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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. 52.

(Mrs.) Eulah C. Laucks, President
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EXCERPT from the July 28, 1983
OCCASIONAL REPORT of David McReynolds, War Resisters League, N.Y.:

"Reagan has gone out on a limb, he has made Central America the issue, he has insisted that Moscow is behind the trouble, that Cuba is acting as the agent of Moscow, and Nicaragua as the agent of Cuba, and the revolutionaries in El Salvador as the agents of Nicaragua—and if we don't stop them now they will be at the Texas border. The good news is that most Republicans and Democrats think Reagan is completely off base. The bad news is that Congress has proven a kind of collective gutless wonder, almost no one is willing to say what everyone privately admits—the emperor is naked. The Democrats don't want to be saddled with the charge that they "lost El Salvador" and Reagan is determined that if El Salvador does "fall to Moscow", that at least the Republicans won't get blamed for it.

"What is so irrational about this is that in the end, and after a great many innocent people have been killed, the U.S. will have to give in—it is almost impossible to think that the United States is prepared for the long term military occupation by U.S. forces which would be necessary to take control of Central America. Reagan, having gotten bad advice, and being inclined toward bluster, has boxed himself in."

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THE MACNEIL-LEHRER REPORT

Reagan: Space Defense

In New York

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In Washington

JIM LEHRER ..... Associate Editor
Dr. ROBERT McFARLANE ..... National Security Council
Sen. TED STEVENS ..... Republican, Alaska
Sen. DALE BUMPERS ..... Democrat, Arkansas

In San Francisco (Facilities: KQED-TV)

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Reagan: Space Defense

[Tease]

Pres. RONALD REAGAN: Let me share with you a vision of the future which offers hope. It is that we embark on a program to counter the awesome Soviet missile threat with measures that are defensive.

[Titles]

ROBERT MacNEIL: Good evening. President Reagan today issued a formal directive to the National Security Council to begin initial research on the space-age missile defense system he proposed to the nation last night. In his televised speech appealing for public support for his defense budget, the President proposed that the United States use its technological skills to develop a system that would make nuclear weapons obsolete by the 21st century. His directive today sets in motion a long-range research and development program. According to White House spokesman Larry Speakes, it was designed to bring some focus to the still undefined project. For most of his speech the President painted a picture of continued rapid Soviet buildup, and stressed the need to defend his request for higher defense spending from budget-cutters in Congress. Tonight, space-age defenses and down-to-earth defense spending politics. Jim?

JIM LEHRER: Robin, the Soviets reacted badly to Mr. Reagan's high-tech missile defense idea, the news agency Tass saying, among other things, that it would violate a 1972 U.S.-Soviet treaty. Undersecretary of State Lawrence Eagleburger said, "That was expected. They would have reacted badly if the President had read a fudge recipe." Congressional reaction was almost as predictable. Democrats for the most part were the ones who attacked it as a reckless star-wars scheme and questioned its soundness. But it was a Republican, Senator Mark Hatfield of Oregon, who called the proposal "terrifying." White House and Defense officials in briefings today emphasized that such a defense system was probably 20 years away from being operational, and conceded it would be difficult to pull off — a concession Mr. Reagan made himself last night.

Pres. REAGAN: I know this is a formidable technical task, one that may not be accomplished before the end of this century. Yet current technology has attained a level of sophistication where it's reasonable for us to begin this effort. It will take years, probably decades, of effort on many fronts. There'll be failures and setbacks, just as there will be successes and breakthroughs. And as we proceed, we must remain constant in preserving the nuclear deterrent and maintaining a solid capability for flexible response. But isn't it worth every investment necessary to free the world from the threat of nuclear war?

I clearly recognize that defensive systems have limitations and raise certain problems and ambiguities. If paired with offensive systems, they can be viewed as fostering an aggressive policy, and no one wants that. But with these considerations firmly in mind, I call upon the scientific community in our country — those who gave us nuclear weapons — to turn their great talents now to the cause of mankind and world peace to give us the means of rendering these nuclear weapons impotent and obsolete.

MacNEIL: That scientific community has given the President's proposal a mixed reaction. For a critical view we have Dr. Sidney Drell, a physicist who was an adviser to the government on national security and arms control issues for 20 years. He also served on the President's Science Advisory Committee under presidents Johnson and Nixon. Dr. Drell is a professor of physics and deputy director of Stanford University's Linear Accelerator Center. He joins us tonight from public station KQED, San Francisco. Dr. Drell, is such a system feasible technologically? Can American scientists build such a system?

Dr. SIDNEY DRELL: Speaking on technical grounds alone, Mr. MacNeil, I see no prospect

of deploying on ground or in space with missiles or lasers an effective defense of the nation, of the people, of the cities. I know of no development that changes the predominance of the offense. This is a fact due to the enormity of the destructive power of the nuclear weapons that we're dealing with.

MacNEIL: And when the President says that the progress of technology has brought us to a position where such is feasible, what is your response to that, that these things have not been invented yet, or just don't work the way he predicts they will?

