

Commentary

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NORMAN PODHORETZ, EDITOR

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Mr. Herbert E. Meyer
Vice Chairman
National Intelligence Council
Room 7E47
Washington, D.C. 20505

Dear Herb:

Just in case you have trouble locating "The Future Danger," I've decided to send you a copy. If you keep your promise to read it, you will see how uncannily close it comes to the kind of discussion you wish to promote. I also neglected to mention yesterday that the Committee for the Free World is planning its next conference, to be held in Washington in the fall, on the very questions you have raised. Midge will probably give you a call one of these days about her plans.

Best,



Norman Podhoretz

enclosure
NP/rk

The Future Danger

Norman Podhoretz

EVERYONE—or nearly everyone at any rate—now recognizes that a change of major proportions came over the United States after the seizure of the hostages in Iran in November 1979 and the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan which followed hard upon its heels. Yet putting the case in such precise temporal terms is slightly misleading. It suggests that the change in question occurred overnight and all at once, whereas what actually happened was the dramatic crystallization of a process which had been developing and gathering momentum for five years and possibly even more. Having thus matured, this great change went on to demand—and achieve—full political expression and representation. Within a year after the hostages were seized, Ronald Reagan, who embodied the new mood more fully than any other candidate for the Presidency in 1980, had first swept away all his Republican rivals with relative ease, and had then gone on to inflict a humiliating defeat on the sitting Democratic President.

Reagan's victory was all the more significant in that Jimmy Carter had in response to Iran and Afghanistan made his own adjustment to the new mood, and was much more closely attuned to it than Edward Kennedy, his chief rival within the Democratic party. But Carter's adjustments were too hasty, too little, and too late to overcome his identification with the now discredited attitudes of the recent past and the policies generated by those attitudes.

In winning the Presidency by a landslide, then, Ronald Reagan confirmed, and in unmistakable terms, that a new consensus had indeed come into being. Specifically his election demonstrated that two related arguments which had been raging in the United States for the past decade or so were now finally settled. The first concerned the growth of Soviet power, and the second had to do with the decline of American power.

I

IN RETROSPECT it seems strange that there should have been any argument at all, let alone a ferocious one, over the growth of

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Soviet power. After all, the basic facts were available and they were reasonably clear. It was no secret that in the course of the negotiations to resolve the Cuban missile crisis of 1962, one of the Soviet representatives, Vassily Kuznetsov, told a member of the American team, John J. McCloy, that the Soviet Union would never let such a thing happen to it again. In an "eyeball-to-eyeball" confrontation with the United States, the Soviets had been forced to back down by superior American power. Their naval power had been no match for ours, and the strategic nuclear balance looming behind the conventional match-up had been even more overwhelmingly favorable to the United States. In short, the Soviets knew that they would be beaten in a limited naval engagement, and that if such an engagement should escalate into a nuclear exchange, their country would suffer much greater damage than they could inflict upon us. It was this situation that, Kuznetsov vowed, the Soviets would never allow to arise again.

Nor was it any secret that the Soviets proved as good as Kuznetsov's word. They embarked on a military build-up so steady and of such impressive breadth and scope that concealment would have been impossible even if it had been the objective. In every category of military power, conventional and nuclear, strategic and tactical, on land, on the sea, and in the air, the Soviets moved relentlessly forward. Quantities were increased year by year while the quality and sophistication of these ever larger arsenals were simultaneously being improved and refined.

The facts, as I say, were known. There might be uncertainty or disagreement over the exact dimensions of the Soviet build-up. Inside the CIA, for example, analysts examining the data came up with a lower estimate of the sums the Soviets were spending on the military than a group of outside analysts ("Team B") looking at the same material. But there was no disagreement among the informed over the upward direction of the general trend.

Nevertheless, while not exactly denying the facts of the case, many people simply refused to pay any attention to them. This refusal was manifested in a tendency to discuss the American defense budget as though it were a purely domestic issue—how much money the "Pentagon" could get for itself as

compared with the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare. Rarely if ever in the debates over spending for defense from the late 60's through the mid-70's did anyone emphasize the major threat that American military power existed to defend against. One heard next to nothing in those years about the Soviet build-up in conventional forces and how it might affect our own military needs. Mainly what one heard about was the putatively bloated American military establishment whose size was evidently a function of self-aggrandizing machinations by the military-industrial complex and had no relation whatever to anything the Soviets were doing in the field of military force.

One did, to be sure, hear a good deal even in those years about Soviet advances in the *nuclear* area, especially in connection with the negotiations that eventually led to the signing of SALT I in 1972. Yet here too an effort was made to prevent the facts from speaking for themselves. Instead of simply being disregarded, as in the case of the build-up of Soviet conventional forces, the build-up in strategic nuclear forces was explained away.

