilla war, and the Korean war was not. In the Korean war, armies encountered armies, and there was bombing at a distance. In the Vietnam war, it was hard to find the enemy much of the time, and to distinguish the enemy from the people. It was hard to justify whom you were killing or why you were killing them. That is one reason why the evidence of war crimes had such a special salience in the Vietnam war.

Second, the dubious United Nations legitimation of the Korean war was generally not challenged in the United States. It was an American war, with allies engaged in ritualistic support. Senator Robert Taft raised the legal issue of legitimation, and, whether Taft was right or wrong, the point is that this question was immediately lost in the American body politic; it speedily became a non-issue. To put the matter more bluntly, it is not the fact of legitimation that defines one of the differences between the Korean and Vietnam wars, but rather the widespread belief in America that there were legitimations in the Korean war but not in the Vietnam war.

And, of course, the Korean war lasted from 1950 to 1953, whereas the Vietnam war lasted for at least fourteen years, with significant American involvement lasting at least a decade.

Well, why the difference in American responses to the Korean and Vietnam wars? For one thing, by 1948, there had been in America the massive triumph of anti-Communism as a way of perceiving the world abroad and the world at home. This anti-Communism had been assisted by the Marshall Plan, by the Truman Doctrine, and then by the Czech coup in 1948. It made alternative arguments on foreign policy difficult to formulate. The confluence of an anti-Communist crusade shared by most Americans — Republicans and Democrats — and an intellectually impoverished American Left made independent positions hard to establish. Too many on the Left sounded like Stalinists, and probably often were. By 1950, the indictment of McCarthyism, leveled most often by liberals, was that the senator had chosen the wrong targets. There were almost no criticisms of McCarthy for trying to root Communists out of American life.

By the time of the Vietnam era, American anti-Communism had lost some of its crusading zeal. Then, in 1961, the Bay of Pigs raised a specter which almost no Americans of the nineteen-fifties had been willing to acknowledge — i.e., that America actually did such things. Also, by the time the Vietnam war was heating up, America was already embattled in a civil-rights revolution at home. Americans began a serious questioning of their comfortable egalitarianism and their belief that our racial problems were only sectional or regional.

In addition, whereas in the early nineteen-fifties there had been no base of Left-leaning or radical American scholarship giving direction and providing new prisms through which to perceive events, by the early and mid-nineteen-sixties, there were small islands of such scholarship. In American history, there was William Appleman Williams and his *The Tragedy of American Diplomacy*. In sociology there was C. Wright Mills and his *The Power Elite*. In economics and political economy there were the works of Paul A. Baran and Paul M. Sweezy. True, it was hard to cite very many more than these scholars. But it is also interesting that those were the books seized upon by a generation in the nineteen-sixties, which was looking for answers, which was rejecting the liberal doctrines and what the elders in the university were teaching. The sales of *The Tragedy of American Diplomacy* increased almost geometrically between 1964 and 1968.

When we speak of the lessons of Vietnam, we should keep in mind that the American architects of the war have remained successes in the American Establishment.

Poor McGeorge Bundy, finally having doubts about the war, had to flee to the Ford Foundation. Robert McNamara had doubts and went to the World Bank. Arthur Schlesinger, Jr., cast out earlier, telling us he had doubts, is Schweitzer Professor of Humanities at the City University of New York. Scan the forty or fifty people prominently identified as architects of the war, at least through the early Johnson years, and you will find only two pariahs as far as today's academic community is concerned: Walt Whitman Rostow, who hung on too long, and Dean Rusk, who seems to have held on forever. So the war that all repudiate and regard as a mistake has not meant that "the best and the brightest" have had to suffer institutionally for their acts.

Now a new trend is emerging, a response to what some attribute to Americans as self-hatred. It is also

a response to what some feel — mistakenly, I think — is neo-isolationism. This response is characterized by several phenomena. One is the film *The Deer Hunter*. In that movie, there is no issue of blame or responsibility for the Vietnam war. The message, rather, is of the brutality of war. But when the issue of brutality is closely examined in the film, the evidence is that the other side was more brutal. There are almost no scenes of American brutality; there are very painful scenes of the mistreatment of American prisoners by the Viet Cong. In the film, when one finds bestiality in Americans, one finds it at home and before the war. Hence, it is in some fashion either deep in American culture or it is true of all persons, rather than something particular to American policy and behavior in the war.

Second, like *The Deer Hunter,* Professor Lewy's book, *America in Vietnam,* eschews the issue of American responsibility for the war. He says that the only significant themes lie elsewhere.

Two things strike me about Mr. Lewy's book. One is that it is conceived to change American attitudes about the past in order to change American attitudes toward the future.

Second, if one takes the criteria of evidence that Mr. Lewy uses with respect to America's guilt or innocence in Vietnam and applies it to Adolf Hitler's Final Solution, then Hitler must remain forever innocent. Because, by Mr. Lewy's evidentiary standards, until one can find the actual document which Hitler signed directing the Holocaust, or a document proving that he knew of the Holocaust — and historians have been able to turn up neither — Adolf Hitler himself must be innocent, although in some fashion the Nazi Establishment will remain guilty. By the same criterion, Richard Nixon will always be innocent of Watergate until, in the Anglo-American system, a court of law adjudges him guilty.

The recent responses to Allen Weinstein's book, *Perjury: The Hiss-Chambers Case,* reflects the return of a certain kind of anti-Communism among American intellectuals. Many of the leading reviewers who praised the book said that it opened new territory; but, in fact, those reviewers wrote pretty much the same reviews, echoing the same ideology, that they had written twenty years earlier on the Hiss case. Go back and read Irving Howe, Alfred Kazin, and the others, from 1950 to 1953, on the Hiss case. Then read them today on Allen Weinstein's book. Interestingly, nothing much has changed. It is like reading Arthur Schlesinger, Jr.'s, *The Vital Center* in 1949, and then reading him in 1967 in *Foreign Affairs* on

the origins of the cold war; many of the paragraphs are virtually the same. So I think we are seeing, once more, an ascendance of neo-conservatism in parts of the American academy.

The Effects Are Ambiguous

RICHARD FLACKS
Professor of Sociology and
Chairperson of the Department of Sociology
University of California at Santa Barbara
Founding member of Students for a
Democratic Society

I think there is a broad agreement among people on both the Left and the conservative side that the United States is experiencing a crisis of legitimacy, and that this has a lot to do with the Vietnam experience. I think, however, that the American involvement in Vietnam is only one of the things contributing to that crisis. It is a crisis which not only the United States but also other advanced industrial societies are going through.

One of the things I learned from Professor Bernstein's remarks was that the very process of delegitimation contributed to the way the war was perceived by people in this country; at the same time, the war increased mistrust and skepticism with regard to all the institutions and conventional values in our society.

I see three general and interrelated effects of the war. The legitimacy crisis is one. The opening up of dissent and the cultural arena is another. And the rise of what has been called privatism as a popular mood is a third. All are interrelated, but they need separating out. All are ambiguous. Anyone trying to understand the direction of society can neither celebrate nor bemoan these trends. All offer opportunities for opening up human possibility. But they also pose grave dangers.

The legitimacy crisis is most feared by the people who believe that the nation-state should be preserved as an institution for all eternity, or at least for the indefinite future. It also seems to disturb people who are responsible for the management of large corporate enterprises. They fear that a crisis of legitimacy of authority will affect work discipline and the willingness of people to subject themselves to the onerous routines that are necessary for the operation of bureaucratic institutions. And it is disturbing to experts of all types, because part of the crisis of legitimacy involves the questioning of expert knowledge as the basis for policy in the operation of society.

So all of us — including people on the Left in academia, who, therefore, claim some expertise — are made a little nervous by a situation in which every authority, including the authority of knowledge, is being questioned. There is no doubt that the war in Vietnam hastened, reinforced, solidified, and crystallized many of the cultural and psychological tendencies that were already widespread in the society, and coming from many different sources.

But there are some positive aspects to this. The Center for the Study of Democratic Institutions is one major institution — and there have been others — where at least over the last twenty years people have asked, "Well, what is the future of the nation-state? Is that the best framework for the fulfilling of human possibility? What are its limitations and dangers? Shouldn't we raise fundamental questions about that? Is the institution of war — which is connected fundamentally to the nation-state — something that can no longer be countenanced as a matter of routine policy?" Of course, these kinds of questions have been asked for a long, long time; but they have been persistently asked in recent years here at the Center.

