

Foreign Policy and the American Mind

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It is only too clear that behind the tactical and strategical problems of our relations with the rest of the world—not to emphasize the occasional humiliations—lie some major difficulties of perspective. They are most plainly political difficulties, but, as the authors of *The New Politics: America and the End of the Postwar World* suggest, they are also moral, rooted in our growing tendency to identify political matters with a transcendent moralism. As Edmund Stillman and William Pfaff put it: “Everywhere diplomacy suffers from the degradation of language and the parallel failure to sense the reasonable limits of political action.”

The authors are right, of course, but one might ask how likely any government is to sense the limits of politics in foreign matters when its modern history reveals a constantly diminishing sense of these limits in domestic affairs. There is also the fact that the only diplomacy of limits we have any real knowledge of is the classical diplomacy of the 18th and 19th centuries. This was the diplomacy of professionals operating in a finite world, not a Faustian world of boundless ideological aspiration. Totalitarianism may have applied the *coup de grâce* to classical diplomacy, but it had been made moribund by democratic insistence upon open covenants and popular participation. I join Stillman and Pfaff in wishing for a return to the objectivity, the empiricism, the patience, and the sense of limits that classical diplomacy had, but it is an open question whether American foreign policy today can be kept any freer of ideological aspiration than has domestic politics.

It is a truth often uttered that war is an extension of foreign policy. In our day, unhappily, foreign policy is an extension of war, and it shares deeply in the modern character

of war. The clear tendency of modern wars is to become ever more "popular," ever more closely identified with widespread moral and political aspirations: freedom, democracy, rights, and social justice. What is true of war is true of cold war—an accepted way, be it noted, of referring to world diplomacy since 1946. Being an extension of war, rather than a pragmatic search for a limited balance of power, it can hardly help but take on some of the moralistic and absolutist attributes of modern warfare.

There is also our taste for the metaphysics of history. It is bad enough in foreign policy to confuse strategy and tactics; it is ruinous to confuse either with essence and eternity. Despite a frequently proclaimed American pragmatism, despite our scorn for Marxian dialectics and other secular substitutes for religion, we have, as Tocqueville noted, a proneness ourselves to general ideas. And of all general ideas, Progress is the one with deepest roots in the American mind: Progress conceived as unalterable destiny with our own civilization as the essence. Just as we have often subordinated our domestic planning and legislation to an imagined track of national progress, so do many of us today subordinate foreign policy to a world view that has the development of American culture as its model. The American dream becomes a cosmic principle.

What else but transcendent moralism lies behind what George Kennan, in *Russia and the West under Lenin and Stalin*, calls egocentric and embattled democracy: "It [democracy] soon becomes a victim of its own war propaganda. It then tends to attach to its own cause an absolute value which distorts its own vision on everything else. *Its* enemy becomes the embodiment of all evil. *Its* own side, on the other hand, is the center of all virtue. The contest comes to be viewed as having a final, apocalyptic quality. If *we* lose, all is lost; life will no longer be worth living; there will be nothing to be salvaged. If *we* win, then everything will be possible; all problems will become soluble. . . ."

In this way we carry our absolutist conception of history, our sense of destiny, into war and peacemaking. The enemy—

whether German or Russian or, almost comically, Cuban—becomes not merely the ready scapegoat for all ordinary dislikes and frustrations; he becomes the symbol of total evil which the forces of good must mobilize to destroy completely.

Stillman and Pfaff call for a new politics, one that will be pluralist, pragmatic, and finite. Like Mr. Kennan (and John A. Lukacs, whom I shall also cite in this article), they have a profound sense of the variety and complexity of the political world abroad (in William James's usage, they are tough-minded, not tender-minded) and of the peril and tragedy that lurk in efforts to reduce complex reality to schemes that are as oversimplified in intellectual terms as they are religious in moral fervor.

More specifically, what *The New Politics* is concerned with is the falsity and harm of the bi-polar view of the world that has characterized our foreign policy since about 1946. From this bi-polar view has come an ethnocentric classification of other nations, especially the new ones, into either an American or Russian sphere, with the grudging label "uncommitted" reserved for those that cannot be proved guilty. As a purely taxonomic device, this one would be perhaps no worse than most simple classifications if it were not for the fact that in following it we endow Russia with a strength in allies that it simply does not have. The point is, as Stillman and Pfaff repeatedly emphasize, there is *self-commitment*. And in the self-commitment of the new nations there is written a pluralism on the international landscape that is, if we would but recognize it, a kind of strength for the United States greater than arms and propaganda.