Dr. DRELL: I believe it's more than a question of technology. It's a question of effective and invulnerable systems, and it's even more so a question of what the opponent can do with his offense to counter the defense that one is considering. Remember that the ABM debate of 1969 and 1970, after the counters of offense were considered, dissolved into a discussion of bargaining chips because the technological case collapsed. And I believe that is still true with the technology we have today and on the horizon.

MacNEIL: How long, with your knowledge of the present technology, do you think it would be before lasers or electron beams or other things that are being talked about today could be made effective as a defense against nuclear missiles?

Dr. DRELL: I would say my technological horizon extends to the end of the century, and so I agree with the President that this would be beyond the end of the century. One has to remember all the actions that the Soviets might be taking, including, for example, just to cite one example, the cruise missile threat, the air-breathing threat, which doesn't even climb out of the atmosphere, and therefore is not one that the defense like this can handle.

MacNEIL: I see. Do current treaties, and you mentioned the ABM, the Antiballistic Missile Treaty. Do current treaties in force permit research on— just research, now, on such a project?

Dr. DRELL: Oh, yes. Research is permitted; research is in progress, both in this country and in the Soviet Union to protect us from technological surprise. What the ABM Treaty limits is the testing or the deployment of ABM systems in space, for example, and in particular.

MacNEIL: What do you think of this idea as a way of making nuclear weapons obsolete, as the President proposed?

Dr. DRELL: Well, I think the President's vision is an attractive vision for the future out from under the nuclear balance of terror, which is deterrence today. I believe, using the limitations that are imposed upon us by technology, probably the best way to accomplish that is by very severe deep cuts in our weapons. Then we'd buy arms control not by bringing another dimension into the arms competition, namely the space out there.

MacNEIL: Because that would create a race in a different dimension? Is that your point?

Dr. DRELL: That's right. We are reaching the limit before we can turn back and head off an arms competition in space. I don't think it's in our interest. One should recall that space has been very useful to the United States, In particular, it's opened the world for us. It's penetrated the Iron Curtain; our reconnaissance satellites have made it possible for us to verify arms control treaties. Without that we would have no prospects. So I think space has been a very useful, important medium for us, both for defensive and for scientific research. I would like to see more cooperation in space.

MacNEIL: Well, thank you. Jim?

LEHRER: Here to speak on behalf of the administration to Dr. Drell's and others' concerns about the proposal is Robert McFarlane, deputy to the President's national security adviser, William Clark. Mr. McFarlane is a former Marine officer who first worked in the National Security Council under Henry Kissinger in the Nixon and Ford administrations, and was counselor at the State Department in the first year of the Reagan administration before moving to the White House. Mr. McFarlane, what about this question that Dr. Drell just

raised, that this will just open up a whole new area of competition and a kind of a space war between the United States and the Soviet Union?

ROBERT McFARLANE: Well, Jim, I think first of all it's important to consider what Dr. Drell doesn't treat, and that is, what are the implications of continuing on our present course? As you know, for the past 30 years the United States has prevented conflict by making clear to the Soviet Union that we could respond to whatever kind of attack they might launch. Now, to do that it has meant we've had to deploy, to display different kinds of forces, and occasionally to improve them, change them, add to them. The implication of all this is that the two of us, the Soviet Union and the United States, sit poised with periodic increases in power, and the implications of that are very worrisome. In short, the President is asking— not proscribing, but saying — should we not look at an alternative. And that is to deploy a defense, a system which does not threaten the enemy's territory but protects us as well as our allies.

LEHRER: But what about the question that if we do it the Soviet Union of course will do the same thing, and we could have just a second level of competition up there in space? Do you see that as a danger at all?

Mr. McFARLANE: I think the answer to that is that as these technologies are pursued and perhaps materialize, before they are deployed their capacity and the Soviet Union's knowledge of their capacity provides a considerable incentive for arms control. And in fact it's the President's judgment that at that point we could look forward to perhaps a new kind of comprehensive arms control regime involving both offensive and defensive systems.

LEHRER: What about Dr. Drell's concerns about the technical feasibility of this — just the fact that the technology isn't there; he doesn't believe it's there yet — to actually do what the President wants done, which is to protect this country from nuclear attack?

Mr. MacFARLANE: The President is very conscious of that, and in his remarks he said that if it proves out it would surely be beyond the century. The point again is, however, that as we are— if we are to look forward to our present course — building offensive systems over time without apparent limit — isn't it imperative that we consider some alternative? It may not prove out, but it certainly has to be tried.

LEHRER: Mr. MacFarlane, as I'm sure you're aware, many people, particularly in Congress, suggested today that the only reason the President put this ABM proposal in his speech last night was as part of a political selling point on his defense budget. Is that in fact the case?

Mr. MacFARLANE: Well, I think that the reaction from the Hill today, which criticizes the proposal because of its costs, on the one hand, seemed to contradict that charge. That is, that if— it doesn't seem to have had a salient effect in urging people to vote for the other systems. No, it didn't have a role to play and wasn't an influence in the President's decision.

LEHRER: Thank you. Robin?

MacNEIL: Dr. Drell, what about this point that the present course is so dangerous we must look for an alternative?