Now, when large segments of the population are beginning to internalize these same objections, questions, and criticisms, we ought to ask what possibilities lie ahead. It seems to me that there is now a lot of potential for fashioning alternative images and visions about how human beings can organize themselves. There is a lot of potential for a new movement, new social initiatives. I don't want to believe that fifteen years of horror in Southeast Asia have had no positive values.

Also, there has been an opening up of the cultural arena. Perspectives, values, cultural heritages, ideas and symbols of all sorts, which, in the pre-1960 era, were not accessible or widely known to Americans, are now very accessible. As soon as you visit a place like the Soviet Union — even for a day — you are struck by the extraordinary difference between our society and theirs with respect to cultural openness and the availability in our society of every kind of human expression that can be recorded.

Now, this openness contains dangers. The most obvious is that, since we are now exposed to so many varieties of possible and plausible beliefs and values, no one knows what to believe in any more. The sense of anomie, as some sociologists call it, is extreme. Some people now bemoan the decline of cultural coherence in America and see that as a great threat for the future. Perhaps it is. It is plausible to think

that the rise of certain cult phenomena, for example, may be traceable to this kind of breakdown of cultural unity and coherence and to the emergence of a confusing melange of symbols and values.

A second negative aspect of this cultural openness concerns how much of it is due to the commodification of culture, i.e., the tendency to turn values, symbols, and ideas into products for the media market. When everything is given that kind of currency, values get debased and we lose touch with anything that has depth.

But after all, this is the kind of pluralism that most people associate with democracy. And since it is reasonable to think that many of the values that have been a basis of social unity and coherence deserve questioning, and that the values and the traditions of other parts of the human race may be relevant, the prospect is exciting.

It is also no doubt true that this makes for a fragile situation. Many people, including intellectuals, do not really believe in defending this kind of openness. Most people have some point of view or perspective they would like to see silenced, whether it is Nazis speaking in Skokie, Illinois, or various cults, or the New Left, or the Old Left, or the Right, whatever. So this openness also creates the possibility of new synthesis and new motion, of social and cultural creativity. How do we move on those possibilities? How can we build around them? Or should we draw back and adopt some variant of neo-conservative and traditionalist perspective on all this?

The third result of the war is privatism. One form of privatism is the new narcissism. I am not one of those Californians who celebrates the latter. But what has been reinforced is both a human tendency and a clear tendency within the American culture for people to focus on their private world as the only real scope for personal action. By "private world" is meant what one encounters in one's daily life as necessary, desirable, and pleasurable. In such a view, one's responsibilities are to people one actually knows rather than to larger categories of human beings. That private everyday world is the framework within which most people have always lived. But in many cultures and at certain times, that attitude or lifestyle has been criticized, or challenged, or been a source of distress; whereas in the post-Vietnam era, more and more people have been saying that that is the only reality for which they should be responsible. On that view, one believes we cannot hope to have effect or satisfaction if we devote our energies and concern to a realm beyond our own private world.

Again, that has perilous potential. It is an extremely short-term focus on reality which, if carried to its logical extreme, says, I will live only for my time and I do not care what the future portends. It is a focus that says, yes, there may be millions dying in *x* place, or suffering in *y* place, but that is not my concern. Why should it be? This is my concern, right here.

This perspective is rarely articulated; but certainly we see it not only in other people but in ourselves. Given the international power of the American state and the American-run corporations, the fact that Americans are withdrawing into a private sphere does not strike one as grounds for optimism. The American people generally are allowing their government and corporations to do things in their name and allegedly in their interest that they prefer not to attend to.

Whatever stability and trust remains in the American system is largely due to the fact that the majority of middle-class Americans feel that the system lets them have that kind of private life. If the system begins to fail to provide a reasonably private existence, then presumably the last base for its legitimacy would be severely challenged.

But there are some positive sides to a privatistic orientation. The most obvious is that it is grounds for resistance to war. There is no greater single threat to the ability of the people as a whole to lead their private lives than the state's mobilization of citizens for war. Resistance to war is present in all societies because people want to lead their own lives, not the nation's life. Not only do they not want to die, they also do not want to have to sacrifice unless it is absolutely proven to be necessary. That is a part of the human fact that private lives have their own meaning for us. The more this is emphasized, the more resistance to war is a factor that must be taken into account by the people who have the power to make war.

The people at the top of the society — those who make the institutions — depend for stability on this very commitment of the American people to their private lives. What keeps the stability we have going is that people are relatively satisfied with their private lives. To an extent, then, there is a kind of built-in contradiction: if you want to mobilize the population for some great national effort, you risk the very thing that keeps the system relatively stable —

namely, that people are paying attention to their own little sphere rather than the community as a whole.

That has an obvious positive side. It *should* be extremely hard for national leaders to mobilize a population, not only for the kinds of wars we have had in Korea and Vietnam, but for most of the other kinds of international conflicts that some American policy-makers have wanted to involve us in. This is a trend welcomed by those who want to reduce the threat of war. The question is how to build upon the reality of privatism in a positive sense, how to create further institutional and cultural bases for resistance to war without at the same time endangering a legitimate national defense.

If there has been a declining legitimacy of institutions; if people are more open to a variety of beliefs, ideas, and possibilities for human development than ever before; and if people are more concerned with the relationships and responsibilities on a daily level than they are with abstractions, is there anything going on now that is promising? The scene is not one of sheer political apathy. The nineteen-seventies have not been the nineteen-fifties in terms of either cultural and social conformity or political apathy. There has been an enormous withdrawal from the electoral process. I don't applaud that. I think that is a real problem. But there is also a rise of participation in other kinds of activity. That should be studied much more fully than it has been.

I can talk only about Santa Barbara, which admittedly is not the typical American community. But I have lived here during the nineteen-seventies. When I got here, Santa Barbara was supposed to be a very conservative, complacent, smug community made up of semiretired people withdrawn from the mainstream of urban life. I am sure that there are many people like that here. But what I have observed is, first, a high degree of participation and readiness to act to protect the environment. This is not, as it is sometimes pictured from the outside, a selfish, smug localism to protect against the "wrong kinds of people." It seems to me to be a very broad, value-based conviction among many people in the community. By participation, I don't mean just signing petitions and peripheral political activities, but rather energies being devoted in behalf of these values in people's daily lives, in the way that they live.

A whole range of issues connects to people's sense of their economic well-being. The most publicized,

In a Moral World

War kills; that is all it does; even its economic causes are not reflected in its outcomes; and the soldiers who die are, in the contemporary phrase, wasted. . . . When soldiers die in small numbers, in encompassable battles, they can attribute some meaning to their deaths. Sacrifice and heroism are conceivable notions. But the slaughter of modern warfare overwhelms their capacity for moral understanding; cynicism is their last resort. But it is not our last resort. . . . In an age when human sensibility is finely tuned to all the nuances of despair, it still seems important to say of those who die in war that they did not die in vain. And when we can't say that, or think we can't, we mix our mourning with anger. We search for guilty men. We are still committed to a moral world.

(From Just and Unjust Wars: A Moral Argument with Historical Illustrations, by Michael Walzer, © 1977 by Basic Books, Inc., Publishers, New York.)

of course, is the tax revolt, an issue that the right-wing, rather than left political forces have capitalized on. Again, the sentiments are privatistic; people ask, why should we be forced to give up a substantial part of our income for purposes over which we have very little control, purposes we consider more and more dubious? I do not welcome the tax revolt; there are things I think the society should do with its resources. But I can understand the roots of that revolt in the sentiments I have been describing. However, partly as a result of that very same privatism, there have been countermovements or parallel movements by people, such as tenants, who are not benefiting from Proposition 13.

People seem to be looking for new forms of governance, new forms of empowerment that allow them direct access, or at least veto power, over what the more established institutions of decision-making are doing. Citizens' groups in various sectors of society are asserting the right literally to intervene in the decision-making process. They are saying they must have the right to check and counterbalance decisions made in remote places by bureaucratically dominated institutions or by experts. The environmental movement has created in the past five years or so an entire system of checks and balances inside the decision-making process.

