

FOIA b3b

Why I Oppose Vietnam Critics

EXTENSION OF REMARKS

OF

HON. CHARLES C. DIGGS, JR.

OF MICHIGAN

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, January 27, 1966

Mr. DIGGS. Mr. Speaker, I ask consent to include in the Record the following article by Dr. John P. Roche:

A DISTINGUISHED PROFESSOR EXPLAINS: WHY I OPPOSE VIETNAM CRITICS

(By Dr. John P. Roche)

(NOTE.—Dr. John J. Roche is Morris Hillquit, professor of labor and social thought at Brandeis University in Waltham, Mass. He was national chairman of Americans for Democratic Action from 1962 to 1965, and is the author of numerous works on American politics, the most recent being "Shadow and Substance, Essays on the Theory and Structure of Politics.")

(The article expressing his views on the anti-Vietnam movement was written especially for the Detroit News.)

I have been actively involved in arguments over American foreign policy since the eve of World War II, but I confess that never in my memory has there been such an intense outpouring of irrational bitterness as we are seeing today.

Only the high point of "McCarthyism" could possibly match the tirades that are appearing on the subject of Vietnam, and not since I denounced the John Birch Society in print some 5 or 6 years ago have I received the kind of hate mail that has been coming in lately: "Drop dead you — baby-burner."

What is peculiar about the anti-Vietnam movement (or movements—there is no monolithic organization) is that its headquarters are found in what is often called the "intellectual" sector of American society, but that the atmosphere in which it operates is reminiscent not of intellectual argument and discourse but of the primitive religious camp meeting complete with hymns, chants, and apocalyptic visions.

And what passes for argument is, at least to one who has made a life's commitment to rational discourse, appalling beyond belief. Recently, for example, after I had presented my views in support of the administration's policy a young man leaped to his feet and impaled me with "Would Christ have carried a draft card?" The best I could do was say that one intelligent question deserved another and asked him, "Would Christ have carried a social security card?"

ANTIWAR ARGUMENTS EXAMINED

Since the opponents of our intervention in Vietnam have refused to carry the logical burden of setting out their premises in coherent fashion, let me try to examine what I take to be the different grounds on which an American can rationally come out against the Vietnam war.

Starting at the simplest level, an individual may oppose the war because he does not want to take any time out from his career for military service, because it would make his mother nervous if he were in the Army, or even because the pay is insufficient.

These are quite rational stands, though hardly adequate as a foundation for national policymaking. Nor—it must be emphasized—do they supply much of a base for a radical critique of the "warfare state"; whatever the content of "radicalism" may be, it is certainly not built around the proposition "I want to survive."

Everyone has a constitutional right not to be a hero (I have exercised my privileges under this heading on occasion), but he has no right to dress up his human failings in a halo of higher morality.

By definition then, the "radical intellectual" must base his opposition to our involvement in Vietnam on principled rather than expedient grounds. And anyone claiming the status of an intellectual—radical or otherwise—is under the compelling obligation to formulate his views with logical consistency; he cannot leapfrog his premises anytime one of them begins to seem inadequate.

If he rejects violence, he must do so on the basis of generic commitments. If he says "I reject war because innocent people are killed," he is forbidden any favorite wars.

Now on what principled grounds can an intellectual denounce the war in Vietnam? It seems to me there are two principled bases of opposition.

The first is an absolute rejection of war as an instrument of international policy which should be accompanied by an equivalent rejection of violence in personal relations.

This is, of course, the classical pacifist position nobly exemplified in our time by A. J. Muste and the American Friends Service Committee. The pacifist, whether religious or humanist, has made a total dedication to a world without violence, has adopted what Max Weber called an ethic of ultimate ends, and is quite prepared to "speak truth to power" whatever may be the personal consequences.

I am unable to accept the final demands of pacifism. Yet I am quite prepared to recognize and honor those who take this position. They are spokesmen for what is probably an impossible ideal, but I hope, in the interests of my descendants, that their ideal will triumph.

However, I must live with my limitations, and I am simply not capable of arguing that the Indians should passively submit to the Chinese, the Israelis to the Arabs, or the black Rhodesians to the whites (or for that matter the Negroes of Mississippi to the Ku Klux Klan) in the name of this ultimate vision of nonviolence.

Thus, while I cannot accept his premise, I have no quarrel with the pacifist who objects to our intervention in Vietnam: He is, in Thoreau's phrase, marching to a different drum and his dedication to his objective transcends the mundane criteria of international relations as we know them. In the Augustinian sense, he is in this work but not of it—his allegiance is to a city of God which the rest of us can only imagine as a misty, remote aspiration. His witness demands our respect.