What happened in Yugoslavia might have given us a clue to the coming shape of things. Tito's defection made plain that national antagonisms are as possible within a common Communist orientation as they are within a generally democratic-capitalist civilization. The trouble is, we had, like the Marxists themselves, swallowed whole the myth that under Communism there can be no national hostilities. And having swallowed it, we look almost compulsively for Soviet control whenever a

new form of militant collectivism comes into existence. Does a revolution break out today in the Middle East? It must be Russian inspired even as was yesterday's in Africa or Cuba. Does a new government accept financial aid from Russia, even as Russia accepted it from the United States in earlier years? It must be Russian dominated.

For a while, we were in danger of making the same mistake about Communist China in its relation to Russia that we made about Yugoslavia, and only now are a few observers beginning to recognize that beneath the ideological top dressing, there lie fissures, the result of centuries of geopolitical conflict. To be sure, there are millions in this country who will not see the fissures, who will not wish to see them, and who will, at the lunatic edges, treat them, as they have the Russian-Yugoslav break, as but camouflage, covering conspiracy that is directed step by step in the Kremlin.

This is the reasoning that triumphantly concludes that "everywhere" Russian Communism advances in the world, never repelled, whether in Southeast Asia, the Middle East, or Latin America. Stillman and Pfaff deal with this in impressive detail and conclude: "While Russia remains a dangerous opponent, the blunt truth is that, for all its noisy threats, it has made no demonstrable inroads on the world in a decade." John A. Lukacs makes the same point in his wise and learned *A History of the Cold War* and reminds us that we are dealing here with a habit of mind that in 1931 foresaw Communist Germany or even a socialist America.

Nor is it essentially different today. Nasser, whom we once accused of subjection to Russia, is today putting Communists in prison by the hundreds; General Kassem, who did not shrink from alliance with Communists in his own struggle for power in Iraq, is now dealing with them in equally harsh terms. And in the tiny state of Kerala in India, the 1957 election of a Communist government has already been undone; in part by firm action by the President of India but also by an increasingly anti-Communist Congress party. As Stillman and Pfaff write: "The sympathy which the Communists commanded when they took office was squandered because the

Communists had inevitably behaved like Communists.”

The truth is, Russia's aggrandizement has been confined to those areas where Soviet troops entered or where the threat of such entry was clear and unpreventable. Stated another way, it has been limited to those areas which have been for centuries within the orbit of the Russian nation. Communism itself, Lukacs writes, “remains unpopular, shunned, even despised throughout the Eastern European sphere of forcibly Communized nations.” Despite a popular conviction that Communist subjugation means national brainwashing that robs men of the will to freedom, events since 1956 have proved that religious, racial, and national ideals do not collapse under the pressure of Communist dogma. How much more true this is likely to be of the nations, races, and tribes of Asia and Africa. In Africa we are learning—to some rationalist dismay—that skin color is mightier than the word and that blackness, not Marxism, is the motive power of a great deal of the attack on the West, an attack that will as easily envelop socialism as capitalism, for both doctrines are products of the West. The appeal of Russian Communism, it should never be forgotten, rests a great deal less on the dogmas derived from Marx that are exhumed in Russia on festival days than it does on the fascinating spectacle of a nation that came into being as the result of quick seizure of power and has maintained itself through the constant reinforcement of that power for nearly half a century.

As more than a few disillusioned visitors to the new states in Africa, Asia, and the Middle East are reporting, it is not the gospel of abundance for the masses, much less popular liberties, that inspires many of the new rulers; it is the vision of power. And it is the Russian structure of power, not whatever may exist of Russian socialism, that magnetically attracts attention. What else but power in massive doses can quickly weld a people divided racially, ethnically, and religiously; can make possible the “big leap” that alone holds promise of resolving the vicious circle of high population increase and low supplies of capital; and attract a proper degree of world

attention? Since it is power, not freedom, that the intellectuals are largely interested in, it is, correspondingly, Russia, Yugoslavia, and, increasingly, Egypt, rather than the U. S. that they are prone to look to for inspiration and ideas.