Dr. DRELL: Well, I think one cannot change policy by declaration. One has to recognize that the technology imposes limitations on policy. I think research and development as allowed by the ABM Treaty, which is what the President said, is proper and we are in fact doing that. So I'm not sure what is new. To get off the present dangerous course I believe a deep, serious, flexible commitment to arms control offers the best option.

MacNEIL: Mr. MacFarlane, is it not true, as Dr. Drell says, that about a billion dollars is now spent a year on this kind of research, and answer his question, what is new about this proposal?

Mr. MacFARLANE: First of all I'd like to corroborate what Dr. Drell has said. Indeed, for the next 20 years the current policies will endure and we will continue to maintain a stable

balance. What is new is focusing attention upon the need to get on with exploring these technologies. Now, there'll be a two-phased plan. In the first phase the President's direction is for scientists — gentlemen from Dr. Drell's community — to work in coordination with the Defense Department and other national security people to identify which of these technologies appears to have promise, and then to come back to the President and say these appear to be worth pursuing or investigating. That will lead to a second phase in which they will be explored over the course of the next years and decades. In short, we are not, as Dr. Drell implied, suggesting an overnight change. As I said, for the next 20 years things will remain essentially as they are.

MacNEIL: Dr. Drell, what about Mr. MacFarlane's point that building towards this capacity would provide a very strong incentive for the Soviets to engage in serious arms control?

Dr. DRELL: I'm not sure how to motivate the Soviets. I would like to, while we are doing the research on weapons, work to see what possibilities there are for negotiations to head off just having another dimension of competition in space with the Soviets for newer arms that will have uncertain results, will perhaps even lead to more instability. Because if we were to see the Soviets announce a big program now to develop ABM, I have no doubt that the first reaction of this country would be to beef up even more our offensive systems to make sure that we preserve the deterrence the President said he would. So it's a two-edged sword. On one hand you stimulate more competition on offensive systems. If you do it alone, on the other hand, with negotiation as part of the effort, it's possible that we could head off the balance of terror by reducing it, by reducing these weapons.

MacNEIL: Dr. MacFarlane, what's your answer on the two-edged sword point?

Mr. MacFARLANE: I think on that score that we're in agreement. The imperative of seeking negotiations and deep reductions right now, and constantly, is clear. And that's a goal the President is committed to both in START — strategic arms — and in intermediate-range arms, where indeed he is proposing that we both adopt zero or none on either side. So I think we're in agreement there that the imperative of arms control is clear today; it is not altered at all by the President's decision. It becomes perhaps more possible later on. But we are very committed to that.

MacNEIL: Well, thank you. Jim?

LEHRER: The bulk of the President's pitch last night, of course, was for something he wants now — a 10% increase in defense spending. The House rejected that yesterday in a budget vote, and it is considered to be in trouble in the Senate. He used charts and intelligence photos to make his public case, but mostly he used strong words. Their effectiveness in selling the Senate on his position is what we measure now, first with Senator Ted Stevens of Alaska, the Republican majority whip of the Senate. Senator, did he make his case for the 10%?

Sen. TED STEVENS: I think he did. I think he did, and I am hopeful that the people who listened to him will do what he asks, and that is communicate with the members of Congress who are wavering in their support for our modernization program.

LEHRER: Well, many were wavering, I assume, before the President spoke. What did he say last night, do you think, that might have influenced those waverers? What was the most persuasive thing he said?

Sen. STEVENS: Well, actually it's the thing that the doctor and Robert have just been discussing here that impressed me most, is the concept of the initiative of moving into this technological phase, of putting greater emphasis on the future and going into the 21st century with emphasis on a true defense rather than offensive capability.

LEHRER: But the word yesterday was that the consensus in the Senate — whatever that means; take that for what it's worth, and you know them better than I — was that this consensus in the Senate was for maybe a five to seven percent increase in defense spending

next year rather than the 10% that the President wants, which is more than the 4% that the House passed yesterday. What do you think? Has that consensus changed any in the last 24 hours?

Sen. STEVENS: Well, we haven't had time to really review that yet, but I do think that the range is probably— the low is somewhere between six and eight percent, maybe as high as 8½. I really don't think we've had a consensus in total support of the President's 10% real growth, though. And that's been our problem.

LEHRER: Do you think that he has a chance, a realistic chance of getting his 10% out of the Senate?

Sen. STEVENS: No, he has a realistic chance of getting more than any President has in recent history. You've got to remember that I think every Congress— Congress has reduced the President's budget every year but six in the last 30 years. The question is, how much is it going to be reduced, not whether it's going to be reduced.

LEHRER: Yeah. How was the House vote yesterday likely to influence what's going to happen in the Senate?

Sen. STEVENS: I think it will actually help us keep the level up because it's obvious there is going to be a negotiation and conference between the House and the Senate, and we would like to come out somewhere higher, much higher than the House 4%.

LEHRER: You said that you hope that the people do what the President suggested they do, which is write their senators and congressmen about this. Is that going to work? Is that a realistic— do you think people are actually going to react over this defense thing based on what he said last night?