As Richard Pipes* described the process: "The frenetic pace of the Soviet nuclear build-up was explained first on the ground that the Russians had a lot of catching up to do, then that they had to consider the Chinese threat, and finally on the grounds that they are inherently a very insecure people and should be allowed an edge in deterrent capability." The Soviets could not in this view be expected to engage in serious arms-control negotiations so long as they were in a position of inferiority. But the minute they "felt themselves equal to the United States in terms of effective deterrence, they would stop further deployment"—and they would then cooperate with us in setting a cap on the "arms race."

When, however, these expectations were disappointed by the refusal of the Soviet Union to remain content with parity after it had achieved it, the response was to dismiss its drive for superiority as meaningless. Henry Kissinger's "What in the name of God is strategic superiority . . . at these levels of numbers?" (a rhetorical question to which some years later he would give a different answer from the one implied here) was the most famous American expression of this attitude. But it was by no means the only one. Thus McGeorge Bundy, who had preceded Kissinger as a National Security Adviser, acknowledged in 1972 that the Soviet Union was engaged in "a very expensive" program of "strategic rearmament," but he characterized the entire effort as "essentially useless." It was, he added, "no more than another demonstration of the folly that seems to be a frequent accompaniment of essentially sober national policies."

Four years later, Paul Warnke, just appointed head of the Arms Control and Disarmament Agency and chief American negotiator at the

SALT II conference, spoke in similar terms of "the primitive aspects of Soviet nuclear doctrine" in accordance with which they were building an arsenal clearly designed to fight and win—rather than merely deter—a nuclear war. Instead of paying attention to such primitive ideas and policies, Warnke said, "we ought to be trying to educate them into the real world of strategic nuclear weapons. . . ."

THIS debate over the Soviet military build-up was pretty much confined to the experts, the lay public being effectively excluded by the repellent vocabulary in which the discussion was conducted and the esoteric statistics that served as counters in the argument. But there was also a political side to the debate having to do with Soviet intentions, and demanding no special technical expertise.

On this issue the people who believed that the Soviet Union was either not really interested in achieving strategic superiority, or that if it was, it was wasting its time and money in a primitive folly, tended to line up with the people who believed that the Soviets no longer had expansionist aims and that whenever they did expand it was because they suffered from insecurity and paranoia. As Stanley Hoffmann of Harvard confidently asserted (in an article which had the misfortune of being published just as the invasion of Afghanistan was being launched),† the Soviet Union had now become a "status-quo power." Yet before Afghanistan had come Angola and South Yemen—both taken over with the direct participation of Soviet military surrogates—while Laos, Ethiopia, Mozambique, and Cambodia were being pulled into the Soviet orbit with the help of massive Soviet military aid. Thus the refusal to face the facts of growing Soviet military power was matched by a commensurate refusal to face the escalation of imperial adventurism that was its predictable accompaniment.

It is an exaggeration to say, as Robert G. Kaiser** does, that "the argument that the Soviets were not really aggressive . . . simply disappeared" after the invasion of Afghanistan. For not even that cataclysmic event could change the minds of certain political commentators about Soviet intentions. Intransigent proponents of the theory that Soviet actions, including the invasion of Afghanistan itself, stemmed entirely from defensiveness ranged in intellectual weight from George F. Kennan to Ronald Steel, and they had their counterparts in politicians like Senator Kennedy and Senator McGovern.

Still, as the weeks and months wore on, the posi-

* "Why the Soviet Union Thinks It Could Fight & Win a Nuclear War," COMMENTARY, July 1977.

† "Muscle and Brains," *Foreign Policy*, Winter 1979/80.

** "U.S.-Soviet Relations: Goodbye to Détente," *Foreign Affairs*, Special Issue (Vol. 59, No. 3).

tion of these intransigents did suffer a greater and greater seepage of influence. Suddenly somber stories about the Soviet military build-up were appearing in sectors of the media which only yesterday had been notable for ignoring or downplaying or even decrying as hysterical and alarmist the Churchillian warnings of groups like the Committee on the Present Danger and individuals like Senator Henry M. Jackson and Governor Ronald Reagan: *Time*, *Newsweek*, the *New York Times*, the commercial television networks, and even, on an amazing occasion or two, public television.

