

worldview

A JOURNAL OF ETHICS AND FOREIGN AFFAIRS

COSMIC MCCARTHYISM

The crises of July 1958 have had two salutary effects. One is spiritual: they have given us a new intimation of our mortality; the other is political: they have caused us, at last, to reexamine our positions on the Middle East.

For a few days in mid-July we seemed (and perhaps were) close to the point-of-no-return for the human race. And we reached this point unexpectedly, in the dark. The United States' decision to send troops to Lebanon, and its brief contemplation of military intervention in Iraq, were not part of a long-range strategy; they were not the painful, last-measure applications of a coherent policy. They were, rather, on-the-spot reactions to situations we had not prepared ourselves to meet; they were largely uncalculated risks, the consequences of which we cannot even now foresee.

It was relatively easy to dispatch our forces to the Middle East. Our problem now is to get them out, without, in the process, inviting a worse disaster than the one we at least temporarily averted. In the meantime Mr. Khrushchev has a propaganda field day, and we wait. But as some wit has observed, one can do many things with bayonets, but one cannot sit on them.

And so we know, better than before, the mortality of our cause. This may be how it and all else are finally lost—through some desperate, last minute gamble, some ultimate act of brinkmanship which, given another policy, a little more wisdom, would not have had to be. Because war is not inevitable. The dilemma we now face in the Middle East was not inevitable. (This is our humiliation.) Disaster, when it comes, results more from our folly than from history's inexorable course.

Good as such knowledge is for our souls, however, it does us little good in ordering the affairs of this world, unless it leads us to revise the ways we have tried to order them in the past. Fortunately, there are signs (by no means certain yet) that a revision is underway. American newspapers and magazines are now full of reexamina-

tions of Middle-East complexities. One can read every day in almost every place that the problem of Arab nationalism is something more subtle than the manipulation of Colonel Nasser by the Kremlin. If the national administration reads these reappraisals and takes them seriously, there may still be hope.

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During the campaign of 1952, in one of his ironical asides, Adlai E. Stevenson alluded to the obsession some people felt with the problem of Communism in the bureau of fishery. The irony was lost, of course, upon those to whom it was directed, but its point was valid then and is valid now: the reality of the Communist danger must not trap us in the madness of attributing all of our problems to Communism. We must not fall victims to the devil-theory of history, seeing every complexity that haunts us as the machination, pure and simple, of the "enemy." Such an obsession is comfortable, in its way, but it is fatal too.

McCarthyism, in its classic manifestations, is such an obsession, and for several years it raged as an epidemic in our national life, making a sane perspective and rational decision almost impossible for large numbers of our citizens. Everyone agrees that around 1955 the epidemic was somehow arrested and a decent measure of sanity restored to the nation's life.

But the events of the past month, and the light they shed on our policies during the past several years, indicate that the sickness is not completely cured. A more subtle, less vulgar form of it seems still to afflict us in the formulation of our policies abroad, leading us to see the wrong enemy in the wrong place at the wrong time, destroying our perspective, blinding us to the real problems we face.

The past obsession of our foreign policy with the military threat of Communism, to the virtual exclusion of all other more complex concerns, can only be described as a kind of cosmic McCarthyism. If this obsession goes uncured much longer

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its consequences for us internationally will be even more deplorable than they were for us domestically from 1950 to 1955.

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What have been the consequences of this obsession as they have determined our policy in the Middle East? The most immediate of them has been that we have treated Mid-East problems primarily as problems of Communist military subversion. We have tended to see issues in those black-and-white categories that are so congenial to the McCarthyite mind.

Example: Our "friends" in the Middle East are those who support the Western cause in the Cold War; our "foes" are those who remain "neutral" (and "neutrality," as every good McCarthyite knows, is merely a mask behind which the Communist devil hides.)

Example: Arab nationalism and the cause of pan-Arab unity must be opposed because they play into the Soviet's hands. The status quo must be maintained. And Colonel Nasser is a mere "dupe" of the Communist conspiracy—a puppet in Mr. Khrushchev's grasp.

The results of such simplifying we now see. As John Courtney Murray recalls in an essay quoted elsewhere in this issue, "The children of this world are shrewder than the children of light." Our obsession with the problem of Communism, everywhere and in every situation, has led us to be identified throughout large areas of the Middle East with the cause of reaction. The Soviet Union, on the other hand, through its successful (however hypocritical) identification with the cause of Arab national aspirations, is identified with the cause of "progress" and peace. History can hold few more tragic ironies.

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The United States speaks much of the captive peoples of Eastern Europe. Our government anguishes over their plight, and we are uncompromisingly moral over the question of their eventual liberation. All this is as it should be.

But in this we lay ourselves open to the charge of hypocrisy, unless we are equally concerned over the plight of other peoples—peoples whose "captivity" is as real as is the captivity of the satellites—even though it may not be a captivity imposed by Soviet might.

Because military captivity is not the only form of captivity, and the Soviet Union is not the only oppressor in the world. The Arab peoples were

for centuries the captives of hunger and privation. They were in bondage to Western greed and the greed of their own feudal rulers. Now they are determined that this captivity shall end. Shall we seem less concerned with their aspirations than we are with the aspirations of, say, Hungary or Poland, merely because these aspirations do not so conveniently serve the immediate ends of our own national policy? If this should be the case, we shall have betrayed not only the Arab peoples but ourselves.

Late in July a typographical error on the first page of *The New York Times* gave one pause. The *Times* reported that, because of the disintegration of the Baghdad Pact, Mr. Dulles had hastened to London in an effort "to hold the past together." Let us hope that this typo is not our epitaph.

AND THE SUMMIT

As this is written, there is still no certainty that a Summit meeting will be held. But it seems probable that, sometime during August or early September, the heads of State will gather, and it is here that the test of our ability to learn from recent events will take place.

This test will be whether we use the Summit merely as an occasion for meeting the "aggression" charges of Mr. Khrushchev by leveling counter "aggression" charges of our own—period—or whether, resisting such temptations to futility, we choose a Summit encounter to advance a new program for future political and economic stability in the Middle East—a program in which we would invite the Soviet Union to join.

The crisis of July has established several points beyond dispute. (And none of them, probably, are too easy for some Americans to take.) One is that Arab national aspirations are genuine and, in the long run, inevitable. Another is that Colonel Nasser represents something more real than a Soviet "front." Another is that the Soviet Union has interests in the Middle East which can no longer be denied.

If the West enters a Summit conference with these facts as an accepted starting point, and then proceeds to concern itself with a future program built upon them, rather than with accusations built upon past illusions and errors, then the cause of stability and independence in the Middle East may yet be saved.