Sen. STEVENS: Oh, yes, and we're going into a recess period and most people are going home, at least for part of it, over the Easter holidays. And I do believe it's a good opportunity for them to talk to their congressmen and senators.

LEHRER: You think the photos made any difference, the intelligence photos?

Sen. STEVENS: Well, that's the only place that I disagree. I think that there were a lot more photos from the intelligence community that should have been released. The intelligence community deterred the President from releasing some of those that we think would have a greater impact on the public. I wish that they had used those, but I understand why they didn't. Those Cuban photos from aerial reconnaissance, they're really not as startling as others that we could have used.

LEHRER: Thank you. Robin?

MacNEIL: Now the view of a Democratic senator who opposes the size of President Reagan's defense budget. He is Dale Bumpers of Arkansas, who serves on the Senate Appropriations and Energy committees. Senator, do you think this speech is going to have the effect of so galvanizing public opinion that the Senate will increase the amount of defense spending it votes from where the President's sentiment is?

Sen. DALE BUMPERS: No, I don't, Robin. I think that a lot of people perhaps last night as they watched the President might have been mildly alarmed or confused, but I think in the final analysis most people in this country feel that we are— that we are spending colossal sums on defense, which we are. And it's very difficult, as other persons review and critique the President's speech last night and point out, for example, that weapons procurement will be up 97% in 1984 over 1981; that by the year 1987— by the year 1988, 87% of all the income taxes collected in this country will be spent on defense; and it's very difficult to believe that 535 members of Congress are expected to believe that somehow or other if we don't spend a $1,600 billion on defense, if we cut that back $100 billion, that somehow or other we're fatally jeopardizing our national defense. I just don't believe the American people are going to believe that.

MacNEIL: What did you think of the case Mr. Reagan made last night for the Soviet military buildup?

Sen. BUMPERS: Well, let me say this, that my primary objection to what the President did last night was a matter of balance. There isn't any question that there is always a Soviet threat; there has always been a Soviet threat. The only thing is, I used to practice law and I always had a very worthy adversary on the other side, and I used to find it to my advantage to get both sides to preempt my opponent. Last night the President talked about Soviet strength and he never one time talked about American strengths. He talked about how far ahead of us they are and various things, and yet every year since I've been in the Senate— and I served on the Armed Services Committee for two years. During that two-year period I asked the Joint Chiefs of Staff — and I know that the question has been asked every year since I left that committee — would you trade the American defense posture for the Soviet Union? And every year the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and other members, who are the military leaders we have to rely on, have given us an emphatic no. So my point is, when you consider that we are very far ahead of the Soviets on a number of areas— the Lebanese war for example is graphic proof of what I'm talking about. In 1982, when the Israelis invaded Lebanon they were up against Syria and Russian-made MIGs. In dogfights they destroyed 85 Russian MIGs and did not lose one single American-made plane. They lost one plane in that whole war and it was to ground fire, not to Soviet MIGs.

MacNEIL: So in a word you don't think the speech last night is going to turn things around for the President on the defense budget?

Sen. BUMPERS: Well, you know, Robin, I don't think the defense budget is the only problem we have with these massive deficits that we're facing. But there is one thing for sure. If we spend the amount of money the President is talking about, we're not going to strengthen America; we're going to weaken America.

MacNEIL: Well, thank you. Jim?

LEHRER: Do you agree with that, Senator?

Sen. STEVENS: I couldn't disagree more.

LEHRER: Why?

Sen. STEVENS: We're spending, at the present time, half as much in relation to the total budget for defense as Jack Kennedy did. To hear the Senator from Arkansas talk, you'd think that Jack Kennedy was a warmonger. But we're spending 27% of our budget for defense; Jack Kennedy spent over 50.

Sen. BUMPERS: Ted, now, let's be fair about that. In 1960, when you're talking about the Kennedy budget, Social Security was not a part of the budget. A whole host of items were not a part of the budget. You're talking about apples and oranges. If you use the same budget that we had when President Kennedy was President, we're spending almost 60% of the budget.

Sen. STEVENS: Well, what you're saying— we've got a different mix in our community. We've got greater emphasis now on entitlements, but that doesn't, in terms of relationship to our GNP or our total budget we're spending much less. But the real problem, the thing that I disagree with the Senator on so much is that we have neglected our defenses. We have cancelled; we have stretched out; we have reduced our capability, and those of us on the defense committee know that's the case. The President made the case last night for this tremendous buildup and the realignment of the Soviet forces around the world. There is a greater threat against this country now than there has ever been before since World War II, and we know it.

LEHRER: Is that true, Mr. McFarlane, from your perspective at the White House? Is the threat worse now from the Soviet Union than it's ever been before?

Mr. McFARLANE: There's no question, Jim, that there's been a dramatic change, particularly in the strategic balance in the past decade, in the past 20 years. Senator Bumpers mentions that we have greater requirements for Social Security, and here indeed is an apples and oranges situation. I'm afraid that simply because Social Security requirements have gone up we cannot legislate a diminished threat on the Soviet side. We have to cope with the problem.