Some American liberals have sneered at our holding before the new nations the picture of American free private enterprise as a model. I do not say they are wrong in their attitude. Given the conditions of population and poverty that exist, as well as the almost total absence of the institutions and values that a system of free private enterprise requires for its successful operation, the prescription might as well be Coca-Cola. But I find it equally preposterous to assume that what the same liberals generally propose—massive injections of goods and capital, social democracy with civil liberties, a kind of Rooseveltian New Deal—is of any greater relevance, given the same conditions and the deep compulsion to absolute power that exists, and probably must exist, in most of the new states. I wish all such persons—and also Stillman and Pfaff who have some Rostovian words in one short section on the value of “massive injections” of capital in a few nations of the world now at “take off”—would read the brilliant attack that Irving Kristol made in the *Yale Review* (June, 1957) on this whole attitude.

Since Cuba is the most recent of the revolutionary new states, it is worth brief special attention. Cuba has about as much relation to a genuinely ideological country as a mob scene has to an army maneuver. The style of Cuba, Stillman and Pfaff correctly write, is “the style of hysteria.” Lacking realizable economic and political programs, insecure and constantly threatened by counter-revolution, Cuba, like most other revolutionary new states, is and undoubtedly will remain non-ideological. “The claimed ideologies are patches and tatters of Socialist technique, Marxist revolutionary cant, and Western progressivism.” Until and unless Russia does seek to locate a missile or submarine base in Cuba, we but demean ourselves and inflate Castro by the attention we have chosen to give the whole matter. I agree completely with Lukacs’s observation that were Hitler’s Germany today the

chief anti-American force in the world, instead of Khrushchev's Russia, Castro's nationalism would be pro-German and pro-fascist rather than pro-Russian and pro-Communist.

As to the probabilities of outright and serious Russian envelopment of Cuba, two points must be kept in mind. There is first the demonstrably repellent character that Russian Communism seems to have, at close hand, for the new nations. The examples of Iraq, Egypt, and even the Congo would suggest that nationalism or tribalism in heat does not suffer gladly the doctrinal rigidities of the imported Russian bureaucrats. Native intellectuals may dream, a few of them, of Rubashov; what they tend to get is Gletkin.

But more important is the sheer difficulty from the Russian point of view of directing and being responsible for outposts in the distant reaches of the world. Hungary in its relation to Russia is one thing. Cuba, several thousand miles away from the borders of Russia, is something else. Nations with as many commitments as Russia already has are not likely to wish to incur responsibilities they have not the military ability to enforce. Some wise words from George Kennan are much to the point here: "Many Americans seem unable to recognize . . . the difficulty of trying to exert power from any given national center, over areas greatly remote from that center. There are, believe me, limits to the effective radius of political power from any center in the world." Suspension of disbelief is, however, an easy operation for most of us. The conspiracy theory is, of all philosophies of history, the one with the greatest appeal for a certain type of mind. Subtleties, powers, and insights that a child would hesitate to ascribe to Superman are granted readily to a flesh and blood enemy. Millions of Americans have no difficulty in believing in the existence of a single diabolical web of authority and belief, spun daily in the Kremlin, that reaches out to include hundreds of millions of individuals of diverse nationality, race, and religion. It is this kind of morbid, cataleptic thinking that complicates the formation of our foreign policy.

In practical terms, the bi-polar view of the world has led us to the policy of containment on a worldwide basis. As a tem-

porary and strictly limited strategy, containment made sense in the period immediately after the war when Europe lay devastated and when victory-intoxicated Soviet Russia was a clear and present danger to Western Europe. As Lukacs puts it: "The original purpose of containment—at least in Kennan's concept—was to build up Western Europe and commit the United States in her defense so that after a while Russia's rulers would see how their aggressive behavior was leading them nowhere. Thereafter the growth of a gracefully prosperous Europe would modify the unnatural division of the continent into Russian and American military spheres, so that ultimately a mutual reduction of the more extreme Russian and American commitments and of some of their most advanced outposts could follow." These were, as Kennan advanced them in his classic article in *Foreign Affairs* in 1947, shrewd speculations; behind them lay not merely some solid geopolitical realities but the historic cultural and intellectual affinity of the U. S. with Western Europe.

