## Peter Berger Responds:

I have great respect and affection for John Bennett, and it distresses me that my recent observations offended him. Still, I must stand by them. It is true that the boundaries between the peace movement and the New Left were uncertain. Part of the reason for this is that those in the movement who were not of the latter persuasion took little or no trouble to make those boundaries clear, thus contributing to the widespread public image of the movement as anti-American. It is also true that one has primary responsibility to denounce atrocities committed by one's own country. However, the very credibility of this denunciation is undermined if the atrocities of the other side are ignored or denied. This, I think, is what happened with the credibility of the peace movement. In that case the "double standard" was not only morally reprehensible but politically self-defeating. As to my conservatism, surely this very article, if nothing else, should make amply clear that it has little in common with the spirit that moved into the White House with Richard Nixon.

As to Barbara Goldhush's comments, I can only affirm my opposition to the "double standard" in all camps. Those who denounce torture in North Vietnam but remain silent about torture in Brazil are just as immoral as those who reverse this procedure of selective outrage. On one point, though, Goldhush has understood me very well indeed: I do not accept the proposition that an allegedly noble cause justifies all and any means-I do not accept it in the cause of "liberation struggle," and just as little "in defense of the Free World."

Bennett feels that my political stance is "élitist." I wish that he would tell me what élite he has in mind. I'm badly in need of an élite to identify with, being just about equally alienated from the political élite "on the right" and the intellectual élite "on the left." And Goldhush characterizes my noncommitment as a "luxury." I wish it were.

I would rather describe as luxurious (psychologically luxurious, that is) those commitments that allow an individual to justify this or that set of human agonies in the name of alleged "necessities."

## "The Last Time We Had a Multipolar World . . ." Doesn't Work Out Very Well

To the Editors: Efforts to draw historical parallels are, of course, often very useful. They are just as often grossly misleading. I'm afraid that Donald Brandon's "The Last Time We Had a Multipolar World Things Didn't Work Out Very Well" (Worldview, March) falls more into the second category.

Perhaps the fatal error is that Mr. Brandon focuses excessively, maybe exclusively, upon the structural'similarities between the 1930's and the 1970's. Even there, however, he overlooks one major structural difference: namely, the existence of the United Nations (which, despite the Nixon Administration's downgrading of it, has not yet gone out of business). Then too he fails to take fully into account the enormous difference between a world in which the United States and the Soviet Union are the dominant partners and a world of the 1930's in which the dominant imperial powers were already, largely as a consequence of World War I, sapped of both energy and vision.

Beyond the structural questions, however, there are enormous substantive differences. National Socialism in Germany, Fascism in Italy and imperial militarism in Japan were all quite candidly committed to geopolitical expansion through military means. While the ideology of the Soviet Union and perhaps of China might reflect a similar commitment, their histories over the last twenty years belie their ideological posturings. Indeed, it is the United States, presumably the most ideologically "pacific" of the super-

powers, that has, notably in Indochina engaged in the only major military aggression. One hopes that even in that case a lesson has been learned and the fiasco is not likely to be repeated in the near future.

Historians are always contending that the worth of their craft lies in its supplying historical parallels from which lessons may be drawn. I am not unsympathetic to the argument. Unfortunately, when the parallels are drawn in such a strained and implausible fashion as Mr. Brandon draws them, it tends to discredit the worth of historical study, especially in the area of international affairs.

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