Suddenly too it became respectable to talk and worry about the uses to which this increase in military power was being put in the present, and the future strategic designs it might also be relied upon to serve. In the recent past the tendency had been to poke fun at anyone who so much as suggested that the Soviet Union even had a strategic design. Such a suggestion was likely to be caricatured as a belief in the existence of a detailed blueprint and a specific timetable for world domination and accordingly as too primitive to merit the consideration of a sophisticated mind. Now, however, respectful attention began to be paid to the view that the Soviet Union, far from being a status-quo power, had moved into a dynamically expansionist or imperialistic phase. In this reading, the pattern of Soviet international activities pointed toward a strategy aimed at encircling the Middle East, gaining control of its oil fields, or at least of access to them, and thereby making possible the "Finlandization" of Western Europe, Japan, and ultimately even the United States.

It was not that this interpretation achieved universal acceptance; far from it. But certainly the Churchillian view, at least in its broad outlines—that a Soviet military build-up had been taking place and that this build-up signified aggressive intent—was now in the ascendant in the world of ideas.

SO FAR as public opinion in the wider sense was concerned, however, it would be a gross understatement to say that the Churchillian view was merely in the ascendant there; the more precise word would be triumphant. The pollsters Daniel Yankelovich and Larry Kaagan* have summarized the evidence as follows:

For the public, . . . the invasion [of Afghanistan] confirmed fears that had been growing for years, fears that the Soviets were taking ever more advantage of American weakness to strengthen their position in the Middle East. Surveys taken in the aftermath of the invasion showed 50 percent of the American people concluding that the "Russians feel they now have military superiority over the United States and can get away" with such a move. And a 78 percent majority maintained that, unthwarted by American strength, the Soviets were motivated

by an opportunity to gain "more influence over the oil-producing countries of the Middle East."

It would probably be unfair to read President Carter's response to Afghanistan as nothing more than an election-year deference to this shift in popular sentiment. When Carter said that the invasion had "made a more dramatic change in my own opinion of what the Soviets' ultimate goals are than anything they've done in the previous time I've been in office," he was admitting that he had accepted the view of Soviet intentions which had been standard among the academic experts and the foreign-policy establishment, but that he could no longer do so in the face of so blatant a living refutation of the assumptions behind that view.

Kennedy, on the other hand, held onto the conventional wisdom of the pre-Afghanistan period. He called the invasion a merely "regional crisis" and associated himself with the position—argued by Arthur Schlesinger, Jr., among others—that it was an index of Soviet weakness rather than of Soviet power. This was not the least important cause of Kennedy's failure to take the Democratic nomination away from Carter who, whatever else might be troubling his candidacy, was at least more closely attuned to what the voters were feeling and thinking on this highly critical issue.†

But Reagan of course was even more closely in touch with public sentiment than Carter—much more. Reagan had long been expressing anxiety over the Soviet military build-up, and he did not need the evidence of Afghanistan to persuade him that Soviet expansionism was posing a mortal threat to the United States and the West in general.

In warning that we would not tolerate a Soviet effort to seize control of the oil fields of the Persian Gulf, Carter undoubtedly had public opinion behind him. But by now public opinion had already moved beyond the Carter Doctrine and was ready to support an even bolder statement of the Soviet threat: and this was not the least important cause of Reagan's overwhelming victory. He was elected on a platform that emphasized "the present danger"; soon after becoming President he spoke of "world revolution" as the Soviet goal; and he appointed a Secretary of State, Alexander M. Haig, who talked about "the transformation of Soviet military power from a continental and largely land army to a global offensive army, navy, and air force, fully capable of supporting an imperial foreign policy."

* "Assertive America," *Foreign Affairs*, Special Issue (Vol. 59, No. 3).

† Although we keep hearing that the economy was the main or even the only issue in the 1980 election, Yankelovich and Kaagan report that at the beginning of 1980 a 42 percent plurality of Americans named foreign policy as "the most important problem facing the country today—ahead of the economy and substantially ahead of energy concerns."

The distance between all this and the statement of Haig's predecessor, Cyrus R. Vance, that the Soviet leaders had "similar dreams and aspirations" to those of our own for stability and peace is a measure of how far the new consensus on the issue of Soviet power had traveled from the old.

II

THE second major element of the new consensus is the obverse of the first. That is, as Soviet power is now generally recognized to have been rising, so American power is now seen to have been declining; and as the increase in Soviet power is now understood to represent an index of aggressive designs directly threatening to us, so the decline of American power is acknowledged to have brought consequences already bordering on the intolerable, with the almost certain prospect of worse to come unless drastic steps are taken without any further delay.

The distance traveled here from the conventional wisdom of the recent past is perhaps even greater than in the case of Soviet power. Even in the early 70's, at the height of American euphoria over détente, there were skeptics with solid credentials who expressed non-dismissible doubts about the putative transformation of the Soviet Union into a status-quo power. While, for example, the chairman of Pepsi Cola and other luminaries of American business with more strategically important goods to sell were rushing to Moscow laden with the "rope" that Lenin famously predicted the capitalists would provide for their own execution at the hands of Soviet hangmen, the AFL-CIO under George Meany and Lane Kirkland was thinking, and voicing, other thoughts. Nor did most Americans surrender their suspicions about Soviet intentions as readily as their leaders and supposed betters in the State Department, the White House, and the foreign-policy establishment.