Sen. BUMPERS: You misunderstood what I said. In 1960 the Social Security was not a part of the budget, and when you say that 50% of the budget was going for arms in 1960, you're talking almost exclusively about corporate and private income taxes. Today, corporate and private income taxes only constitute about half of the budget.

LEHRER: But, Senator, what about the point that Mr. McFarlane has just now made, also with Senator Stevens, that the Soviet threat is bigger now than it's ever been before?

Sen. BUMPERS: I don't undertand that because the CIA, just two weeks ago, the CIA stated — and *The New York Times* carried this on the front page — that they have since 1970 overestimated Soviet expenditures by a magnitude of two to one.

LEHRER: Mr. McFarlane?

Mr. McFARLANE: That same study, I think if the Senator will acknowledge, also pointed out that by whatever scale you wish to use, the output is enormously greater than our own. The steady-state condition, as reported in this report, of production in aircraft, tanks, ships, artillery and certainly strategic missiles, has been manyfold times the United States. And that has an effect, not only in numbers, but in political influence.

LEHRER: Let me ask Dr. Drell in San Francisco. Do you think the President made the case last night for his defense spending?

Dr. DRELL: Well, I agree that the Soviet threat has grown. It started in the nuclear strategic area in 1969, where his charts began, at a much lower level than ours, and they indeed have a robust force. My concern and my study has not been on the appropriate level of defense spending; it's been a concern to spend on the right weapons. I believe that our conventional forces should be adequate to meet our vital alliance commitments and our security needs. I do not view nuclear weapons as a substitute for conventional forces, because I do not believe nuclear weapons are usable. Like President Eisenhower said, they're weapons of suicide. I do not believe there is a window of vulnerability or gap that we must build up, a window we must close. I think we have very robust forces, but indeed the Soviet threat is bigger than it used to be.

LEHRER: All right. We have to leave it there. Robin?

MacNEIL: Yes, Dr. Drell in San Francisco, thank you for joining us; Mr. McFarlane, Senator Stevens, Senator Bumpers, in Washington. Good night, Jim.

LEHRER: Good night, Robin.

MacNEIL: That's all for tonight. We will be back tomorrow night. I'm Robert MacNeil. Good night.

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(The following articles from COMMONWEAL were published in 1982 when Alexander Haig was U.S. Secretary of State.)

Of several minds: *Thomas Powers*

CHOOSING SIDES

IT'S NOT MILITARY MIGHT WE LACK

THERE IS A CURIOUS claim in the second volume of Henry Kissinger's memoirs. It is that the world is all of a piece. Every nation has its place in the balance of power. A challenge to the status quo in the remotest corner of the globe, even a purely internal challenge, is a challenge to the two great powers. Thus the rise of a leftist government anywhere — even in tiny El Salvador, for example — represents a direct threat to the security of the United States. Since it is the balance of power which maintains world peace, the United States not only has the right but is positively obligated to resist any attempt to change the balance. Presumably the Soviet Union has a similar right, recently exercised in a veiled way in Poland, but Kissinger naturally does not emphasize this corollary of his theory of international relations.

There is a sweeping quality to Kissinger's claim which is quite breathtaking — especially the part about purely internal challenges. The Soviet Union claims a right, in the interest of world peace, to suppress any challenge to the status quo in the socialist bloc of Central Europe — a claim which seems indefensible on its face — but Kissinger goes Moscow one better. He claims a similar right even with neutral nations, in the event one of them threatens to ally itself with the other side.

This sort of geo-realpolitik is hard to swallow for an ordinary citizen, educated in the ideals of self-determination, fair play, the redress of grievances, freedom of conscience, the absolute sovereignty of the people, and so on. As a practical matter, it is hard to see how the United States (or the Soviet Union, which is faced with the identical task) can keep so many lids on at once, more or less forever. As a theoretical matter, it is hard to square a claim of universal interest with our own pride of independence — much less the Charter of the UN. But this only suggests how distant we are from the customary practices of government. On some subjects Kissinger is an uncommonly honest man, and this is one of them. A claim of universal interest is only another way of saying that peace is indivisible; it is the great rule of Munich, carried one step further than it is normally considered polite to go.

We might argue, in fact, that the Munich rule is so ancient it's not a rule at all, but rather a kind of instinct. Great Powers have *always* divided the world in two. As a mental exercise it takes only minutes. As a matter of statecraft it is complex and demanding enough to occupy the whole of the time between wars. Thucydides says somewhere that states do what they can and suffer what they must. This means only that smaller states do not so much choose sides, as try to calculate which of their neighbors is best positioned to force a choice. We need not belabor the point. This is one of the constants of history. It never occurred to Eisenhower or John Foster Dulles that the Indochinese ought to have first say about who ruled Indochina. It never occurred to Kissinger that the election of Allende was a matter for Chileans to decide. It does not occur to Haig now that the people of El Salvador are thinking of their own country first, not the balance of power.

