As a public service,

THE LAUCKS FOUNDATION—

from time to time calls attention to published material that might contribute toward clarification or understanding of issues affecting world peace.

The accompanying reprints constitute Mailing No. 37.

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President
Post Office Box 5012
Santa Barbara, CA., 93108

June 21, 1982

The Nation

April 17, 1982

Izzy Says...

An obscure voice from the Falkland Islands strikes a note of sanity for a larger world growing more frenzied. A carpenter (what an echo of forgotten Gospel!) in the main town of the islands, Stanley, tells *The Times* of London as the British fleet advances: "If they try to take Stanley they will destroy Stanley. Everything is made of wood here. Half a dozen fires and a good wind and the town will be gone forever."

The same day, half a world to the north, Secretary Haig in a full-dress declaration of policy says the United States will neither accept a nuclear freeze nor forswear first use of nuclear weapons—because it must protect "the essential values of Western civilization."

The planet is as fragile as tiny Stanley. How do you protect civilization by threatening to set a match to it? How do you preserve its values by such loose and brutal talk from a hysteric who was all set for Armageddon many months ago essentially to preserve brutal oligarchies over peasant serfs in the backwoods of Central America?

How preserve peace in a volatile and unsteady thermonuclear age when statesmen act as if they were wearing leopard skins and brandishing spears, dancing themselves into a fury against those barbarous and benighted savages over the next hill?

Must we suffer voodoo statecraft as well as voodoo economics?

I. F. STONE

"There was poorly disguised glee in France when Argentina used French air-to-sea missiles so effectively against British ships off the Falklands. The American press reflected the official Pentagon reaction by openly gloating about the relative effectiveness of our equipment in Israeli hands as opposed to Soviet equipment in Syrian hands. It's wonderful to have a tidy little war in which to test your newest military toys. The only people who suffer are the natives, and they are far away, foreign, unimportant. Which is immoral nonsense as well as extraordinarily dangerous."

—Hodding Carter III

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL, THURSDAY, JUNE 17, 1982

Argentina: The Admirals' Bid for Glory

Tom Kelly

As Her Majesty's fleet steams out of Portsmouth for the South Atlantic, there is an almost irresistible tendency to regard the Falklands/Malvinas crisis as a throwback to the 19th century. Images arise of doughty British admirals in funny hats and their fiercely mustachioed Latin counterparts. But the body count is already too high to permit such atavisms to linger.

The dead in the Falklands/Malvinas war are really dead. It is a real war, fought for real motives, not a bizarre sporting event.

While the British are intent to discourage others from picking off the rag-tag ends of their Empire, in this case the property, human and otherwise, of the semi-feudal Falkland Islands Company, the motives are mostly on the Argentine side. Argentina has claimed the islands for more than 150 years without feeling the need to seize them militarily. Much has been said about the likely presence of oil in large quantities under the sea around the islands. Doubtless Argentina would like to own that oil. But Argentina is neither capable nor desirous of developing that oil itself; nor is the international oil community likely to put up hard cash for rights whose title is based purely on force —and subject to future challenge.

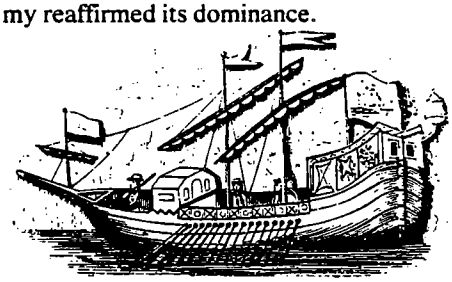
It has also been suggested that the attack on the Falklands/Malvinas is a typical attempt by an economically floundering dictatorship to distract the attention of its own people from domestic disasters. There is no question that the Argentine economy is a disaster. Inflation has run at over 100 percent per year ever since the military seized power in 1976. Industrial production, once the greatest and most advanced in Latin American, has collapsed—and this in the country with the most highly organized labor force on the continent, one that has massively demonstrated its opposition to the junta as recently as March 30. It would thus be difficult to conceive of a distraction sufficiently spectacular to erase such a reality, and the bloody repression necessary to sustain it, from the consciousness of Argentines.

The inner workings of power relationships within the Argentine military may provide firmer ground for understanding the operation launched on April 1. The first point to note is that it is a Navy (including Marines) show. As in many countries, the Argentine Navy is the most aristocratic of the armed forces, with blood ties to the great landholding families of the local *ancien regime*. But that traditional power bloc has been surpassed in Argentina's socio-economic development by the currently dominant financial-industrial-landholding oligarchy dedicated to "modernization." In addition, the Navy has had to accept a secondary role within military politics, dominated by the much larger and more powerful Argentine Army. This leaves the Navy ahead of the small and politically bizarre (mainly neo-fascist in its upper echelons) Air Force, but that is not much consolation for politically ambitious admirals.

The Argentine military dictatorship, established March 24, 1976, operates as follows: a junta composed of the chiefs of the three armed forces decides fundamental policy. As the three approach their pre-designated military retirement, they designate one of their number to become the "civilian" President of the Nation, while the other two supposedly pass quietly into retirement. So far, and inevitably, it has been the Army head who has become President. Even when a supposed alteration of policy is involved, the presidential succession remains in the Army: Thus General Videla was succeeded by General Viola, and he in turn by General Galtieri.

The Navy's commitment to dictatorship has been amply illustrated: Its Mechanical School is the most infamous torture center in a country sadly endowed with hundreds of them. Nevertheless, Navy chiefs have criticized junta policies —especially economic policies—in an apparent attempt to court popular support. Thus in 1978 Admiral Massera, an original junta member, accused the junta of encouraging social unrest by its economic plan; he called for reforms of a "social-democratic" nature. But this gesture produced only the briefest of political boomlets for Massera. The political weakness of the Navy as an elite service with little significant influence outside of port cities was exposed.