President Carter has announced that he will try to abolish all of this. He has said he will try to short-circuit what he calls the tremendous bureaucratic entanglement that energy developments must undergo. On one occasion he talked specifically about the south coast of California. We are entangling the liquid natural gas emplacements, we are entangling nuclear power, we are entangling oil pipelines and oil drilling in bureaucratic regulations. That is how he described it. But what is being entangled are developments coming from high places which impinge on the lives of people in a community. And the people have discovered and have invented some means of entangling and stalemating these developments.

This is a continuing and very important struggle. It will affect how the crisis of legitimacy will be resolved. If it is resolved by the exercise of elite power in remote places, power that suppresses citizenly initiative, then we are going down a disastrous road. If it is resolved in more decentralized ways, by people in communities finding the ability to take control over some of these decisions, by people exercising real rights and empowerment, then we may enter a period where new structures of authority and legitimacy are possible.

Vietnam Was a Catalyst

STANLEY ROTHMAN
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In order to understand why the Vietnam war was able to be a catalyst, one must understand that certain other things were happening underneath the surface of the American society. If the war had been fought forty years earlier, the effect on the society would not have been the same.

America for a long time was a peculiar kind of a society with a particular kind of ideology — a liberal-capitalist ideology derived primarily from Calvinist Protestantism. Until very recently, that defined the society and continued to define small-town America. Such a society was able to assimilate a lot of other people and their values. It saw itself as a second Eden, partly because it swept a lot of issues under the rug. Unlike European societies, from which it sprang, it saw few alternatives to its ideology. That ideology was a civic religion for some Americans; for them, religion and the social culture tended to fuse.

This pattern of identification continued up to the end of World War II, and, to a certain extent, up into the nineteen-fifties.

But there had been in the United States the gradual rise of an intellectual class, beginning at the end of the nineteenth century. This brought about, for the ever-larger middle class emerging in this country, a revision in the nature of the American liberal-Calvinist ideology, even though much of that remained. There was an increasing belief that one's failure was not due to individual sin but was the result of a malfunctioning in the society, something which could be corrected by tinkering with the society. There was also the idea that the ultimate aim of one's existence is free expression and self-realization. That is part of a liberal cosmopolitan orientation, largely derived from ideas imported from the European tradition and brought to fruition in universities and by increasing numbers of psychiatrists and psychoanalysts, who became ever more important in the post-World War I period.

A second change can be seen in the ethos of American capitalism. The economic system tended to encourage, in its later periods, a consumer society, one which stressed self-realization, self-expression, the consuming of experiences.

A third factor is America's role in the world after World War II. The only option that Americans thought they had at that time was that if they were

going to be involved with the world, they would have to try to export American institutions to the rest of the world, make the rest of the world like America. Gradually Americans became aware that other cultures were different than their own, that the institutions which defined us as a nation were not accepted by other people. We discovered that the Vietnamese peasant was not interested in becoming like us; and Americans found this hard to deal with.

Along with this was the growth of a large middle class characterized by university education, by professional degrees, one that had imbibed a great many new ways of thinking about things, one that had the time and opportunities to be active in politics and to influence large numbers of people. These people who had been college-educated had a whole new set of attitudes about American society which I call liberal-cosmopolitan.

Of course, a key role was played by the migration into the universities of people who had been radicals in the nineteen-thirties and nineteen-forties, and who had been forced to keep quiet in the nineteen-fifties, but had moved on to university positions and were waiting for their opportunity. The Left hadn't died in America, it had simply gone underground. Especially relevant was the large influx into elite universities of Jewish intellectuals who continued the radical tradition which had characterized Jews for a long time.

Also, there was the nationalization of the culture due to the revolution in communications, and to the emergence of what I call a national media elite. Ideas which emerged in New York in the nineteen-twenties remained in New York; they did not go to Winesburg, Ohio. But by the nineteen-sixties and nineteen-seventies, ideas were going from New York to everywhere else very quickly. That affected the whole culture.

This national media elite vies with academic elites as among the most liberal in the society in terms of its openness to the new liberalism. Some people may think *The New York Times* is a conservative organ; it depends on one's view. But in terms of the reporters, the media are a very liberal elite. The media are liberal-cosmopolitan, not totally anti-system, but certainly suspicious of business and of traditional American values.

Another factor is the rise of the civil-rights and race issues. The race issue was one which Americans could not cope with for all sorts of reasons. One of the reasons why the United States could go to the rest of the world and teach it its ways was that it believed in itself. It believed it had a message. But after the emergence of the race issue and the civil-rights issue, American intellectuals were not so sure that they had lessons to teach the rest of the world. Certainly they could not feel it was legitimate to kill other people in order to bring them the American way of life, which, for many of them, was not a good way of life.

Then, of course, the Vietnam war itself split the intellectual and the elite communities, and brought to the fore radical ideas which had been there sort of underground and which could now be freely expressed. The student movement — the cutting edge of the radical movement in this society — was initially largely Jewish and upper-middle-class Protestant. Later, lower-middle-class and middle-class young people were brought in; they often came from very conservative families and were acting against their parents, by reacting against a weak and flawed society which they partially identified with their parents. It is also true that by the mid-nineteen-sixties, as Mr. Bernstein notes, because of Israel and for other reasons, segments of the Jewish community had broken away and sparked neo-conservatism in the United States. It may be that the Jewish community is now moving in a more conservative direction, though it still tends to be far to the Left, and Jewish intellectuals certainly are far to the Left of other intellectuals.

Vietnam catalyzed these things which had been going on. It did lead to a breakdown in the consensus of the society, and the breakdown built on itself. When people lose faith in themselves, they tend to became more corrupt. And corruption characterizes regimes which have already lost faith in their institutions.

This loss in faith of American institutions will probably continue. It is unlikely that we will ever recover the kind of thing that some of us would like to recover, those of us who grew up on farms in Indiana, or in the Southeast. I grew up in Brooklyn, and I had it, too, in a working-class area. I don't think we will ever get back to that.

Formerly, because of the low saliency of politics and ideology in our society, Americans just assumed the system was there, and that if things went wrong in one's personal life, one reacted on a personal level. That has changed. People are now hostile to the system. Individual problems are now played out in the public realm in our society as they have been in most other societies. In the nineteen-thirties and before, if people failed, if they couldn't get a job, they

blamed themselves rather than the social order. That was a characteristic of American society. Today it is increasingly true that if individuals have personal problems, they will blame the system. That is a profound change in American society. It means that the system is going to continue to be politicized and, I would suggest, polarized.

An Exchange

GUENTER LEWY (*Professor of Political Science, University of Massachusetts, author of* America in Vietnam): I want to ask Stanley Rothman to amplify some of his comments, to get at some implications of his comments. I happen to have read some of his research, which he was too modest to mention here. He is in the last stages of completing a book, to be entitled *Radical Christians, Radical Jews,* in which there is a very careful examination of some of the personal dynamics of members of the radical student movement in the nineteen-sixties. If I understand his findings, one of them is that while on the surface many of these radical students appeared to be full of love of humanity and peace, underneath there was a tremendous amount of tension, hatred, and very destructive drives which then found an outlet in radical political activity.

Fred Downs was generous in his response to the people who challenged what he had done. He said, in effect, those people chose to escape the draft, they opposed the war, they were entitled to their point of view. I don't bear them any grudge. He was even somewhat charitable to those who had called him a murderer and vilified his uniform. Now, if indeed Stanley Rothman is correct, if many of these antiwar people acted, not from lofty moral humanitarian principles, but rather because, at least subconsciously, and perhaps even consciously, they hated the society and its values and really found this a good opportunity to bring it down, then it seems to me the situation between Fred Downs and his opponents is much more serious. Fred Downs wanted to serve his country, they want to destroy it. They hate it. If Stanley Rothman's findings are correct — and they look to me to be impressively correct — there are some implications here which he was not prepared to draw out. Perhaps I am going too far in drawing out implications, but I think they are there.

FLACKS: I can't let that go by. I don't know all of Stanley Rothman's data, but I have done a lot of research on student activists as well, but I am not going to discuss that. It may be true that a lot of student activists were motivated by hatred of their fathers and country. But that is true of people who get involved in all sorts of pursuits and who project their private needs onto various public realms.