But this is very far from being the case with the rest of us. War in El Salvador is bad enough. We are human; we can feel for the victims. But the really distressing aspect of the war for us is the fact we are being asked to take sides, to judge the rights and wrongs, to accept a theory — well-expressed by Kissinger, but hardly original with him — of what constitutes acceptable change. A revolution, like a divorce, is the most personal of questions. Sympathy is about the best outsiders can offer. How can outsiders hope to judge whether the marriage should endure? These are supremely difficult matters. Their difficulty is suggested by the fact Salvadorans have abandoned argument for war. Now Haig is asking us to do the same thing, and the reason he has been asking obliquely, searching for a minimum assent — the weary okay which might allow intervention — is that we are so visibly reluctant to go down this road again.

I realize I have been using the word "we" pretty freely here. Perhaps you are

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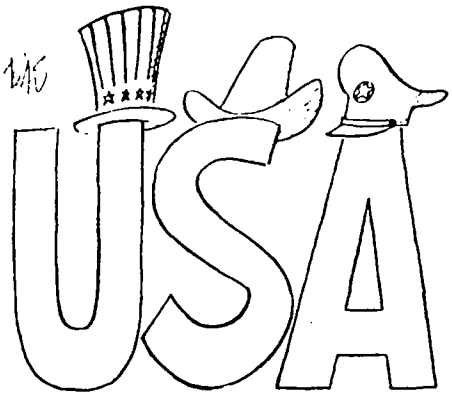
not in confusion about this at all, but clearly see the Soviet-Cuban-Nicaraguan hand and marvel I can be so blind. But I don't mean to say "we" are solidly lined up against Haig, only that it's obvious we aren't solidly behind him. We're divided, as a people and as a country. We can argue about El Salvador but we can't agree about it.

The thing we agree on least is the question of military intervention. Officials in Washington have bulled through a policy of material support for the authorities in San Salvador — Haig has autonomy enough for that — but it is quite possible the guerrillas will win their revolution. It is hardly likely the new regime would be any friendlier to the U.S. than Nicaragua. No one can believe such a victory would discourage other rebel groups in Guatemala. Could Honduras or Panama be far behind?

This is Haig's nightmare, as it was Kissinger's before him — a kind of leftist infection, bringing down one hard-to-defend rightist regime after another. The American press is quick to describe the offhand crimes of rich oligarchs who murder their opponents. It takes a strong stomach to rush to the aid of these brutal ruling cliques whenever they are threatened by a peasant union. Who wept for Somoza? If anyone can be said to deserve his fate, he certainly deserved his. Haig may talk about progress, evolution, the growth of democracy in Central America, but what does he actually get? Secret murder squads, bombings, bodies in the roads and the garbage dumps. The forces of law and order are illiterate teenaged soldiers with American M-16s, or national police in sunglasses and short-sleeved shirts which hang loose at the waist. Their idea of interrogation technique is a bullet behind the ear.

El Salvador has three million people in a territory the size of Massachusetts. This tiny country has suffered tens of thousands of political killings. Murder is the nation's only modern industry. Most of it is conducted by the side Haig asks us to support — the side with condominiums in Miami and bank accounts in the Bahamas. Is it any wonder Haig finds it an uphill job to persuade Americans we may have to send in our own



soldiers, in the event the oligarchs' policy of murder fails to sustain their power?

It is increasingly apparent that Haig's power of persuasion is not up to the task. If it appears the guerrillas are going to win, we won't intervene to stop them. What will happen then? If history is any guide, the new populist regime will postpone elections indefinitely, arrest leading figures in the army and the national police, restrict the purchase of newsprint by the right-wing press, nationalize the banks, prohibit the export of capital, encourage peasants to expropriate large landholdings, exchange ambassadors with the Soviet Union, tell reporters from the *New York Times* and the *Washington Post* the new government plans on a mixed economy, officially denounce continued Israeli occupation of the West Bank, deny the existence of political prisoners, reach an agreement for the export of coffee to the Soviet Union at a favorable price, issue thirty-year bonds at three percent interest to owners of nationalized property, send fifty young men to Bulgaria for pilot training, instruct El Salvador's delegate to the UN to support recognition of the new regime in Kampuchea, elect the widow of a political moderate to the ruling junta, send birthday greetings to Fidel Castro, blame Washington for the deterioration of relations, and invite the Soviet Union to help reorganize El Salvador's security services.

We might argue about the details late into the night. But the pattern is a clear one, and the choice is not pleasant — brutal oligarchs defending privilege and cheap domestic help on one side, a repressive one-party state aborning on the other. Whichever side wins, the people of El Salvador will go on being poor. The strategic significance of the outcome is not so clear. Back in 1961 J. William Fulbright, then chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, told Kennedy he thought Cuba was a thorn in the side, not a dagger in the heart. Kennedy apparently disagreed. Kissinger and Haig certainly do. The broad American public cannot make up its mind. Some think one way, some another. We don't like the regime waiting in the wings, and we don't want to fight to preserve the status quo. There is nothing new or unfamiliar about the situation. We have faced it repeatedly since 1945 — in Greece, in the Philippines, in Vietnam, in Cuba, in Angola, in Nicaragua and El Salvador. We have never been eager to intervene militarily, and are so reluctant to do so now that not even Haig seems willing to propose it outright.