The lesson was apparent. If the Navy were to achieve political predominance, it would have to bypass the junta structure in order to do so. And what better way than to make itself and its leader national heroes? The near-war with Chile in 1979-80 over three islands in the Beagle Channel (near Tierra del Fuego) bears the signs of a move in this direction. A long-standing territorial dispute in an area accessible only by sea was suddenly raised to fever pitch in certain sectors of the press, and a flotilla steamed south from Buenos Aires with the Navy chief at the helm. In this instance, then-President Videla defused the situation by beginning direct talks with Pinochet of Chile, and the whole issue eventually smothered under the weight of extended negotiations. The Army reaffirmed its dominance.



The Navy's success in seizing the initiative in the Falklands/Malvinas crisis indicates a deterioration in the Army's relative position of power since Videla's time. Perhaps the dumping of General Viola from the Presidency by General Galtieri after only a few months in office has shaken the confidence of, or left internal divisions within, the Army officer corps. In any case, now that actual engagements have taken place and actual blood has been shed, the junta may have no option but to attempt somehow to retrieve the Navy's chestnuts from the fire while allowing the latter service to carry off the laurels for daring and "patriotism."

That will take some doing. With the Navy to the fore, the junta has roused Argentine nationalism while delivering an unforgettable insult to the British people, led by a shaken government that now must act to appease the anger of its citizens. History is full of the awful consequences of petty ambition, but there cannot be many military initiatives matching this one in sheer stupidity. But then, our "authoritarian" "ally" has had lots of practice. □

TOM KELLY is editorial assistant at C&C. Trained as an historian, he has been active on behalf of human rights in Argentina.

REPORTS & COMMENT

FOREIGN POLICY

OUTMODED ASSUMPTIONS

Ideas and fears with deep roots in the national psychology are helping to perpetuate the Cold War

"WHEN SOCIETY REQUIRES to be rebuilt, there is no use in attempting to rebuild it on the old plan."

"No great improvements in the lot of mankind are possible, until a great change takes place in the fundamental constitution of their modes of thought."

John Stuart Mill's admonitions are still valid. Since the Truman Doctrine of 1947—perhaps since Hiroshima and Nagasaki—the United States has been locked into a Cold War whose temperature has fluctuated over the years, and now threatens to become incandescent. The origins of that war have fascinated a generation of historians whose disagreements are by now irremediable, perhaps because the explanations are not to be found so much in unraveling the tangled skein of history as in probing the philosophical and psychological assumptions that were uncritically adopted at the beginning of hostilities, and that have not yet been subjected to serious re-examination by those in power.

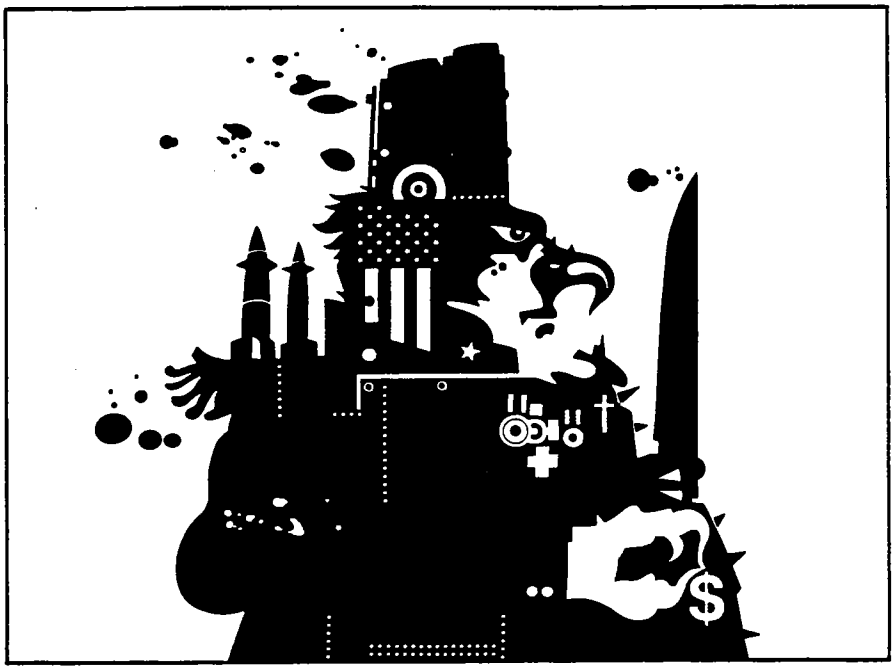
How are we to explain our obsession with communism, our paranoid hostility to the Soviet Union, our preoccupation with the Cold War, our reliance on military rather than political or diplomatic solutions, and our new readiness to entertain as a possibility what was long regarded as unthinkable—atomic warfare? Can we avoid the "unthinkable" and rebuild a world of peace and order without a change in the "fundamental constitution of [our] modes of thought"—modes of thought themselves largely responsible for the crisis that glares upon us with relentless insistence from every quarter of the horizon?

Some of those assumptions have long enjoyed the dignity of official endorsement; some have been eroded in principle but linger on in official ideology—and are held together by passionate emotional harmony; some are sustained by interests so deeply entrenched that they seem invulnerable to criticism. As a body, the catechism of assumptions resembles in many respects that of the Moral Majority: it is rooted in emotion rather than in reason; it is negative rather than positive in its objectives; it is inspired by fear rather than by confidence; it is inconsistent and even contradictory in logic.