You conclude from this research that these antiwar people hated their country and acted that out with respect to the war in Vietnam. What you are not pointing out — or thinking about, perhaps — are the following things. By the end of the military draft, at least one out of four people called for induction was not reporting to the induction station. They were not going. Also, when Richard Nixon ordered the invasion of Cambodia in 1970, the great majority of college students all across the country went on strike.

Now, I don't know that it was student activists who vilified Fred Downs. I spent my "Vietnam period" in the antiwar movement, and I frankly do not know anyone who was active in that movement who would insult a G.I. I know there are people who did that, but I do not think they were active participants in the antiwar movement. They may well have been other young people whose only way of acting against the war was to insult a G.I. Or there may be people with all kinds of problems who said they were against the war and would insult a G.I. But I honestly do not think that the people who were committed to opposition to the war, and had a thought-through position about that, went around insulting G.I.s. In fact, there was a great deal of consciousness and concern about what was happening with G.I.s; there was also a great deal of tension in the antiwar movement about whether it was even right, as both a practical and moral question, to refuse the draft.

The draft-resistance movement itself was not the creation of some elite young people. It became a mass phenomenon. It became part of the American scene. Draft resistance is as American as the draft, maybe more so.

My grandparents came over here from Russia in part to avoid the draft in Russia. I am sure that that is true of thousands of Americans. The draft is a late American institution with dubious constitutionality. Many Americans feel that way. So, to think that those who served in Vietnam were the lovers of their country and that those who opposed the draft and the war were not may be a relief to you, Mr. Lewy, but it does not solve any of the intellectual, cultural, and moral dilemmas that the country faces.

Comparing Notes on Television's Coverage of the War

Lawrence Lichty and Murray Fromson

LICHTY: On August 3, 1965, Harry Reasoner, substituting as anchorman for Walter Cronkite, who was on vacation, opened the C.B.S. Evening News television program in atypical fashion. I quote:

"Good evening. We received today a cable from Morley Safer, our correspondent in South Vietnam. It seems to us worth quoting directly. 'I was the only correspondent,' Safer says, 'at today's burning of a hamlet by U.S. Marines, surrounding the village of Camne. According to a Marine officer on the operation, they had orders to burn the hamlet to the ground if they received so much as a round.' "

In the whole history of television's coverage of the war, I know of no other instance when an anchorman set up a film report in such a way. Mind you, the film was still on its way from Da Nang to the United States. No one had any idea what was on that film. It had not been developed. Safer's message was an internal memo, a cable advising what was coming.

Two days later, that story played on the air. Here is how it went:

"We are on the outskirts of Camne as elements of the First Battalion, Ninth Marines. We were walking into this village when you can hear what happened. [Gunfire; a Marine sets a hut afire with his cigarette lighter.]

"This is what the war in Vietnam is all about . . . the old and the very young. The Marines have burned this old couple's cottage because fire was coming from here.

"Now when you walk into the village you see no young people at all. Fire was coming from automatic . . . automatic weapons fire was coming from all of these villages. It's not really one village, it's a string of — and the people that are left — come this way, Kan — the people that are left are like this woman here, the very old. . . .

" 'Were you getting fire from them?'

" 'From what, not too much — '

"It first appeared that the Marines had been sniped at, and that a few houses were made to pay. Shortly after, an officer told me he had orders to go in and level the string of hamlets that surround Camne village. And all around the common paddy field that feeds these hamlets, a ring was fired, 150 homes were leveled in retaliation for a burst of gunfire.

"In Vietnam, like everywhere else in Asia, property, a home, is everything. A man lives with his family on ancestral land. His parents are buried nearby. Their spirit is part of his holdings. If there were Viet Cong in the hamlet, they were long gone, alerted by the roar of the amphibious tractors, the heavy barrage of rocket fire laid down before the troops moved in.

"The women and the old men who remained will never forget that August afternoon. The day's operation burned down 150 houses, wounded three women, killed one baby, wounded one Marine, and netted these four prisoners: four old men who could not answer questions put to them in English; four old men who had no idea what an ID card was.

"Today's operation is the frustration of Vietnam in miniature. There is little doubt that American firepower can win a military victory here. But to a Vietnamese peasant whose home means a lifetime of backbreaking labor, it will take more than Presidential promises to convince him that we are on his side. Morley Safer, C.B.S. News, near the village of Camne."

FROMSON: As soon as that appeared on the air, Arthur Sylvester, then the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Public Affairs, called Fred Friendly at C.B.S. News and said, to the best of my recollection, "Now that you've spit on the American flag, how do you feel?"

At that moment, at that juncture in the Vietnam war, there was still a feeling that American power

would win. There had never been any really sharp questioning of American policy, either in Vietnam or in Asia, for that matter. There was probably some intimidation felt at the network.

I happened to be on my way back to the United States, and C.B.S. asked me to stop in Washington. They knew I had become acquainted with Bill Moyers during the 1960 Presidential campaign when I was covering Lyndon Johnson. Moyers was now press secretary at the White House. The C.B.S. people said, "Why don't you go talk to Moyers? They are upset. Try to explain what's going on in Vietnam."

I talked with Moyers, but it didn't really come to much. I do remember Moyers asking me, "Why do you have to use foreigners to cover the war in Vietnam?" Morley Safer is a Canadian. Also, "Why do you have to use Vietnamese cameramen?" That irritated me. I simply said, "Well, your boss, the President, keeps on saying it's their war to win. Why *can't* you have Vietnamese cameramen covering it?"

But that was a kind of a Rubicon in terms of television coverage of the war. It was an uncomfortable chapter for Americans to face on television. In an era of symbolism, that incident was not just a case of one village being burned. It talked about American understanding or misunderstanding of the Vietnamese, and of the Vietnamese understanding, or misunderstanding, of Americans. It told of the frustration in a guerrilla-type war. I think it covered an awful lot.

LICHTY: Television is not the monolith it is often seen to be. The same day that this was broadcast, N.B.C.'s Huntley-Brinkley report had film of a similar incident in another village four miles from Camne. The burnings of both villages were part of a single operation that day. The N.B.C. film was done voice-over by Chet Huntley in New York. He reported that fifty of ninety houses were burned, and that civilians were caught in the cross fire. He noted in his narration — though it is not in Safer's story, and was insisted on by the Marines — that there were Viet Cong fortified bunkers beneath some of the houses. Huntley said that it was a "tragic misfortune of the people of Chan Son to have been used as a shield by the Viet Cong." He said that the Marines have been criticized for excessive brutality, but that this battle was no more barbaric than any other battle in recorded history, and what made it seem more brutal was that it was photographed.

If any television story from Vietnam ever created a sensation, it was Camne. But it is still not possible, after almost fifteen years and millions of words, to describe precisely what the reaction means. The *Saturday Review* started a fund-raising campaign to help rebuild the village. Drew Pearson said that the Americans were using too much firepower, often indiscriminately, and that the American occupation of Vietnam would end just as the French had.

William F. Buckley devoted a column to the incident, entitled, "Join the Marines and Get on the Hate List." He quoted Safer at length, and then said, "This episode is symbolic of the larger problem. America's mode is an all-out effort, done with singleness of purpose and dispatch. We are unpracticed at sustained exercises in Florentine cunning. . . . We are a nation of problem-solvers by direct approach. If a hamlet is in guerrilla hands, you level the hamlet. . . . It will get worse, and the bitterness of our soldiers will be real and searing as they face gunfire ahead of them, and, behind them, the well-formulated contempt of those in whose cause they serve and die."

The main showdown came to be C.B.S. and Safer versus the Department of Defense and Arthur Sylvester. Sylvester later wrote to Friendly and said essentially what Moyers said to Fromson. Sylvester said he thought American reporters and photographers would be more sensitive — presumably more sensitive than Canadians and Vietnamese — to the considerations that this was a new kind of war.

President Johnson called Frank Stanton, the president of C.B.S., and said, "Boy, your man just shat on the flag." Then, "Did you know that Mr. Safer is a Communist?"

Frank Stanton said, "No, sir, he's not a Communist; he's a Canadian."