What happened after 1950, however, and largely as the result of Secretary Dulles's labors, was the expansion of a limited concept into one that literally enveloped the world, committing us to political and military problems of staggering magnitude. As Stillman and Pfaff write, "An American enterprise—begun to contest the aggressive expansion of another state—had grotesquely grown into what we envisaged as a struggle for the world itself." What followed, however, was not the marching of Soviet armies but the infinitely varied and complex eruptions of fanatic nationalism and guerilla warfare that containment had as little chance of coping with as the Maginot line had with the German Panzer divisions in 1940. The sad fact is that in a situation like that presently posed by Laos, containment is simply irrelevant, and, like all irrelevancies in a crisis, dangerous.

Containment on a worldwide scale had but one possible chance of success: the unique possession by the United States of a super-weapon so destructive that the mere threat of "massive retaliation" would suffice to support the policy.

But today we do not have unique possession of any known super-weapon, and nuclear threats, except at the last extreme, are unimaginable.

Beyond this, I think we must agree with Lukacs that containment on a world scale has done as much, if not more, to change the character of the United States itself as did the entire Second World War. Here is a point that cannot be sufficiently emphasized. In financial and personnel terms, the change has been staggering. Lukacs notes that between 1948 (itself a crisis year—the Berlin Blockade) and 1958, a decade in which the Russians *did not conquer a single square mile* of new territory, the military budget went from \$14 billion to \$45 billion, almost two-thirds of the entire budget. At home the federal bureaucracy grew from about 3.3 million employees in 1948 to nearly 5 million by 1958 (not including the employees of the FBI, the CIA, and the vast but not easily measurable increase in the persons indirectly employed by the government). The staff of the State Department, consisting of less than 8,000 people in 1948, multiplied fivefold, and this does not include the 14,000 employed by the United States Information Service.

We have every reason, alas, to be sure that even these fantastic increases are insufficient, for now we have in office, as the Democrats have made all too plain, a government dedicated to repair of the condition created by the “penny-pinching, budget-obsessed Republicans.”

There are also some grave social consequences of containment, and these too I summarize largely from Lukacs: a tremendous increase in bureaucracy and its powers and responsibilities; a proportionate increase in federal investigative and intelligence agencies; hundreds of American military colonies from Spain to Asia, whose members, like the Romans of the 1st century C.E., are learning to experience the corruptive delights of home-style accommodations abroad; an enormous public machine pressing billions of dollars of gifts upon people in five continents with sometimes dismaying consequences; thousands of American businesses organized

frankly for the first time in history upon the expectation of permanent "defense" requirements, making mockery of the free private enterprise most of their owners ritualize, and washing almost completely away the line between public and private, military and civil; finally, and perhaps in the long run most tragically, the unabashed feeding by America's greatest universities and colleges in the trough of "research" and "defense" funds, the while arguing solemnly that academic freedom must be maintained at all costs. The question, in short, is not simply: Can the rest of the world endure American containment around the globe? It is also: Can America itself endure containment without losing completely its political and cultural character?—a question that preoccupied President Eisenhower as he left office.

Actually, as Stillman and Pfaff point out to us, containment cannot really be justified any longer even in military terms. In the same way that gunpowder helped to dislocate the pattern of feudal society by separating war from the traditional sources of military power, so nuclear technology has had a fateful influence upon the balance of power in the mid-20th century. The authors quote a prescient remark of Raymond Aron in 1956: "The atom bomb, developed at a moment when two states were overwhelmingly more powerful than all others, has reinforced the bi-polar structure of the diplomatic field. On the other hand, once the bomb is at the disposal of every state, it will contribute to the dissolution of the structure." Aron's prophecy is indeed being realized. Few would take issue with Denis Healey's statement in the May, 1961, issue of *Commentary* that not fewer than thirty countries are capable of producing atomic weapons during the next ten years if they choose. And, let us make no mistake, many of them will choose. Membership in the nuclear club has both status and power values, each being more compelling in the contemporary world than economic values. In short, we have to look forward to a pluralism of nuclear technology as well as to a pluralism of politics.