Consider some of those assumptions that have proved most tenacious.

First is the assumption that the world is divided between two great ideological and power groups, one dedicated to freedom, the other to slavery. History appointed the United States to represent and defend the first. The Soviet Union, whether by appointment or not is unclear, represents the second. These two worlds have been, for thirty years, locked in fateful combat.

This simplistic picture has, over the years, been badly distorted by developments that do not fit its logic: the conflict between China and Russia; our own almost nonchalant rapprochement with China; the emergence of a new power



ILLUSTRATIONS BY MICHAEL DAVID BROWN

bloc in the Middle East; and the growing reluctance of many members of the "free-world" coalition to respect either the freedom or the morality to whose defense we are committed. None of these developments has as yet persuaded many Americans to modify their original conviction that communism is the inveterate enemy.

A second assumption is implicit in the first: that communism, especially the Soviet variety, is not only dedicated to the enslavement of men but is godless and deeply immoral. Therefore the Soviet Union can never be relied upon to keep its word; it is engaged in ceaseless aggrandizement; it makes a mockery of international law and human dignity, and trusts only force. From all this it follows that for us to substitute diplomatic negotiations for military power would be to fall into a trap from which we could not extricate ourselves.

This assumption, to be sure, has deep roots in our history and our psychology. Though perhaps no other nation of modern times has had such spectacular success at the diplomatic table as the United States, Americans have long deluded themselves with the notion that their diplomats—invariably virtuous and innocent—have been consistently seduced and betrayed by wily Old World diplomats. This is, needless to say, fantasy. The Treaty of Paris of 1783 represented a spectacular triumph of American diplomats over both the British and the French, and the new nation found itself not thirteen independent states hugging the Atlantic but a vast empire. Twenty years later Jefferson intended to secure no more than New Orleans, but found that, thanks to Napoleon's impatience, the Treaty of 1803 doubled the territory of the United States without war and almost without cost. No one really won the War of 1812, but American diplomats won the negotiations at Ghent, and after that treaty, and the Battle of New Orleans, Europe left America alone. In 1871, the United States collected substantial awards from Great Britain for her violations of neutrality during the Civil War—violations of international law that were tame compared with those we now commit as a matter of course. In 1898, we dictated our own terms to Spain; and if in 1919 Wilson was not able to get all the Fourteen Points into the Treaty of Versailles, he did get his associates to set up a League of Nations, which we subsequently scuttled. Certainly we were in command in 1945, dictating terms not only to Germany and Japan but to our allies as well—terms characterized on the whole by magnanimity. Yalta, which most Americans have been led to believe a diplomatic defeat, was no such thing: in the military circumstances of February, 1945 (when American forces had not yet crossed the Rhine), it constituted an American success.

As for violation of international law, treaties, and agreements, and of the territorial integrity of weaker nations, the record of the Soviet Union is indeed deplorable. Whether it differs greatly from the American record depends, no doubt, upon the point of view. Little need to rehearse that record: suffice it to say that the CIA has at least tried to be as subversive as the KGB in many parts of the globe, that intervention in Cuba, the Dominican Republic, and Guatemala was no less in violation of law than the Soviet invasions of Hungary and Czechoslovakia, and that a ten-year undeclared war in Vietnam, with casualties of some two million, both military and civilian, and bombardment with three times the tonnage dropped on Germany and Japan in World War II contrasts unfavorably with the much-condemned Soviet invasion of Afghanistan.

Nothing surprising about all this except that a people brought up, for the most part, on the New Testament should so readily ignore the question raised by Matthew: "Why beholdest thou the mote that is in thy brother's eye, but considerest not the beam that is in thine own eye?"

A third assumption is rooted in the second: that the Soviet Union is the mortal enemy of the United States and that her animosity is implacable. This assumption, implicit in innumerable statements by President Reagan and Secretary of Defense Caspar Weinberger, dictates most of our current political and military programs. The term "dictates" is appropriate, for we no longer appear to be masters of our own destiny or even in control of our policies, but react with almost Pavlovian response to the real or imagined policies of the Soviet Union. Clearly, our reaction to the Polish crisis is animated more by hostility to the Soviet Union than by compassion for Poland.

In all this we rarely ask ourselves what the Soviet Union has to gain by destroying the United States. In the past neither czarist nor Communist Russia has been an "enemy" of the United States, and in the twentieth century Russia was allied with or associated with the United States in two major wars. Nor do many Americans pause to acknowledge that the Communists have more ground for fearing the United States than we have for fearing them: after all, American military forces invaded the Soviet Union at Archangel and Vladivostok to prevent the Bolshevik takeover and remained on Russian soil for well over two years: had Communist forces invaded the United States in, let us say, Alaska or Florida, we would not be quite so forgetful.

That the ideological conflict between the Soviet Union and the United States is deep and perhaps irremediable cannot be denied. It is sobering to recall that during the early years of the nineteenth century—and, indeed, again during our Civil War—much of Europe looked upon the United States as we now look upon the Soviet Union, and with more justification. The new American republic did indeed threaten the peace and security of Old World nations. Republicanism, democracy, constitutionalism, and social equality challenged all Old World monarchies and class societies. That challenge was practical—millions of Europeans found refuge in America—and it was philosophical, as well. Listen to Prince Metternich, the greatest and most powerful European statesman of his generation, excoriate the United States for proclaiming the Monroe Doctrine:

> These United States . . . have suddenly left a sphere too narrow for their ambition, and have astonished Europe by a new act of revolt, more unprovoked, fully as audacious, and no less dangerous than the former [against Britain]. They have distinctly and exactly announced their intention to set not only power against power, but, to express it more exactly, altar against altar. In their indecent declarations they have cast blame and scorn on the institutions of Europe most worthy of respect. . . . In permitting themselves these unprovoked attacks, in fostering revolutions wherever they show themselves, in regretting those which have failed, in extending a helping hand to those which seem to prosper, they lend new strength to the apostles of sedition, and re-animate the courage of every conspirator. If this flood of evil doctrines and pernicious examples should extend over the whole of America, what would become of our religious and political institutions, of the moral forces of our governments, and of the conservative system which has saved Europe from complete dissolution?