And the President said, "Well, I knew he wasn't an American."

It is important to realize that virtually none of what we are talking about here, none of this criticism of the media, was then a part of the public record.

Now, here is Safer's report from Vietnam on the C.B.S. Evening News, August 20, about two weeks after the network's highest officials had been privately criticized by the President of the United States and by the Department of Defense. Walter Cronkite began the report:

"Biggest American victory yet out there. The Marines are mopping up the rugged terrain south of the Da Nang and Chu Lai bases, and they are rooting the isolated Viet Cong out of bunkers and pillboxes. They disclosed today that about five thousand

leathernecks took part in that big battle that ended yesterday."

[Safer:] "This is the command post for the biggest and most successful American operation to date. The flow of Marine battalions came ashore, came in by helicopter . . . and in the end killed more than seven hundred Viet Cong. This is probably the most important operation to date, too, because it is the first time that American troops were able to act successfully instead of react to the Viet Cong.

"The Marines used every device, every lesson. This was an operation that they had been rehearsing for months in Vietnam, and for years on Okinawa. Then Wednesday morning some of the world's finest assault troops hit the beaches . . . just south of their base at Chu Lai. A simultaneous landing by helicopters put down more Marines behind the suspected Viet Cong concentration. And then another amphibious force cut both sides of the peninsula, and the enemy was trapped, a suspected Vietcong regiment.

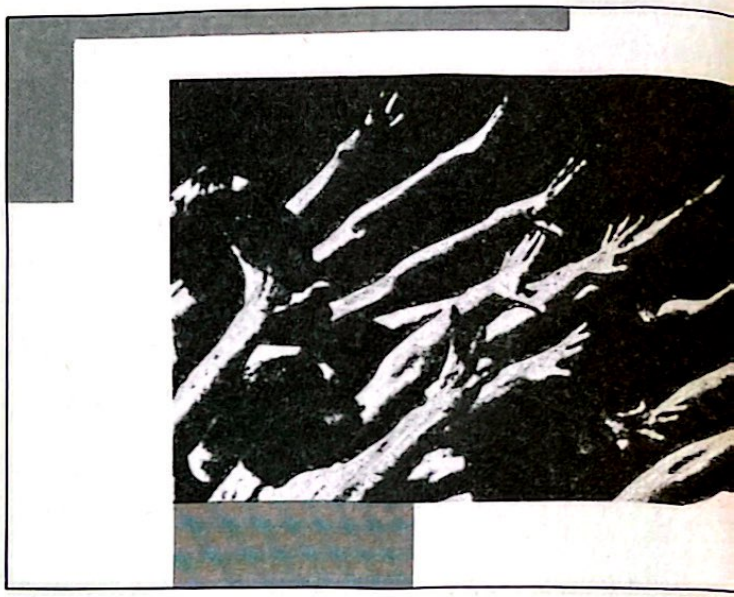
"Two thousand men, a full Marine regiment, made the assault, supported by fighter bombers and naval gunfire. The area around Chu Lai is some of the roughest fighting country in Vietnam — a long stretch of sand dunes down the coast and, inland, impassable jungles. The temperature here sometimes rises to 140. The Viet Cong had installed heavy concrete bunkers and seemed to be preparing for an assault on Chu Lai air base itself.

"The peninsula has a complex of villages, one of which the Viet Cong has used as a command post. And the inevitable civilian suffering. Marine casualties were the casualties of all-out war, not of booby traps and sniping. This was the first set battle for American troops in Vietnam, and in the peninsula south of Chu Lai, a lot of nineteen-year-old Marines became veterans on that steaming August afternoon.

"The battle at Tam Quan is a rather historic event. It marks the first time that American troops took on an aggressive role. This wasn't the static perimeter defense or even a probing action. It was a major assault by American Marines. Morley Safer, C.B.S. News, Tam Quan."

Then Cronkite:

"There was just a hint today that North Vietnam may not insist on the complete withdrawal of American troops from the South before they are ready to talk peace. The story comes from a roundabout way, British diplomats who talked with Vietnamese Communist officials in Moscow. Frequently that is the



way a break first comes. The softening of Red policy, if any, is attributed to President Johnson's tough stand in Vietnam, and there is more to that story. Here is C.B.S. News diplomatic correspondent Marvin Kalb."

"The Administration believes that the Viet Cong has now reached a point of critical decision: either to initiate major military action in South Vietnam, or to sue for peace. One American official said tonight, 'Something very important is now happening in Vietnam.'

"Officials, of course, are not sure which way the Viet Cong will turn. But in hopes the Communists may find negotiations attractive at this stage of the war, President Johnson today issued another passionate appeal for peace talks."

[President Johnson:] "We do have a serious situation in Vietnam. We need to get to the negotiating table. We need to, in the words of Isaiah, reason together. And I pray every night that the day will come when others will be willing to accept our proposals and join us in our hopes of satisfying these problems and dealing with these difficulties by talking instead of fighting."

[Kalb:] "Many U.S. officials are buoyed up by the news of that Marine victory near Chu Lai, and tend to feel that the Communists may now be drifting toward negotiations. Their casualties in the past few weeks have been extremely high, and their morale has been sagging under the impact of continuous American air strikes. It is now felt here that this military pressure may be forcing the Viet Cong and Hanoi to drop their earlier precondition that the U.S. withdraw from South Vietnam before any negotia-

tions can start. However, the Chinese Communists still insist on this, which indicates a major breach may now be developing in the ranks of Asia's Communists. Marvin Kalb, C.B.S. News, in Washington."

In terms of the television coverage of Vietnam, we tend to remember and write about the myths rather than the reality. The myth came to be that Morley Safer was hostile to the Americans and tried to sabotage the war effort. The myth was that television in general did that. But a careful reviewing of the television reports from and about Vietnam over a long period of time indicates that the second series of reports on Vietnam are typical of television reporting up until the Tet offensive early in 1968. The Camne report of the village burnings in 1965 was not typical.

FROMSON: Walter Cronkite was pretty much a hawk right up to the time he went to Vietnam during the 1968 Tet offensive. A lot of people around C.B.S. in New York were convinced that the U.S. effort in Vietnam was valid and would eventually come out favorably to the United States.

In December, 1965, I was living in Bangkok and going back and forth to Vietnam. My wife and I encountered a couple of American F-105 pilots from an air base in Thailand. The United States was not publicly admitting at that time that we were bombing from Thailand. These pilots were reservists who had been called back to active duty. That week, President Johnson announced the Christmas bombing pause to give the North Vietnamese a chance to talk peace. Johnson said that our planes were not bombing North Vietnam. But we were really bombing the hell out of Laos at the time.

These pilots were very upset about it because they were not getting combat pay and there was a shortage of bombs and they were being forced to fly over enemy targets without enough bombs in their planes.

I checked this out with a friend who was an intelligence officer. He verified it. I went back to Saigon and did the story. People in the Defense Department immediately called up C.B.S. after the piece was on the air, and said my story was a lie. They insisted that C.B.S. carry a rebuttal from them the next night. I got a long cable from C.B.S. in New York, saying they felt compelled to use the Defense Department reaction to my piece.

Two months later, *The New York Times* printed a story saying it had learned there was a bomb shortage in Vietnam. Then I got a kudo from New York, saying "Congratulations on your exclusive." It was only when *The New York Times* confirmed the piece that C.B.S. was willing to believe what I had reported two months earlier. There was always that kind of questioning in television in the early part of the war.

LICHTY: In 1965, virtually every American leader, everybody in the media, reflected at least lukewarm support for the war effort and for at least the ideology of it. When criticism was voiced, it was explained as being the radicals' echoes of the Moscow line. That was a perfectly rational media explanation of criticism of the war at that particular time.

FROMSON: In the early years of the Vietnam war, most of the decision-makers in both the military and the media were still fighting the end of World War II. This was particularly true in Walter Cronkite's case at C.B.S. Whenever Cronkite began to worry about the war, he went to Washington and talked with the people with whom he had been associated as a United Press International reporter in World War II. There was this tremendous pressure throughout Washington on television correspondents to "get on the team." And this came not just from the White House or the military. The Washington columnists accused these "young kids" in television of distorting the American war effort.