To withdraw from containment is not, however, an easy matter, and Stillman and Pfaff do no more than hint at its

true complexity. "A new American policy," they write, "would look toward the closing down of our overseas bases as rapidly as strict military interest permits. It would then review our alliances for their true political meaning." But does "true political meaning" here denote simply power and ultimate defensibility, or does it take also into account some of the moral commitments which have by now assumed profound symbolic value in the free world? At what point does withdrawal from a foreign base invite charges of appeasement that may be crippling to the government in power and, worse, to a long-term strategy? Happily, apart from Formosa, there are no commitments in Southeast Asia or the Middle East that have the symbolic overtones of Berlin, but the recent emotionalism over Laos and South Vietnam suggests that the "spirit of Berlin" may overnight envelop another outpost, making real strategy impossible. We know what the response has been when such unchallengeably dedicated and informed minds as Churchill, Field Marshal Montgomery, and George Kennan, among others, have suggested disengagement, in one degree or another, from the position we inherited in Berlin.

At the bottom of the whole matter is, of course, the picture we hold of the present character of Russia. Is the Kremlin to be seen fundamentally as the militant Holy City of world Communism, the source of all Communist dogma and doctrine, bent, as were the followers of Mohammed a thousand years ago, upon the forcible conversion of the infidel, and basically more interested in the world at large than in what lies within Russian borders? Or, in extreme opposition, is Russia to be seen as a powerful military collectivism, Communist in ideology, nationalist to the core, deeply suspicious of the West, but interested first, last, and always in her own security?

Those who hold the first conception have no difficulty in citing chapter and verse from writings of Lenin to buttress their case, even occasional utterances of Khrushchev himself at world gatherings of Communist party representatives. And there is the undeniable fact that the present leadership of

Russia has a deep, almost religious faith in the eventual triumph of Communism as a way of life everywhere in the world. The issue between the two conceptions is complicated by the fact that Russia works constantly through agents abroad. The question, however, remains: Are the Russian agents more like 17th-century Jesuits, primarily abroad to advance an ecumenical creed, and only incidentally to harass a specific government (and its Western supporters), or are they more like the agents that governments have immemorially sent abroad, concerned above all else with guarding and advancing the political interests of the nation they work for?

There are some, no doubt, who would say that the distinction is without a difference. But I cannot agree. I think that from the American (and Western) point of view the difference between the two conceptions is huge and the very cornerstone of the kind of foreign policy and national defense we build up. In dollar cost, it is the difference between feasible national budgets and budgets that, at present rate of increase, will in time destroy utterly the economic base of what we like to call the American Way. (May I observe in passing that this includes my community's symphony and opera groups as well as tail fins and Las Vegas?)

Those of the right who say that we can afford the financial costs of a military attack upon Communism wherever it rears its head in the world, provided only that we reduce expenditures for education and social security, are either fools or knaves. Those from the left who say that it is all simply a matter of rate of economic growth and central planning are either fools or collectivists. In human terms, to suppose that the United States can long maintain a political and military machine of containment dimensions without destroying the localism, pluralism, and free enterprise in all spheres that are the true basis of American freedom and creativity, is to suppose utter fantasy. The affinity between militarism and socialist collectivism is, and has been throughout history, a close one. Far closer, let me emphasize, than the affinity between collectivism and, say, the speeches and writings of socialist propagandists.

If we would see Russia in her true might, we must not see her as the Russia of Trotsky's dream—a vanguard whose only real justification for being lies in her role in the spread of international Communism—but the Russia forged by Stalin: Stalin the psychopathically xenophobic peasant, cunning, cruel beyond belief, but actuated basically by motives more nearly those of Peter the Great than those of the internationalist intellectuals whom Stalin came to hate and eventually kill off. For Stalin the goal was socialism, but it was socialism within the historic limits and aspirations of the Russian nation. As Lukacs points out, we might have drawn more clues to the real meaning of Stalin's behavior by reading “Herberstein rather than Marx, Custine rather than Lenin—just as the age-old Chinese pattern appears so much better from the actual history of such things as the Taiping Rebellion than from the dreary theoretical texts of Mao.”

I think it is nationalism above all other forces—technology and socialism included—that has given the essential cast to events and changes of the 20th century. Nationalism has been the shaping force of the socialisms as well as the capitalisms and the democracies of the age, and we may perhaps modify the old aphorism to say that there is more similarity between two nationalisms one of which is socialist than there is between two socialisms one of which is nationalist. National socialism, united with military collectivism, this is the present reality, not the primitive, apostolic socialism that the 19th century envisaged and that cranks of right and left still look for in Russia.