Nor was this paranoia confined to spokesmen of autocratic countries. Here is what the leading British journal of its

day—*Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine*—had to say of Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation:

> Monstrous, reckless, devilish. . . . It proves . . . [that] rather than lose their trade and custom, the North would league itself with Beelzebub and seek to make a hell of half a continent. In return this atrocious act justifies the South in hoisting the black flag . . . And thus . . . we are called upon to contemplate a war more full of horrors and wickedness than any which stands recorded in the world's history.

The exacerbation of anti-Russian paranoia by this administration is not in fact in the mainstream of American experience. We have had less excuse for it than any other major nation, for since 1815 we have never been threatened by external aggression by any nation except Japan nor, except for the Civil War, by serious ideological conflicts.

Our current crisis dramatizes the wisdom of President Washington's warning, in his Farewell Address:

> . . . nothing is more essential than that permanent, inveterate antipathies against particular nations . . . be excluded; and that in place of them just and amicable feelings towards all should be cultivated. The nation which indulges towards another an habitual hatred or an habitual fondness is in some degree a slave. It is a slave to its animosity or to its affection . . . Antipathy in one nation against another disposes each more readily to offer insult and injury . . .

IT IS PERHAPS THIS enslavement to our own animosity that explains a fourth major assumption—one we might call the Dr. Strangelove syndrome: that we could fight and "win" an atomic war, that the loss of 50 million to 100 million lives would be "acceptable," that the Republic could survive and flourish after such a victory. An atomic war is no longer "unthinkable"; perhaps it never was: after all, we are the only nation ever to use the atomic weapon against an enemy. Now spokesmen of both our parties have declared that in an "emergency" we would not hesitate to use it again. In all this we are reminded of the moral of slavery: when a "necessary evil" becomes necessary enough, it ceases to be an evil.

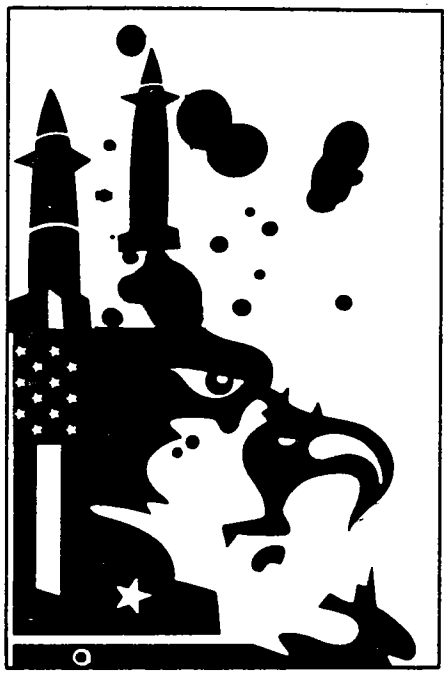
This philosophy is a product, or a by-product, of a fifth assumption: that the most effective way, and perhaps the only way, to counter the threat of communism is neither political, economic, nor moral but quite simply military, and that the mere threat of overwhelming military might will persuade all rivals to abandon the field.

This is, to be sure, a familiar maxim: it was Voltaire who observed that God is always for the big battalions. But there is an older wisdom. More than three centuries ago Francis Bacon wrote, "Walled towers, stored arsenals, and armories, goodly races of horse, chariots of war, elephants, ordnance, artillery and the like—all this is but a sheep in lion's skin, except the breed and disposition of the people be stout . . ."

That is still true, though we must rephrase it to comport with modern weaponry. The futility of reliance on superiority in nuclear arms should have been clear as early as 1949, when the Russians astonished most of the "experts" by detonating their own atomic bomb a decade earlier than had been expected. Certainly it should be clear by now that the Russians can produce anything that we can produce, and that the notion of "winning" an arms race is fantasy. The hope—perhaps the only hope—of avoiding a nuclear war lies not in adding another $1,500 billion to the $2,000 billion we have already spent on the military since the close of World War II but in mutual abandonment of that race, and a cooperative program of systematic reduction of existing nuclear arms.

As for security, that is indeed to be found in the "stoutness" and the disposition of the people—in their courage, intelligence, and resourcefulness, and in the preservation and nurture of that common wealth with which Nature has endowed them. The most serious threat to national security is in the wastage of human and the exhaustion of natural resources. It is in permitting our industrial and technological enterprises, our transportation system, our financial health, to deteriorate, our cities to decay into slums, our schools to fail of their primary functions of education, our society to be ravaged by poverty, lawlessness, racial strife, class hostilities, and injustice. It is in a leadership that lacks prudence, wisdom, and vision. It is in a society whose leaders no longer invoke, and whose people no longer take seriously, those concepts of public virtue, of the pursuit of happiness, and of the fiduciary obligation to posterity that were the all-but-universal precepts of the generation that founded the Republic.