LICHTY: There was great pressure from the Defense Department in Washington and the military in Vietnam to "give us time." They would say, "We are getting the kinks out, lay off, give us a bit more time."

There were what I call the instrument-of-war stories, to suggest that progress was being made. Every time television or the military did not quite know what to do, we came up with a new weapon. It might be a jeep with a thirty-five-foot steering wheel so that the driver sat thirty-five feet behind it and when it went over mines, he would not get killed.

Television gave the appearance of progress in all the official documentation — the numbers that came out of the computer on pacification of villages, military operations, body count. All this to give the appearance of progress in the war.

What is most important about the Safer story in August, 1965, was not what Safer said — though that is important — but the fact that it became the symbol of television coverage of Vietnam. There were some four thousand film reports from Indochina after Safer's, but none could compare with that one.

A recent textbook about the history of television showed a still picture of the cigarette-lighter incident and said, "An American soldier sets fire to a house in Vietnam. TV viewers numbly watched the horrors of war nightly in the nineteen-sixties."

Guenter Lewy has said that every night there were bloody stories from Vietnam on television. That is absolutely incorrect. There were not bloody stories on television every single night. Such stories were a very small percentage of the television coverage.

For most of us — if we think back on the symbols and the pictures of Vietnam — four pictures flash into our head. One is of the Buddhist monk who immolated himself in 1963. Another is the picture of Brigadier General Nguyen Ngoc Loan, South Vietnam's national police chief, raising his pistol and shooting a Viet Cong suspect through the head during the Tet offensive. Another is of the little girl accidentally napalmed by South Vietnamese soldiers and running out of the black smoke. The fourth is this one of the Marine burning of the village. All but the last were still photographs, not television film.

Many observers have said that the cigarette-lighter picture at Camne somehow marked the beginning of the end of the war. But it didn't. And it was not, indeed, a moment that would often be repeated. In fact, in the history of television, that was virtually never repeated. It was a unique instance.

FROMSON: Of course, it was almost impossible for television to cover some of the major realities of the Vietnam war. Those include American sanctuaries in Cambodia. They include the attitudes of G.I.s. We spent an awful lot of time in the field talking to G.I.'s, trying to capture their frustrations and their feelings about the war. But they were intimidated. A lot of the political stuff was simply impossible to put on television.

LICHTY: I think it is important to understand that the media — like the public generally — was innocent on Vietnam. There was no real discussion about the price that had to be paid, about the implications of U.S. policy in Vietnam. There was no prediction of where U.S. policy might lead. There was also conscious selectivity, a leaning over backward by the media, to present the general American view that our Vietnam policy was a good idea, that it would work, that we could win. That was the feeling up until the Tet offensive in 1968.

FROMSON: Two things happened after Tet. Immediately after the Tet offensive, Walter Cronkite, one of the most respected men in America, went on camera and said, "We've got to have a settlement of the war. We are mired and stalemated." I think that turned an awful lot of people around. Second, Lyndon Johnson called a council of the elders together in Washington and said, "What are we going to do?"

I am not sure that if another Vietnam came along tomorrow, the television coverage would be all that different from what it was in the nineteen-sixties. I watched the television coverage of Iran, for example. I looked at it, and I thought, that is a distortion of what is going on there. I said, "My God, that's not the way it is. We don't understand the religious and the cultural influences and forces in Iran."

When I went back in 1974 to cover the collapse of Cambodia and Vietnam, I began getting the same kind of telegrams from C.B.S. in New York that I had received in the nineteen-sixties: "Why aren't you out there on the road getting into the action?" All they wanted was the episodic action of the fighting Cambodians.

So, did the television industry learn anything about covering a war, about showing a war on television? I don't think so. The war left a permanent effect on many of us individual journalists. There was a great frustration in our not being able to capture the essence of the war. That essence was never consistently translated to television film in human terms.

LICHTY: When it all ended on April 29, 1975, Walter Cronkite said that many of us will not be so ready to accept what we are told in the future. I think that is true.

But jump forward to the Angola episode in 1975. When Angola came up, C.B.S. said we — C.B.S. — got suckered on Vietnam. We were bozos. We are not going to fall for that on Angola. We are going to look at that one very carefully. Then what they did was virtually a carbon copy of what they had done in Vietnam in 1964. They had five nights of here's the background, here's the history, here's what you need to know. And it was all the same kind of superficial treatment they had done on Vietnam fifteen years earlier.

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Observations and Deductions

We Americans Ignore the Vietnamese Victims

MURRAY FROMSON

What troubles me is that, while we have examined what has happened to American intellectuals, to journalists, to veterans, to us Americans as human beings, we will leave here without having examined what happened to the real victims of the war; I am referring to the Vietnamese themselves.

The fact is that while, for all intents and purposes, the Vietnam war has been over now since 1973, there is still no evidence that we intend to do anything about the Vietnamese victims of the war, those who were left behind, largely because of our participation.

There have been a number of references here to *The Deer Hunter*. *The Deer Hunter* capsulates part of this problem. That film is just the latest example of Americans trying to excuse their guilt or responsibility with a false metaphor. I was repelled by that movie. The whole centerpiece of the Russian roulette episode was a cheap way to rationalize what had taken place in Vietnam. Such a game doesn't exist in either Vietnamese or Chinese culture. Its portrayal merely heightens our belief that Asians have a low regard for human life.

The Deer Hunter suggests to me that perhaps we haven't really understood just how a whole culture and a people were shattered, and that we Americans have simply put that entire chapter behind us.

I think there was a racist motivation, tendency, or impetus for what happened in Vietnam. I know we did fire-bomb Dresden and Berlin in World War II. We had an enemy in Adolf Hitler who made it easy to do those things to achieve victory. But what made it easy for us to bomb in Vietnam — and for that matter earlier in Korea — was the fact that these people were Orientals.

Finally, as a reporter, as part of the medium that is, after all, episodic in its approach to historical events, I confess to an inadequacy. The media did not bring to the attention of the American people early enough in this terrible tragedy the enormity of what America was doing.

America's Role Is Quite Defensible

GUENTER LEWY

A number of people, including Fred Downs, have talked about the importance of healing wounds. I agree.

But Fred's approach will not bring about this healing. I want to be frank. I admire Fred's charity in saying that those who opposed the war are entitled to their point of view. But I say to Fred, if you want to rehabilitate the Vietnam veterans' standing in American society, you and the other Vietnam veterans will have to help rehabilitate the cause which you served. That means you have to make common cause with the likes of me, and be quite clear where you stand and what your values are.

I don't want to be misunderstood. Anyone who has read my book knows that at least half of it is devoted to a condemnation of our military shortcomings. But what we must reject — you and I, Fred — is the charge of legal and moral guilt, in terms of both intent and conduct. The American role in Vietnam is quite defensible.

Vietnam Veterans Desperately Need Help

FREDERICK DOWNS, JR.
Assistant Director
Veterans Administration
in New Mexico
Author of The Killing Zone

Soldiers returning from war should receive a psychological debriefing to help them readjust to society. I once put a soldier on a helicopter in Vietnam an hour after he had killed

someone. Twenty-four hours later, he was in the United States. A few hours after that, he was home. But there was no gradual come-down. He just had to make it on his own. He had to hack it out. That man needed psychological debriefing, and he didn't get it.

Our society must be ready now to accept the Vietnam veterans. Some of them have not been able to adjust. They are going through a lot of problems. The money for the proposed Veterans Administration's resocialization program can be appropriated only by Congress. A lot of veterans still desperately need help.

An Unhealthy Privatism Has Emerged in the U.S.

HARRY S. ASHMORE
Center Associate

There has been a good deal of talk about privatism and about the American people, as a result, not being willing any longer to go to war, not allowing their sons to go, protesting taxes to support the military establishment, and all the rest. But I see no protest in America against the escalating cost of maintaining the present military establishment.

There *is* a turning away from any government demand which makes us uncomfortable — whether it be taxes, humanitarian reform, or the desegregation of the public-school systems in cities outside the South. The antibusing movement in Los Angeles, for example, is a rejection of responsibility to do anything that requires a sacrifice, including putting your own child on a bus. That is an unhealthy privatism, and it is linked to resistance to service in any kind of military capacity.