The United States has spent a couple of trillion dollars on defense since the end of World War II. Our strategic capacity is unequaled, despite gloomy remarks of late in Washington, but our conventional capacity is very great too — a navy of 450 ships, armored divisions, transport aircraft, and so on. We sent an expeditionary force of half a million men to Vietnam, and *could* have sent many more. We could invade and conquer Cuba in short order, if we decided to do so, and Russia was unwilling to resort to nuclear weapons to stop us. We have power enough to decide matters in Angola. We have got power enough now to defeat the guerrillas in El Salvador, who are few, poorly armed, indifferently led, denied a sanctuary, and far from sources of supply. It is not military might we lack, despite claims in Washington we need to spend nearly two trillion dollars in the next five years to build up our strength. What we lack is a consensus — agreement on what threatens us, and what we ought to do about it. Nixon once said he feared the United States would become a pitiful, helpless giant, if it shrank from war in the defense of its friends. But we are not helpless, just undecided, and we shall remain undecided until officials in Washington have got something better to suggest than sending in the bombers and the Green Berets whenever the oligarchs tremble before the peasants.

THOMAS POWERS

Of several minds: *John Garvey*

A POLITICS OF SILENCE

GETTING AWAY FROM THE QUICK FIX

I HAVE PROBABLY been spending too much time with newspapers and magazines and radio news recently, because my current mood is clearly a reaction, but one which I think is worth defending. I am coming to think that we live on noise, and make life and death decisions on the basis of allegiances which are shallow and destructive, but which nevertheless hold us. We believe that unimportant things are important, that we must make choices which in fact we do not have to make; and we trust the information we receive, just as we trust leaders who should not be trusted at all. I am not ready yet to find a place without electricity in the woods where I can get away from this noise, but it is important to call noise by its real name and to record what seems truly stupid about our common life and common political worries. It is important not to let people who seem to live on speed and on self-importance, people like Alexander Haig and most television reporters, define the limits of our world.

The problem is that to a large extent they do. It is in part our fault. We seek the news: it is a distraction, full of interesting stories. It tells about a world which appears to be more interesting and important than our own. It is more clearly storylike than our own dailiness is; it is full of beginnings and outcomes — how will the Falkland Islands story end? Who is the hero and who the villain in El Salvador? Without these stories and other distractions we would have to confront the emptiness which silence always seems to threaten us with. This is not the only reason we pay attention to the news — it will be personally important to know when World War III begins — but it is one of them.

We look at the surface of a quickly told story and think that we see real information about the world we live in — about, for instance, "a threat to our national security." That sounds real and important. But how is that information bred? Here is where our desire for distraction, for noise, becomes dangerous. Politicians worry less about the world's well-being than about how they are perceived; this matters more to their future, which is defined completely, even neurotically, in terms of the power they will be able to wield. When Jimmy Carter felt Republican breath at the back of his neck he got even more hawkish than he had been. Better to shove us closer to the brink than to appear a wimp in the eyes of the electorate. But because Carter looked like a wimp anyway, Reagan was able to make Carter's final plans for a massive defense build-up look not good enough, and he was able to propose even bigger expenditures — he had to, since he had accused Carter of being soft in this area. Carter's need to appear tough and Reagan's need to show that he wasn't upped the ante, which raised our defense expenditures and set off ripples to which the Soviets must respond with a build-up of their own. And of course the Soviets have their own baroque infrastructure and a defense establishment which, like ours, feeds on its own growth.

Much of what is finally presented to us as a problem of our national security in fact begins as a contest for power which has nothing directly to do with any real external threat, but with party politics and the desire to win elections. This extension of personal and party ambitions has a permanent effect on defense and foreign policy. As long as we remain as uncritical as we are of the choices offered us, this will be a problem. Our only acceptable form of criticism now contributes to the problem: we feel that we must criticize a Reagan by voting for a Carter, despite the fact that it is Carter's fear of defeat which has led him to propose unprecedented defense expenditures.

One of our first obligations as citizens or victims, depending on how you feel about the system, is not to believe what they tell you. They have reasons for saying what they say that have nothing to do with the truth about our international position, but rather with personal and institutional ambition. This has been true ever since Kennedy gave us a non-existent missile gap; it continues in Reagan's insistence that we are behind the Soviets, despite that we could more than destroy their entire country, just as they could ours; and Reagan's own Defense Department says in its statement for this fiscal year that we can speak of rough equality between the two superpowers.

Our problem is that the ambitions of our leaders finally do affect international reality. Their ambitions lead to wars, or to the support of governments which make life miserable for those who must live under them.

The commentary surrounding the elections in El Salvador has been intriguing. It's another example of noise. To people who believe in democracy as a sort of religion the elections were encouraging because so many people voted: all those people got out and exercised their franchise! The fact that they voted for the parties of the right, including a hefty chunk for the man who is suspected of having ordered the murder of Archbishop Romero, the fact that the cause of reform and justice has probably been set back by the vote, these things matter less than the exercise of the franchise, ripped out of any decent context. What was not often mentioned is that it is against the law *not* to vote in El Salvador. To be sure, the vote was in part the expression of a terrible weariness, of a desire to see something happen which might end the killing. There are people who saw in the elections a massive repudiation of the left, and this surprised them. According to one romantic vision the left must always represent the deepest aspirations of the poor. But right and left are the twin pincers of a great claw. In between are people who would be quite happy to live

without either. The vote was interesting, but hardly encouraging.