A sixth assumption is a by-product of the fifth: that the security of the United States is bound up with and dependent on whatever regimes throughout the



globe are ostentatiously anti-Communist. Our record here is a dismal one, yet instead of repudiating that record, the present administration seems determined to outstrip it. We persist in regarding South Korea and Taiwan as not only friends but allies; we practically forced Pakistan to accept billions of dollars for arms; we have abandoned all pretense of holding aloof from the tyrannical regimes of Chile and Argentina; we even conjure up a distinction between "authoritarian" and "totalitarian" regimes, whose only real distinction is whether they are authoritarian on our side or not. The vocabulary of this administration, as of Nixon's, inevitably conjures up what Thucydides said of the corruption of language in the Athens of his day: "What used to be described as a thoughtless act of aggression, was now regarded as the courage one would expect to find in a party member . . . fanatical enthusiasm was the mark of a real man . . . anyone who held violent opinions could always be trusted . . . and to plot successfully was a sign of intelligence."

To many of the peoples of the Third World, and even of the European world, the United States appears to be what the Holy Alliance was in the early nineteenth century. The analogy does not favor the United States, for while the Holy Alliance, for all its interventions in Spain and Italy and Greece, had the good sense to keep out of distant continents, the United States does not. What our interventions throughout the globe—Vietnam, Cambodia, Angola, Nicaragua, El Salvador, and Iran—have in common with those of the Holy Alliance is their failure.

MUCH OF OUR NEW "imperialism" is rooted in a seventh assumption: that the United States is not only a Western but an African and an Asian power.

That the United States is a world power is incontestable. Clearly, too, it is by virtue of geography an Atlantic power and a Pacific power, and it is by virtue of history something of a European power—a fact convincingly vindicated by participation in two world wars. But the United States is no more an Asian power than China or Japan is an American power. We have never permitted an Asian power to establish a military presence in the American continents. We bought Alaska from Russia, and the 1912 Lodge Corollary to the Monroe Doctrine extended that doctrine to "any Government, not American." It was the illusion that we could control the internal politics of China that distracted us from a recognition of reality for a quarter-century: certainly the greatest blunder in the history of American diplomacy. Even now, notwithstanding the commonsense reversal of that misguided policy by Nixon and Kissinger, we have not yet wholly rid ourselves of the purblind notion that we can, and should, "play the China card"—a notion that in its arrogance and in its vulgarity must represent the low-water mark of American foreign policy.

Another corollary of our reliance on the military for security is dramatized by an eighth assumption: that to achieve security it is proper for government to conscript science and scholarship for the purposes of war, cold or not; that, in short, the scientific, philosophical, and cultural community should be an instrument of the State for secular purposes.

This principle was not embraced by those who founded the Republic nor, for that matter, by the philosophers of the Enlightenment in the Old World. During the American Revolution, Benjamin Franklin joined with the French minister of finance, Jacques Necker, to decree immunity for Captain Cook because he was "engaged in pursuits beneficial to mankind." In the midst of the Napoleonic Wars, the French Institute conferred its gold medal on the great British scientist Humphrey Davy, and while the war was still raging, Sir Humphrey crossed the Channel to accept that honor. "If two countries are at war," he said, "the men of science are not." Napoleon himself shared this view: during his victorious campaign in Germany, he spared the university city of Göttingen from bombardment because it was the home of the greatest of classical scholars, Christian Heyne. And it was Napoleon, too, who, at the request of Joseph Banks of the Royal Society, freed the great geologist Dolomieu from the dungeons of Naples. Edward Jenner, the discoverer of the smallpox vaccine, put it for his whole generation: "The sciences are never at war. Peace must always preside in the bosoms of those whose object is the augmentation of human happiness."

It was Thomas Jefferson who stated this principle most clearly and most eloquently, and this at a time when he himself had abandoned his study and his laboratory to serve in the Virginia legislature. In 1778, he addressed a letter to the scientist David Rittenhouse, then serving as treasurer to the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania:

> Your time for two years past has . . . been principally employed in the civil government of your country. Tho' I have been aware of the authority our cause would acquire with the world from its being known that yourself and Doctr. Franklin were zealous friends to it, and am myself duly impressed with a sense of arduousness of government, and the obligation those are under who are able to conduct it, yet I am also satisfied there is an order of geniuses above that obligation, and therefore exempted from it. No body can conceive that nature ever intended to throw away a Newton upon the occupations of a crown. It would have been a prodigality for which even the conduct of providence might have been arraigned, had he been by birth annexed to what was so far below him.

A NINTH ASSUMPTION, PERHAPS the most intractable of all, is that any of the fundamental problems that confront us—and other nations of the globe—can be resolved within the framework of the nation-state system. The inescapable fact, dramatized by the energy crisis, the population crisis, the armaments race, and so forth, is that nationalism as we have known it in the nineteenth and much of the twentieth century is as much of an anachronism today as was States Rights when Calhoun preached it and Jefferson Davis fought for it. Just as we know, or should know, that none of our domestic problems can be solved within the artificial boundaries of the states, so none of our global problems can be solved within the largely artificial boundaries of nations—artificial not so much in the eyes of history as in the eyes of Nature. Nature, as the dispenser of all resources, knows no boundaries between North and South Dakota or Kansas and Nebraska, no boundaries, for that matter, between Canada, the United States, and Mexico, and very few between the two Americas, Europe, Asia, and Africa. Every major problem that confronts us is global—energy, pollution, the destruction of the oceans and the seas, the erosion of agricultural and forest lands, the control of epidemics and of plant and animal diseases, famine in large parts of Asia and Africa and a population increase that promises to aggravate famine, inflation, international terrorism, nuclear pollution, and nuclear-arms control. Not one of these can be solved within the limits of a single nation.