None of this means that Russian leaders are either ideologically or militarily uninterested in developments in Asia, Africa, and Latin America. Like all True Believers, Russian leaders assume that in the distant future other forms of society will be buried in the dustbin of history. Such burial, however, will be the consequence not of a great military Armageddon but of indigenous social and economic factors, occasionally aided by Russian measures when these suit national strategy, but operating basically in the same fashion that human evolution

itself operates. I quote Mr. Kennan again: "Central to the Soviet view of how socialism was to triumph on a world scale has always been the operation of social and political disorganization within the capitalist countries; and, while Moscow has always recognized that civil violence would have a legitimate place in the operation of these processes—while it has not hesitated in certain instances to promote or even to organize such civil violence; while it has even considered, in fact, that the use of the Soviet armies in a subsidiary capacity might be justified at one point or another as a means of hastening or completing an otherwise inevitable process—it has never regarded action by its own forces as the *main* agency for the spread of world revolution."

There is, I concede, a danger here that in our critical reaction to a demonology we may end up underrating the enemy as he exists in fact. This would be unfortunate, for the evidence shows that with the very recession, over a forty-year period, of the dedicated and evangelical messianism that was the Soviets' first inheritance from 19th-century socialism, there has developed the most powerful nation, excepting only the United States, in all history. It is a formidable nation, unscrupulous, ruthless, and despotic. But it is a nation, and we had better react accordingly.

Stillman and Pfaff remind us, in a striking chapter on Russia, that it has always been the fate of new ideologized societies to suffer "a tension between universalist claims and the circumstances of their birth. For revolution, myth to the contrary, is seldom the sign of the decay of a society, but only of the decay of a ruling class." This was true of the early Islamic state, and it was equally true of Jacobin France. As a result of this tension, "the messianic claims conflict more and more markedly with the selfish demands of the society itself."

And the "ultimate fate of the ideology—which tends to be 'bigger,' more exalted, than the mundane behavior of the state which gave the ideology birth—is to cut loose from the ties of national interest and to take on a life of its own. And freed from the society of its origin, the ideology tends to galvanize neighboring societies. These take over elements

associated with the revolution, but use these innovations for national purposes of their own." Thus the European nationalism that was the heritage of the French Revolution and the consequent and fateful unification of Italy and Germany; thus, today, the spectacle of Yugoslavia and Albania, and beyond any doubt, China tomorrow.

There are also the effects of rising economic abundance in Russia. Militance and purity of religious faith thrive best in conditions of poverty, as the experience of every successful religious order in history has suggested. The slow drip of economic abundance has taken and will continue to take its toll from remaining Soviet messianism. The Russian as consumer begins to come forward hand in hand with the Russian as organization man to supplant the Russian of primitive and poverty-sworn evangelical zeal. Passion, which is as necessary to messianism as it is to lust, is difficult to sustain in circumstances of bureaucracy when every gleam of inspiration calls for an original and eight copies and a chain of command more like Westinghouse than a revolutionary band. There is also boredom (one of the most neglected forces in social history); the kind of boredom that can produce alienation in the young from Soviet scripture and morality as easily as it does from our own.

All of this does not mean either a growingly unstable Russia or a growingly democratic Russia. Philip Mosely's important article in *Foreign Affairs* (April, 1961) makes clear that the changing style of Russia—evidenced in civil and political, as well as economic ways—has, if anything, strengthened the stability of Russia and removed many of the tensions between ruler and ruled that were spreading cancerously in Stalin's final years. The pressure for political conformity is as great as ever, but the style is immeasurably different from what it was under Stalin, and style—as every boxer knows—is crucial.

We have to agree with Mr. Kennan that "despite the angularities of Mr. Khrushchev's personality" there are some deep and, for us, encouraging differences between the Russia of

Stalin and that of Khrushchev. "The relaxation of the Iron Curtain has, to date, remained within modest limits. It obviously encounters deep inhibitions in the neo-Stalinist echelons of the regime. But I think it has gone so far that it would not be easy to bottle up again the intellectual and cultural life of this talented people as it was bottled up under Stalin."