We have been raised on the belief that our ability to choose between the limited options offered us at election time is a proof that we are free. We also tend to believe that the majority is more likely to be right about something than the minority is; at least we hope that through education and information the majority will make the right choice. The "will of the people" becomes sacred, as if there were such a simple thing, or, even if there were, as if it would be a good thing. The abolitionists, after all, were a crazy minority. Most people would have voted a more moderate course on slavery. The electoral process should be seen in the light of Plato's *Gorgias*, which describes the limits of democracy.

The solution does not lie in the repudiation of democracy, and certainly not in an adoption of more elitist forms of rule. But we do have to understand that the rise and fall of political fortunes, the stories we see on the news, are distractions from profoundly important political questions which are scarcely ever dealt with publicly, though they have much more to do with our futures than the results of a presidential election.

Some problems — the arms race, for example — are direct results of the systems we vote for. The answer is not to be found within the system: we would be foolish to leave the solution of our problems to the system which gave them birth. Politicians are now scrambling to follow the people on the issue of the nuclear arms freeze, an issue which would not have come up if for years those same politicians had not routinely voted military appropriations. The leaders of both the U.S. and USSR believe that their plans for the future of the planet are worth threatening the destruction of whole human populations, if in fact they don't someday destroy them. In his deservedly praised *The Fate of the Earth*, just published by Knopf, Jonathan Schell points out that even if we were to dismantle every warhead on earth, we would still know how to make them. As long as sovereignty remains our dominant political consideration, the making and use of nuclear weapons will be a temptation.

We have been encouraged to believe that we must choose between the narrow political alternatives offered us by the party system. It is considered a terrible thing not to vote. But this is nonsense: you really don't have to choose. You have every right, and maybe even the duty, to say that you find the choices offered you stupid and destructive. It is right to refuse the terms that we are offered; we aren't free unless we can do that. Most of the misery in the modern world is the result of people taking some form of national or ideological allegiance seriously. Millions died in concentration camps, hundreds of thousands died from fire bombing, atomic weapons, and napalm, because people were willing to obey orders.

Some of those people obeyed orders because they feared the system they saw ranged against their own, and with good reason; but in answering ideology with ideology, force with force, we contribute to the problem. The hope of all well-intentioned political violence is that we kill now so that someday men can be brothers, as if ends and means could be separated. This is the dream of the left. The right kills in defense of tradition; it believes that bad ideas can be murdered, and those who hold them can be frightened away from their belief. Ever since war began we have seen our enemies as potential cowards; we can terrify them into laying down their arms and backing away from us. Dogs fight that way, but people usually don't. We assume that our enemies will be craven, and know that we ourselves are not. Our enemies know the same thing. Johnson was sure he could bomb them back to the stone age, but knew that *we* could never be bombed into submission. It's always different with *them*. In a recent *Notre Dame Magazine* article, Michael Novak, defending the arms race, suggested that because the Soviets have an unchristian approach to truth they could not be trusted. A few days later I saw Caspar Weinberger say of an arms treaty that the U.S. might have to "rethink our commitment to that language" — words to that effect anyway, meaning that we would have to break it.

All of this is part of what I mean by noise. If our current politics is born in the need for distraction and feeds in shallow waters on our desire for simple answers, the way out is not more noise and more rhetoric. We need to have a politics which begins in silence, and an understanding that there is no quick fix, no ideology or system which will save us. Time spent in the refusal of any distraction — in prayer, in attentive awareness — teaches us how cluttered our own hearts are, how full of anger and resentment and self-importance.

The people who decide our futures ask for and, unfortunately, receive a power over our lives which is crazy, a product of noise. Like us, they are ambitious, confused, envious, divided, and angry. They do not know their own hearts very well, any more than we do. They need approval from the rest of us to go on. Unfortunately, they are not like Tinkerbell — they will not disappear if we refuse to clap for them. But we can make a beginning by refusing to accept the terms we are offered, by understanding that we do not need to accept any choice in an election, and by encouraging our children to be as skeptical of any system's claim as they ought to be of any advertiser, particularly when that claim can lead to the worldwide violence which our leaders would have us believe is an inevitable part of the atmosphere now, something like a new sort of weather.

It is hard to imagine a politics born of silence and self-examination, but we may look to Gandhi for a clue as to how it might be done and to the anti-nuclear movement as a sign of hope. It is certainly more realistic to pursue that course than to accept the choices offered us as absolutely essential by people whose hearts are as confused and divided as our own.

JOHN GARVEY

Variations on a Theme

It has been hinted often enough in the media that the strongman of Libya is a bit mad. Perhaps he has been driven so because nobody has bothered to ask him how he wants his name spelled:

In Newsweek, it's	Kaddafi
In The Economist,	Qaddafi
In Wall Street Journal,	Qadhafi
In Manchester Guardian,	Gadafy
In N.Y.Times	Khadafy

...??—ECL

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