Even to mitigate these problems requires the cooperation of statesmen, scientists, and moral philosophers in every country. Americans should find it easier to achieve such cooperation than did the peoples of Old World nations, for they are the heirs and the beneficiaries of a philosophy that proclaimed that *all* men were created equal and endowed with unalienable rights to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.

Of all the assumptions I have discussed, that which takes nationalism for granted is perhaps the most deeply rooted and the most tenacious. Yet when we reflect that assumptions, even certainties, no less tenacious in the past—about the very nature of the cosmic system, about the superiority of one race to all others, about the naturalness of women's subordination to men, about the providential order of a class society, about the absolute necessity of a state church or religion—have all given way to the implacable pressure of science and of reality, we may conclude that what Tocqueville wrote well over a century ago is still valid:

> The world that is rising into existence is still half encumbered by the remains of the world that is waning into decay; and amid the vast perplexity of human affairs none can say how much of ancient institutions and former customs will remain or how much will completely disappear.

If some of our ancient institutions do not disappear, there is little likelihood that we shall remain.

—Henry Steele Commager

Henry Steele Commager, noted historian and educator, has taught at many universities here and abroad. He is now at work on a fifty-volume work, The Rise of the American Nation.

THE CLAIM TO VALIDITY

WAR, like its opposite, human brotherhood, used to be a local affair. Until the wars of the twentieth century, armed conflicts between nations could be endured. They caused much suffering, resulted in injustice, but it took only fifteen or twenty years for the defeated to regain their balance, and perhaps some prosperity, and there was at least some need for recovery for the victors, too. Today the prospect of war is quite different. Actually, there is hardly any such thing as "peace," since virtually all peoples live in uneasy anticipation of a conflict that might involve practically the whole world. Those who study these matters point out that a "limited" war, if it involves the major powers, is practically certain to escalate to all-consuming dimensions. This means that the emotional unity within a nation, sought and usually achieved in order to fight effectively to victory, no longer has meaning or rational ground. The local brotherhoods which cement people into units to confront and defeat an enemy, as goals in national affairs, are without meaning for the reason that victory has lost its meaning.

The moral verdict on this situation is that brotherhood must become a universal ideal. Brothers who unite *against* some other partisan formation, similarly united, are not moving toward peace and freedom, but toward Mutually Assured Destruction; not thinking, or understanding, but blind habit, gives strength and animation to the limited unities of the present in national affairs. What is the foundation of this habit? We know the answer quite well: *They* are evil, *we* are good.

How can we recover from this delusion? First of all, perhaps, by candid admission that it *isn't* a delusion. Certainly not entirely. Human nature being pretty much the same around the world, the behavior of nations organized for both dominance and self-defense is consistently both good and evil. Serious historians, starting with Thucydides, have made that plain. Why can't we recognize this and then stop turning our argument with other nations into moralistic Armageddons?

The answer is again simple: Because we are in the egocentric predicament. The bad things we do are petty, the good things great. We know how *we* think, and how much sense it makes, but we are unable to understand how *they* think. They, it seems clear enough, are determined to make trouble for us and the rest of the world, and people who can't see that are just plain stupid or morally blind. This being the case—in a world where reason and trust don't work—we have to have more bombs.

We have the habit of thinking this way, and overcoming the habit is the project before those who are serious about working for peace.

This, as anyone can see who takes time to think about it, is a psychological problem. It is also, of course, a moral problem, but the psychological factors get in the way of recognizing the moral considerations. The sequence of reasoning is familiar: There is serious evil in the world, and the chief offender, just now, is that nation over there. They have done this and this (all true), and they will almost certainly do *that*, a possibility which cannot be tolerated. Therefore, more bombs. To the arguer, his logic is impeccable, his intentions righteous, his readiness to sacrifice a sign of good character. He is simply *right*.

A simple illustration at the everyday level should help in getting at the psychological factors of this situation. We found one in a book by a psychiatrist (Abraham Low's *Mental Health Through Will-Training*). Dr. Low gives the example of a woman, Mona, with neurotic tendencies, who had a relapse into a disturbed condition because, while waiting for service at the meat counter of a market, another woman who had come there later was served first. The woman replied to Mona's objection by saying that Mona was "asleep."

It was discourteous, but was it *wrong*? Analyzing, the doctor said:

> Mona knew she tended to be preoccupied, inattentive, dreaming. In the preceding five years she had amassed a prodigious record of tasks neglected, things forgotten, remarks not heard. She knew her defect of not hearing, seeing and recalling properly. When at the butcher's she missed her first cue her first thought should have been that something went "wrong" because of her nervous condition; that her attention had wandered again as it had on so many previous occasions. Instead, she jumped to the conclusion it was "that woman" who caused her to lose her "rightful" place. You see, even in this "clear-cut" case there are two sides to the story, and it would take a very wise judge to decide which was the right and which the wrong side. Mona looked at her own side of the story only. The part of the story which could have been told by "that woman" was thoroughly neglected. It is the distinctive mark of the so-called intellectual to emphasize or over-emphasize one side of an issue only, usually his own side, and to look away from the other side.

The doctor goes on to generalize from this example:

> The main pride of the average person is that his views, opinions, plans and decisions are right, sensible and practical. Essentially, this is a claim that the thought processes are solid, that they can be depended upon to prove true, in short, that their premises and conclusions are valid. This may be called the *intellectual claim to validity*. A parallel ambition of the average individual is to prove to himself or to others that his heart is "in the right spot," that he is emotionally responsive, ready to fight for his rights and to defend his convictions. His feelings and sentiments, he insists, are generous, noble, vigorous and vital. . . .
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> The abiding distress of the nervous patient is precisely his inability to trust the validity of his thoughts or to have pride in the vitality of his feelings and sentiments. . . . Then comes the temperamental spell. It works a miraculous transformation. All of a sudden he is aroused to a fit of anger. He fumes and raves; he is indignant and fairly panting for a fight. What else can that be but strength, vigor and vitality? And that insult that was hurled at him by "that rascal" was clearly and undoubtedly an injustice, an unprovoked attack. That he is right and the other fellow wrong cannot possibly be questioned. In a "clearcut case" of this kind, who but a fool or a knave could challenge his premises

and conclusions? The temperamental spell re-establishes as with magic his intellectual claim to validity and his romantic claim to vitality. . . .