If one is not a pacifist, he may still find a moral basis for condemning American policy in Vietnam by arguing that—while violence per se is not necessarily evil—the goals of public policy are immoral and corrupt all the instruments. It is not that innocent women and children are dying, but that they are dying unnecessarily as a consequence of an evil policy.

An individual with this approach could logically support war in defense of India or Israel while opposing our activities in Vietnam. But this line of argument requires considerable support. One cannot simply say that he is prepared to use violence in situation X but in situation Y on grounds of personal taste, because he likes Indians or Israelis. Any charge of immorality, in sum, has to be formulated on some consistent theoretical infrastructure.

THERE CAN BE ONLY ONE ANSWER

What basis is there for charging that we are engaged in an immoral war in Vietnam?

Pacifists excepted, there can only be one answer: that the Communists are right and we are wrong, that we are engaged in an "unjust war." The techniques of war-making are irrelevant—if we are wrong, it would be as immoral to fight with crossbows as with jets and napalm.

Similarly, the fact that innocent women and children are dying is in itself irrelevant—if we were right, as we presumably were in fighting Nazi Germany, the death of the innocent would be written off as an unfortunate byproduct of necessary and just acts.

We must then turn to the question of the

justice of the Communist cause in Vietnam since this and this alone can provide principled grounds to the nonpacifist opponent of U.S. policy. (There are a number of expedient grounds for opposing the war and taking an isolationist posture in Asia, but we are here concerned with the moral bases of opposition.)

Prof. Eugene Genovese, of Rutgers University, stated very frankly: "I do not fear or reject the impending Vietcong victory in Vietnam. I welcome it." From his vantage point as the prophet of the Marxist weltgeist, Genovese sees the confrontation in Vietnam as one between an historically progressive north and a reactionary neocolonialist south.

If one shares Professor Genovese's Marxist religious convictions, it is patent that the United States is the "buttress of reaction," that we are trying to derail the locomotive of history, and that we are fighting a rear-guard action against the forces of "historical progress."

By definition a war against socialism must be immoral—Professor Genovese and those who agree with him have thus set forth a consistent case for opposing the war. Those of his persuasion and the integral pacifists are, I submit, the only individuals who have established their standing as moral critics of American intervention.

PRACTICALITY RATHER THAN MORALITY

Let us now turn to the other types of anti-war argument which can be broadly designated as expedient or pragmatic.

Here we have a broad spectrum ranging from new-fashioned isolationists on one extreme to the "American protection is more hazardous than Communist tyranny" position at the other. These objections to our actions run against their practicality or productivity rather than their morality.

An interesting development has been the conversion of a number of liberals, and even some alleged radicals, to the dogmas of geopolitics, traditionally a reactionary entertainment.

The great expectation among these neo-Machiavellians is that, with the proper bribe, Ho Chi Minh will become a "Tito" and presumably rush to contain Red China. The problem with this is that the Red Chinese have not been leaning on Ho; Tito, after all, did not become a "Tito" for the sheer novelty of it. But our geopolitical snaglers may devise some way of getting the Chinese Communists to put the arm on Ho (perhaps with a research grant from the CIA).

A variation on the geopolitical theme suggests that we should turn the South Vietnamese over to Ho, make the Russians happy, the Red Chinese mad, and thus stimulate the Sino-Soviet schism. Somebody has, I think, suggested that we could improve this scenario by giving the South Vietnamese to the Russians to give to Ho.

I think this bush league Machiavellianism is childish nonsense: for one thing, it is unwise to dabble in the heresies of other men's churches. Moreover, E. H. Carr's observation on a similar effort in geopolitical horse trading sticks in my mind as a warning to our self-styled "realists."

"The negotiations," Carr remarked in 1939, "which led up to the Munich Agreement of September 29, 1938, were the nearest approach in recent years to the settlement of a major international issue by a procedure of peaceful change." Unfortunately, the Nazis refused to stay bought and Carr had to do some rewriting for the next edition of this work.

The most persuasive argument for getting out of Vietnam rests on what might be called updated isolationism. Ironically, isolationism is in the 1960's a functional position; i.e., it is feasible for the United States to devote itself wholeheartedly to affluence in one country and let the rest of the world slide off into chaos.

Weapons technology has ended our need for foreign bases: with ICBM's and naval power we no longer have any military rationale for involvement outside of the Western