As Russia is different today from what it was in 1946, so is the world. I do not say it is less dangerous; it may even be more dangerous. But it is different, and we had better deal with it in ways appropriate to politics and military force, not religion and moral conversion. At this writing, Outer Mongolia, and our possible recognition of it, has come to the fore. Will this be dealt with as a problem in political strategy, one to be resolved in light of its possible strengthening or weakening of our strategic position in relation to China and Russia, or will it instead be decided in light of passions generated by our moral dislike of Communism? If the latter, we will risk loss once again of strategic strength for the luxury of self-righteousness.

When I am told that Russia—or China—is dangerous to the United States and to the free world, I can understand this and agree. When it is suggested that the United States should suspend nuclear testing, as an example to the rest of the world, I can understand this and emphatically disagree. But when I am told that the real danger to the United States is something called "world Communism" and that our foreign policy must begin with a "true understanding" of the moral nature of Communism and not rest until Communism has been stamped out everywhere, I am lost. Meaning has fled into a morass of irrelevancies, half-truths, and apocalyptic symbols.

Is "world Communism" the specific linkage of ideas and agents that flows from Soviet Russia, in competition not only with the United States and the West, but also, increasingly, with Yugoslavia, China, Albania, and a host of other nations—collectivist, Communist to be sure, but, in all probability, no more closely identified with Russia than capitalist England was with capitalist Germany in 1900? Or is "world Com-

munism” simply a term of aggregation, referring to the disparate collectivisms and national socialisms of Asia, Africa, the Middle East, and, no doubt increasingly, Latin America? If it is this—and it is the nearest I can come to a referent for the term—then it is a little like referring to “world nationalism” or “world industrialism.”

Writing as one who dislikes even mild forms of socialism, I can understand readily that Communism, wherever it is, and however isolated it may be, is an evil. But I do not know what this fact has to do with measures that can feasibly be taken by a national foreign policy and defense structure. I see measures that can meaningfully and feasibly be taken with respect to Russia, or to any other hostile and dangerous national socialism in the world, but I can no more imagine a foreign policy directed toward the destruction of “world Communism” than I can one directed toward world paganism. In an article in the *Yale Review* (Autumn, 1956), Louis Halle has made a useful distinction between two types of mind, the strategist and the ideologist: between those for whom foreign policy is a matter of appropriate and due protection of national interest, and those for whom it is a means of advancement of, or destruction of, moral causes. He rightly suggests that the rising ideological passion of sections of our people both on the left and on the right has constituted the prime political dilemma of administrations in Washington since 1949, causing a dangerous separation between government and people, and confronting the President with the unhappy choice of pursuing policies that, in his view, the national interest requires, or pursuing popular policies. Today he must confront particularly the ideologist of the right who invests each new foreign issue with intimations of Armageddon, who sees in the world around us not strategic problems posed by a dangerous military nationalism but, rather, ethical and metaphysical problems posed by an absolute Evil.

None of this means that we must turn away from moral principle, adopting an opportunistic strategy based solely upon power. I do not believe the American people could do

this if they wanted to. Historically, there is too deep a strain of moral principle in our national make-up. But morality is a different thing from moralism, and it is a vastly different thing from that ontology which makes us see American political life as the image of universal Good, and our foreign policy as a kind of avenging sword for the destruction of the infidel.

This, Stillman and Pfaff wisely write, is the new *hubris*, the debasement of politics and the secularization of religion: "To wise men the difference between the area of practical action, the attainable, and the informing body of principles to which we privately adhere is a datum. This is not hypocrisy: politics, in this view, is not the art of the salvation of the soul; the element of hypocrisy enters when we deny the distinction between guiding principle and deed."

About the Author

Robert A. Nisbet, noted historian and sociologist, was born and raised in California and pursued both undergraduate and graduate studies at the University of California during the 1930s. After thirty-five years of teaching, research, and administration at the Berkeley and Riverside campuses, he concluded his academic career at Columbia University from 1974 to 1978. Currently, he is Albert Schweitzer Professor Emeritus at Columbia and Resident Scholar at the American Enterprise Institute for Public Policy Research.

In addition to his many articles that have appeared in scholarly journals and anthologies, Professor Nisbet has authored or coauthored over a dozen books, beginning with *The Quest for Community* published by Oxford University Press in 1953. Among his more recent works are *Social Change and History* (1969), *Twilight of Authority* (1975), and *Sociology as an Art Form* (1976).

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