The doctor's point is that being "right" is a small and insignificant matter compared to preserving one's mental health. Frustrated righteousness leads to overwhelming anger, and then to a fight—"war." The parallel is complete if you are willing to admit that the psychiatrist's account of the pattern of neurotic behavior applies to practically all of us. He has given an account of how wars begin. And we have reached the point in history where a war will not bring only measurable destruction and casualties—it will bring *annihilation*. So there is a sense in which being "right" no longer matters. Both the righteous and the unrighteous are sure to die.

Who are the doctors of nations, able to explain by clear analysis what terrible mistakes they are making, in their righteous outrage and zeal? There are many prescribers for the ills of nations, but the best are probably historians turned social psychologist. There is, for example, the discussion of "Outmoded Assumptions" in the March *Atlantic* by Henry Steele Commager. He begins with two assumptions made by American leaders: first, that "the world is divided between two great ideological and power groups, one dedicated to freedom, the other to slavery." The second assumption is that, being godless and immoral, and dedicated to the enslavement of men, "the Soviet Union can never be relied upon to keep its word; it is engaged in ceaseless aggrandizement; it makes a mockery of international law and human dignity, and trusts only force." It follows, therefore, that "to substitute diplomatic negotiations for military power would be to fall into a trap from which we could not extricate ourselves."

What is the "other side" of the story? Prof. Commager says:

> As for violation of international law, treaties, and agreements, and of the territoriality of weaker nations, the record of the Soviet Union is indeed deplorable. Whether it differs greatly from the American record depends, no doubt, upon the point of view. Little need to rehearse that record: suffice it to say that the CIA has at least tried to be as subversive as KGB in many parts of the globe, that intervention in Cuba, the Dominican Republic, and Guatemala was no less in violation of the law than the Soviet invasions of Hungary and Czechoslovakia, and that a ten-year undeclared war in Vietnam, with casualties of some two million, both military and civilians, and bombardment with three times the tonnage dropped on Germany and Japan in World War II contrasts unfavorably with the much-condemned Soviet invasion of Afghanistan.

He examines a third assumption: "that the Soviet Union is the mortal enemy of the United States and that her animosity is implacable." We react, he says, "with almost Pavlovian response to the real or imagined policies of the Soviet Union."

> In all this we rarely ask ourselves what the Soviet Union has to gain by destroying the United States. In the past neither czarist nor communist Russia has been an "enemy" of the United States, and in the twentieth century Russia was allied with or associated with the United States in two major wars. Nor do many Americans pause to acknowledge that the Communists have more ground for fearing the United States than we have for fearing them: after all, American military forces invaded the Soviet Union at Archangel and Vladivostok to prevent the Bolshevik takeover and remained on Russian soil for well over two years: had Communist forces invaded the United States in, let us say, Alaska or Florida, we would not be quite so forgetful.

A fourth common assumption—Commager calls it the "Dr. Strangelove syndrome"—is that "we could fight and 'win' an atomic war, that the loss of 50 million to 100 million lives would be 'acceptable,' that the Republic could survive and flourish after such a victory."

> An atomic war is no longer "unthinkable"; perhaps it never was: after all, we are the only nation ever to use the atomic weapon against an enemy. Now spokesmen of both our parties have declared that in an "emergency" we would not hesitate to use it again. In all this we are reminded of the moral of slavery: when a "necessary evil" becomes necessary enough, it ceases to be an evil.
>
> This philosophy is a product, or a by-product, of a fifth assumption: that the most effective way, and perhaps the only way, to counter the threat of communism is neither political, nor moral but quite simply military, and that the mere threat of overwhelming military might well persuade all rivals to abandon the field. . . .
>
> The futility of reliance on superiority in nuclear arms should have been clear as early as 1949, when the Russians astonished most of the "experts" by detonating their own bomb a decade earlier than had been expected. Certainly it should be clear by now that the Russians can produce anything that we can produce, and that the notion of "winning" an arms race is fantasy. The hope—perhaps the only hope—of avoiding a nuclear war lies not in adding another $1,500 billion to the $2,000 billion we have already spent on the military since the close of World War II but in mutual abandonment of that race, and a cooperative program of systematic reduction of existing nuclear arms.

The last assumption to be inspected is the idea that "the fundamental problems that confront us—and other nations of the globe—can be resolved within the framework of the nation-state system."

> The inescapable fact, dramatized by the energy crisis, the population crisis, the armaments race, and so forth, is that nationalism as we have known it in the nineteenth and much of the twentieth century is as much of an anachronism today as was States Rights when Calhoun preached it and Jefferson Davis fought for it. Just as we know, or should know, that none of our domestic problems can be solved within the artificial boundaries of the states, so none of our global problems can be solved within the largely artificial boundaries of nations—artificial not so much in the eyes of history as in the eyes of Nature.