The Military Remains as Strong as Ever

CYNTHIA W. FREY

After three days of discussion here, I have concluded that those of us who were active in the antiwar movement were right when we despaired then because of the infinitely absorptive capacity of the American culture.

The American value consensus is much broader than those who refer to our "civil religion" might have us believe. Individual acts of civil disobedience really did not make much difference during the war because the American culture is so broad, so absorptive that it can tolerate almost anything. Even though the antiwar movement was very large and very disruptive, and even though there is a lot of guilt and a lot of chaos in American society now, still the essential value consensus remains. The military establishment remains pretty much as it was. There have been no major efforts to reduce it. The institution that waged the war — the military — is as strong as it was ten years ago.

The Ultimate Importance of Personal Conscience

BARTON J. BERNSTEIN

Several people have said that we do not have a consensus here on what constitutes the impact of Vietnam. I suspect if we were to persist for another day, or more, we still would have no consensus, and even civility might break down.

But I am not persuaded that civility is always the ally of intellectual discourse. I suspect that too often we allow the dictates of civility to suppress real differences. I would go so far as to argue that without civility we would have had a civil-rights crusade earlier in America. Without civility, American universities would have been compelled to be morally responsible earlier. Without civility, many of us would have opposed the war earlier. It is a dangerous liberal notion that communication is inevitably abetted by civility. Politeness often distorts.

Cynthia Frey, David Krieger, and others have stressed the ultimate importance of personal conscience. Dwight Macdonald wrote an essay in 1944, entitled "The Responsibility of Peoples." It was an attack upon the nation-state at war. Macdonald argued that in the end the only basis for morality was individual conscience. He said we should never allow ourselves to be depersonalized, that we should never be defined as persons by what the nation-state does. Macdonald held that often the only resolution of this tension between the person and the state is what he called negativism, but what twenty years later — in the nineteen-sixties — was called resistance. Macdonald said then that one of the great dangers of social science is that it does not simply explain things; it explains them in a way that suggests things necessarily are the way they are, that everything is predictable. The danger, of course, is that that erodes a sense of personal responsibility. People begin referring to themselves as tools. While social science has tried to liberate us from the notion of a simpleminded individual responsibility when we are in fact beset by institutional forces, it has sometimes been too successful. It has left individuals feeling they have no responsibility at all for their actions.

The Religious Context

A World of Broken Pieces

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No single narrative account quite captures the Vietnam experience. Nor is there any self-consistent reading of American history that can accommodate the experience, none so compelling and so confident that the chroniclers can say, "We could have told you so."

To call the Vietnam war a mistake is to capture something of the truth. But mistakes betoken strategy, program, planning, implementation to reach objectives, and it seems impossible to capture the sense of Vietnam in those terms alone. Vietnam is also a profound psychic disturbance.

It was a war. But those of us who remained at home sometimes believed that the military combat was secondary to the other arenas in which the conflict was being waged. As the war ground on, its purpose became less and less clear. Why were the soldiers fighting? What would it mean to win a war like this? Or lose it?

Some Americans viewed the Vietnam war as a kind of Christian morality play. But who was the victim? Who was the hero? What was the meaning of the sacrifice? Where could redemption be found?

Others, turning to Biblical motifs, linked the alleviation of oppression with the Exodus theme, and thus with freedom. We have done this before. We did it during the American Civil War. More recently, we did it in the civil-rights movement under Martin Luther King, Jr. *We shall overcome.* But in the case of Vietnam, who needed to be set free? Who were the oppressors? Who the oppressed? Where was the promised land?

Godfrey Hodgson has written that America has been both an enterprise and a frontier. But what was the enterprise in Vietnam? Where was the frontier?

In the absence of compelling ways of coming to terms with the event, we turned to private interpretations, most of which, I suspect, were derived from special interests. There were the interests of the military — in the Pentagon and on the scene. There were the interests of the Presidency, of the American people on the Left, and of those on the Right.

Vietnam stimulated profound soul-searching. But it did not give us the means to articulate the same. It was accompanied by a sense of corporate guilt, but that guilt, on the whole, still remains inarticulate and unspecified. We turn to the Vietnam veteran — perhaps a symbol of our shame — as an unwelcome reminder of our profound uncertainty, perhaps even as potential scapegoat of our wish to make amends. But the veteran says to us, "We are not your enemy, the enemy is the war."

In the aftermath of Vietnam, there has been a rise of privatism and the birth of small-is-beautiful. The former is illustrated in the photograph of the American soldier in Vietnam listening on his transistor radio to the Beatles' song, "Let It Be." The small-is-beautiful syndrome has less to do perhaps with our sense of diminished energy resources than it does with our awareness that we have reached limits of other kinds.

The American story, up to this point, cannot comprehend the new components of contemporary life. We have encountered too many elements that don't seem to fit into our story. The Asian and Third Worlds do not yield easily to American assimilation. And following Nagasaki and Hiroshima — with the prospect that human destruction may become total — warfare itself seems an affront to our deepest sensibilities.

Vietnam, therefore, is both event and symbol. We can trace some of the factors which led to its occurrence. But we are not sure whether those factors were causes or simply projections of our own psychic limits.

The war itself became the enemy. It quickly assumed monstrous proportions as well as the reality of the demonic. Appropriately, many of the portrayals by the Vietnam veterans are surrealistic. In psychoanalytic terms, it is as if the father has been killed, as if the realm of the superego has been shattered and in many cases eliminated. In the after-

math, we have turned to jingoists and mystics, to authoritarian religious teachers who prey upon the dark side of our psyches, upon what Erik Erikson calls the negative conscience. We have turned to easy answers, to simpleminded truths. I refer to the Jim Joneses and their like, a cultic phenomenon that continues to grow in our society.

I perceive Vietnam as a ritual. It was an event, a profound drama, a tragedy. But previous rituals in American history — even tragic events — have been accompanied by a myth, an explanatory story. In the Vietnam situation, the ritual becomes disconcerting, because it expresses the breaking of the American myth. What myth? The story of America's greatness, its largesse, its concern for others, the way it has exercised stewardship over the causes of freedom, human rights, the pursuit of happiness. The painful irony is that it was on behalf of this story that the leaders of our country sent troops to Vietnam in the first place.

Thus, Vietnam became the event by which the American story was shattered, as well as the event in which the broken story, the broken myth, is acted out. The result is an atomistic world, a world of broken pieces. We see the ramifications of that in the breakdowns of institutional structures in government, in education, in our corporate life, and in what has been happening to the American family.

The most difficult problem is that it is in this atomistic, fragmented world that the impact of Vietnam continues to be received and that our responses to that impact can, therefore, be enunciated in only disconnected and fragmented ways.

Destructiveness at Home

NICHOLAS PIEDISCALZI
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It is an error to view Vietnam as an isolated event or, worse still, as an aberration in our nation's history. If we are to make any sense out of Vietnam and its impact upon our national life, we must view it as an organic part of our ongoing history, indeed, as an organic part of Western history. Denis de Rougemont, in his work, *Love in the Western World,* traces Western man's devotion to war, to our culture's long-ago and unrecognized adoption of a Manichaean world view in which unrequited love, destruction, and death are ultimate values. Warfare in the West, according to Rougement, followed a pattern derived from this "romantic" world view up until World War I. Participation in warfare produced a sense of fulfillment and power. But, according to Rougement, World War I changed all that and, by extension, so did World War II, Korea, and Vietnam. Most soldiers returned feeling impotent. Fred Downs and Shad Meshad have told us in this meeting that Vietnam veterans feel that they were treated as tools in Vietnam. As a result, they experienced no sense of fulfillment, not to mention purpose. What they do experience is that profound sense of impotence described by Rougement.

With reference to American history, it is important to view Vietnam, in part, as did Erik Erikson in his 1973 Jefferson Lectures, published as *Dimensions of the New Identity*. Erikson holds that if the American Indian and the African were not so readily available to us, we would have had to invent them because of all the dimensions of our negative identity which we have had to repress in our forming of the character. Repressed elements of an identity often work themselves to the fore in neurotic, sometimes psychotic, behavior, and it is in this light that we must analyze our cruel treatment of the American Indian and the Africans, whom we made slaves, and their descendants. We adopted a similar stance toward those whom we label "Orientals." Much of our behavior in Vietnam must be seen in this light. We must deal openly and analytically with this negative dimension of our American identity.