We turn now to another historian-doctor, a man with a therapy as well as a diagnosis—Edward P. Thompson, British scholar and a founder of the European Nuclear Disarmament movement. Prof. Thompson wrote "A Letter to America," a portion of which appeared in the *Nation* for Jan. 4, 1981, and which was later expanded into a book, *Protest and Survive*, issued by the Monthly Review Press ($4.95). We now have from him a lecture, *Beyond the Cold War*, which the BBC decided not to broadcast, but was given anyway late last year in Worcester, Prof. Thompson's home town. In this address he shows that both Russia and America have lost any rational basis for the Cold War, and that it continues only through its own self-generated momentum. "If," he says, "we ask the partisans of either side what the Cold War

is about, they regard us with the glazed eyes of addicts." Virtually ignored is the fact that the Soviet Communists have lost Yugoslavia and Albania and utterly split with China. Meanwhile, the client states meant to be buffers on Russia's western frontiers are restive for independence (as in Poland, Czechoslovakia, and Hungary), while the European communist parties are either weakening or critical of Soviet policies.

The United States, in turn, has lost prestige, its economy has diminished in authority and power, while its military forces "suffered a catastrophic defeat in Vietnam."

> Only the overwhelming nuclear strength has been maintained—has grown year after year—has been protracted beyond the moment of its origin. United States militarism seeks to extend forward indefinitely—to cast its shadow across Europe—a supremacy of economic and political force which existed thirty years ago but which has long ceased to exist. In one sense the present crisis in Western Europe can be read in this way. The United States is seeking to use the muscle of its nuclear weaponry to compensate for its loss of real influence. . . .
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> What is the Cold War now about? It is about itself. . . . The Cold War has become a habit, an addiction. But it is a habit supported by very powerful material interest in each bloc: the military-industrial and research establishments of both sides, the security services and intelligence operations, and the political servants of these interests. . . .
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> I don't mean to argue for an *identity* of process in the United States and the Soviet Union, nor for a perfect symmetry of forms. There are major divergencies, not only in political forms and controls, but also as between the steady expansionism of bureaucracy and the avarice of private capital. I mean to stress, rather, the *reciprocal* and interactive character of the process. It is in the very nature of this Cold War show that there must be two adversaries: and each move by one must be matched by the other. This is the inner dynamics of the Cold War which determines that its military and security establishments are *self-reproducing*. Their missiles summon forward our missiles which summon forward their missiles in turn. NATO's hawks feed the hawks of the Warsaw bloc.
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> For the ideology of the Cold War is self-reproducing also. That is, the military and the security services and their political servants *need* the Cold War. They have a direct interest in its continuance.

They need it not only because it serves their interest and privileges, but because the Cold War holds the nations together. "Rome required barbarians, Christendom required pagans, Protestants and Catholic Europe required each other." Patriotism means love of one's country, but hatred or fear or suspicion of others. Prof. Thompson goes on:

> I have argued that the condition of the Cold War has broken free from the "causes" at its origin; and that ruling interests on both sides have become ideologically addicted, they need its continuance. The Western hemisphere has been divided into two parts, each of which sees itself as threatened by the Other; yet at the same time this continuing threat has become necessary to provide internal bonding and social discipline within each part. Moreover, this threat of the Other has been internalized within both Soviet and American culture, so that the very self-identity of many American and Soviet citizens is bound up with the ideological premises of the Cold War.

A summing up:

> The United States is the leader of "the Free World," and the Commies are the Other. They need this Other to establish their own identity, not as blacks or Poles or Irish, but as free Americans. Only this pre-existent need, for bonding-by-exclusion, can explain the ease by which one populist rascal after another has been able to float to power—and even to the White House—on nothing but a flood of sensational Cold War propaganda. And anti-Communism can be turned to other internal uses as well. It can serve to knock trade unions on the head, or to keep dissident radical voices or peace movements ("soft on Communism") on the margins of political life.

The Soviets have similar need of the threat of the "Other" to hold its vast and vastly dissimilar population together:

> The bonding, the self-identity of Soviet citizens comes from the notion that they are the heartland of the world's first socialist revolution, threatened by the Other—Western imperialism, in alliance with 1,000 million Chinese. The positive part of this rhetoric—the Marxist-Leninist, revolutionary bit—may now have worn exceedingly thin; but the negative part remains compelling. The one function of the Soviet rulers which commands consensual assent throughout the population is their self-proclaimed role as defenders of the Fatherland and defenders of peace. . . . Hence the Cold War ideology—the threat of the Other—is the strongest card left in the hand of the Soviet rulers. It is necessary for bonding. And the card is not a fake. For the Other—that is, the Cold Warriors of the West—is continually playing the same card back, whether in missiles or in arms agreements with China or in the suit of human rights. . . .
>
> Both adversaries need to maintain a hostile ideological posture, as a means of internal bonding or discipline. This would be dangerous at any time; but with today's nuclear weaponry it is an immensely dangerous condition. For it contains a built-in logic which must always tend to the worse: the military establishments will grow, the adversary postures become more implacable and more irrational.
>
> That logic, if uncorrected, must prove terminal, and in the next two or three decades. I will not speculate on what accident or which contingency will bring us to that terminus. I am pointing out the logic and thrust of things, the current which is sweeping us toward Niagara Falls.

Here, spelled out, is the individual and corporate psychology which conceals from us the plain moral issues of war and peace. We cannot get rid of "nations" in a hurry—such great reforms take time—but we can, each one of us, deliberately stop thinking in *national* terms. We must think of people, not countries, and recognize that nationalism is a sickness—or, as Prof. Thompson says, an "addiction"—which has overtaken all the world. The good guys/bad guys equation is useless for putting an end to war. And being "right" has become irrelevant if it can only harden the addiction of the age, assuring that we will eventually reach the "terminus" of which Prof. Thompson speaks.

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