The movie, *The Deer Hunter,* provides clues for understanding Vietnam as an organic part of our social history. I disagree with those who say that the film seeks to absolve us of our guilt. There is a great deal of social criticism in the film. Think of the way in which the bright wedding scenes are juxtaposed with the drab appearance of the town and the Pennsylvania mills, and the way in which the fiery furnaces of the mills are juxtaposed with fiery scenes in Vietnam. There is a link between the fiery furnaces of Pennsylvania and the fiery fields of Vietnam. There is a link between the way in which we have raped and desecrated the beautiful landscape of Pennsylvania and other parts of our nation and the way in which we defoliated Vietnam.

Whenever I walk through the neighborhood in which I grew up in Chicago, I am reminded of some of the battle-scarred towns of Normandy, through which I walked shortly after the Second World War. There is a link between the way in which we have destroyed whole sections of our major cities and the destruction we visited upon the cities and hamlets of

Vietnam. There is a correlation between what we do to our nation and ourselves and what we then do to other nations. We must accept responsibility for this destructiveness at the heart of our own life if we are ever to understand Vietnam and its impact upon our national and individual lives.

Civil Religion at Bay

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World War II was a watershed on religious attitudes. If you ask Christian churchgoers whether they believe in the divinity of Christ, whether they believe in the Trinity, whether they believe that God exists, seventy-five per cent of the people who were adults before World War II say they do believe in these standard articles of Christian belief.

In contrast, about seventy-five per cent of the people who became adults after World War II do not accept these particular items of orthodoxy. That is to say, the matter of orthodoxy in Christianity became a non-issue at about the time of World War II. Surveys five, ten, fifteen, twenty-five, and fifty years down the road will show, I think, that the Vietnam period will be a comparable watershed, reflecting another loss of faith — this time in American institutions.

Before Vietnam, there were signs of volatility. In 1958, church attendance peaked; it has gone downhill ever since. In 1958, the birthrate peaked; after that, people began having fewer children. By 1958, the civil-rights movement had formed. The decade of the nineteen-sixties started with optimism beyond compare. Then came Vietnam and the demolition of that optimism.

I must emphasize that when I talk about a drop in the birthrate, starting in 1958, I am not saying that all parents cut down by five per cent the number of children they had. I am saying that these decisions are being made by an age-specific cohort of people. When we talk about the decline in church attendance, we are not saying that everybody cuts his attendance by five or ten per cent. We are saying that everybody in a certain age cohort no longer goes to church, or even affiliates. In other words, what in statistical terms always appears to be a partial movement, is in fact a much greater movement among specfic cohorts of people.

The same for Vietnam. For people in a particular age cohort, that was a totally different experience from what it could ever have been for people much younger or much older than they. People in the age cohort specifically and personally affected by the Vietnam experience reacted intensely to events going on around them. One such reaction is that all religions became suspect to them. If all religions are suspect, then any religion becomes plausible. And so, one of the responses to Vietnam was an amazing bursting-forth of esoteric religious movements. The striking feature of those religious movements is that they tend to have not just a bizarre or offbeat theological doctrine, but that they include communalism and an emotional quality. The rediscovery of ethnicity is another response to Vietnam by this age cohort. But all of these movements downplay theology. In that sense they are anti-intellectual even as they are anti-establishment.

Those people who came of age in the late nineteen-fifties and on through the Vietnam war, have — as others here have noted — lost faith in the American civil religion, that religion which allows a person to be a good citizen and a good believer at the same time, a religion in which there is no contradiction between what one believes to be true about the transcendent realm and what one is encouraged to believe about one's nation or country. Civil religion was almost the last thing we were prepared to think about or question, until it was exposed by the events of Vietnam.

Emergence of Nihilism

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Through the Vietnam experience, we are witnessing and, indeed, participating in a dissolution of the synthesis of religious and political values that has characterized America. All great civilizations have such a synthesis, whereby that which is religious, or transcendent, is combined with, gives force to, transforms, and gives moral direction to the political order. Vietnam did not cause the dissolution of this synthesis, but it did bring it to the surface.

I view this dissolution with sadness. On the one hand, the American ideology supported a humanistic individualism. The self-sufficient individual is a heritage of the Enlightenment, but it is practically an axiom, an *a priori* assumption of every American.

On the other hand, what is intriguing is that this

individualistic value system was connected to a political commonwealth. We were not only individuals, we were also citizens. In religious terms, we sought private salvation and also the Kingdom of God on earth. These were not contradictory; somehow each would reinforce the other.

Now, through the Vietnam experience, we are beginning to lack confidence in the value and integrity of the commonwealth ideal. We lack confidence in government. We know the government lied. We always felt that while there might be some duplicity in government, still on the fundamental issues we all participated in the decision-making process. Now we know we were lied to, and that is carrying over to other things. Take the nuclear accident at Three Mile Island. We had been absolutely assured there was no danger. Then, when danger emerged, we were told we had misunderstood the authorities, that, of course, there is some danger, but that danger is part of life. If you fly in an airplane, you might crash. If you live near an atomic plant, there are risks.

But all of us now feel that some of us are being made sacrificial goats for the rest of us. That leads to a lack of confidence, a lack of faith, a lack of trust in our government. That is the disintegration of the commonwealth ideal.

I was impressed by the intelligence and organization of Guenter Lewy's material, but it was irrelevant. The issue is not whether the Vietnam war was waged according to some international standard of what a just war should be. I am quite ready to entertain the hypothesis that other wars may have been more unjust and that in many ways the American military in Vietnam conformed generally to international law. That doesn't matter. What matters is the devastated land, the deaths, the repugnance for war itself. The Vietnam experience brought all that to a head. Values have a deep emotional layer. If you witness an atrocity like an ax murder you don't want someone to try to mitigate that with a detailed explanation of why it really is not as bad as it seems. You are appalled. That is what happened to many Americans because of Vietnam. . . .

We are falling back, more and more, on the individualistic norm. That can reflect personal integrity, but perhaps more often it means a hedonistic and narcissistic repudiation of all values. We are seeing the emergence of a nihilism which is leading to the dissolution of all values. That may have been going on before Vietnam, but we still treasured the American ideal of God and country. Now that is disappearing. So we fall back on ethnic values and familial kinship systems. If those go, then, of course, we fall back on the individual himself. But who or what is the individual? A nihilistic nothing? Or a source of new values?

There have recently been two interesting movies on the Vietnam experience: *Who Will Stop the Rain?* and *The Deer Hunter*. *Who Will Stop the Rain?* used the metaphor of heroin. The hero, a Vietnam soldier about to return to the States, becomes obsessed with a sense of nihilism. He had heard that the government had ordered the soldiers to strafe elephants because of their transportation value. It suddenly came to him that a world in which one must strafe elephants is a world without meaning. He then decides to become a heroin carrier, a symbol of the loss and dissolution of values.

The Deer Hunter has an even more powerful metaphor — Russian roulette. Life is reduced to that level, and there seems to be no way out. It is significant that in the first hour of *The Deer Hunter*, the stress is on an ethnic community. That is to say if there is any value left, it is in ethnic values. But what you do not see in the film is anything of the political order, the American values that transcend the ethnic or melting-pot idea. You are reduced to either ethnic values or the nihilism of Russian roulette.

Vietnam has caused us to lose confidence in the integrity of our way of life. It is hard to predict the future. We may proceed further into nihilism. We do see many evidences of the growth of individualistic religion, religion that no longer connects with the political order, but simply seeks to give the individual private salvation. For many this has become a source of meaning.

On the other hand, there could be a renaissance of the commonwealth or kingdom ideal. One of the things I have lost in recent years is my belief in irresistible trends. I no longer believe that we are necessarily moving toward either utopia or the final holocaust. Things can be reversed. The people in the Renaissance complained of nihilism. Martin Luther could not imagine the world becoming more corrupt than it was during his day. Luther expected the end of the world in a few years. But there are always reversals, new opportunities.

Vietnam was the symptom of a crisis. In a crisis, the patient may die, but he may return to health. It is not yet clear how this crisis will end. □