So far as the issue of *American* power went, however, there was much less dissent in any quarter from the idea that the problem was not too little but too much. Almost everyone in those final years of the Vietnam war and their immediate aftermath seemed to agree that the defense budget was "bloated." The only real argument was over the amount that could or should be cut.

Thus at a time when the defense budget was running to about \$75 billion, proposed cuts ranged from \$10 to \$30 billion; and there was hardly a weapon in the American arsenal that was spared the hostile scrutiny of one or another critic of the "Pentagon" (the spreading use of this vaguely sinister term to describe our own military establishment was itself a significant symptom of the general mood).

In 1972, the *New York Times*, declaring that "America's defense budget is exploding, becoming

itself a threat to the security and well-being of the nation," called for "deep cutbacks" in both nuclear and conventional forces. Public opinion soon began diverging from this attitude, but in the early 70's at least, there was no gap at all: only 11 percent of the American people then favored increases in the defense budget. So powerful was the anti-defense tide that even Senator Henry M. Jackson, regarded in those days as an unreconstructed cold warrior and the very model of a hawk, had to make some accommodation to it: he favored small defense cuts and "a prudent defense posture."

By 1975, in what came to be called the Great Debate over post-Vietnam foreign policy, one Senator after another, sounding like Goneril and Regan asking King Lear why he needed so many knights in his entourage ("What need you five-and-twenty, ten, or five?" "What need one?") rose to the floor to rail against "the degree to which it [America's destructive force] goes beyond what we really need" (Patrick Leahy), against our "fanatical desire to be always No. 1 in the ability to kill people in war" (Mark Hatfield), against "a defense structure that is artificially high, redundant, or unnecessarily provocative" (John Culver). No wonder, then, that Jimmy Carter was able to win the Presidency in 1976 on a platform calling for cuts in defense spending on the order of \$5-7 billion.

This readiness, nay eagerness, to cut back on American military power was encouraged by several ideas that gained widespread acceptance in the same period. The most influential of these was the doctrine of mutual assured destruction (MAD). According to the MAD theory, it was both unnecessary and undesirable to build a strategic nuclear force capable of more than a devastating retaliatory strike against the major Soviet population centers: anything beyond this (including defensive systems like the ABM) was "overkill" or provocative, or both. Since, as Senator John Glenn put it in opposing the B-1 bomber in 1975, "we are already so far above anything we need with respect to ICBM's, . . . to talk about needing another weapon to deliver nuclear weapons is . . . wishful thinking of the highest order." Senator John Culver, basing himself on the same reasoning went even further in declaring that "we have obscene overkill capacity that is totally unconscionable and unjustifiable."

This particular line of argument was restricted to strategic nuclear weapons. But there was a kindred approach to conventional forces which became almost equally influential. Again sounding like Goneril and Regan, critics asked why the army needed so many men, why the navy needed so many ships, why the air force needed so many fighter planes. The very existence of such swollen arsenals and capabilities constituted a standing temptation to put them to use. Would we have

gone into Vietnam, for example, if we had not been itching to test our new anti-guerrilla forces and our advanced technologies of destruction?

And if one great "lesson" of Vietnam was that what used to be called standing armies led inexorably to ill-advised wars, another was that under contemporary conditions military power was no longer the decisive factor—not in political conflict and not even in war itself. For had not our conventional forces, powerful beyond the dreams of traditional military planners though they were, still proved insufficient to win the day? And in any case, what good did military power do in an interdependent world in which the great issues were economic rather than political? After all, had not the militarily powerless oil-producing nations successfully imposed their will on the infinitely more powerful nations of the West, including the United States?

THREE major events came together after 1976 to damage and even discredit these arguments and the policies they simultaneously sired and justified. The first was the signing of the second Strategic Arms Limitation Treaty. Much to the surprise of the opponents of SALT II, the debate over the treaty turned into a means of persuading a great many people, including many Senators who supported ratification, that there were serious deficiencies in our strategic posture, that we were falling behind, and that—as the then dovish Foreign Relations Committee put it in reporting the treaty favorably—"additional defense efforts by the United States will be necessary to preserve deterrence and essential equivalence in the 1980's and beyond."

In other words, the problem was not too much American power, as the consensus of 1975 had it, but too little. Accordingly, the Gonerils and Regans of 1975 now reappeared, as one might say, in the guise of Cordelia, declaring that "we must improve our defense capabilities" (Gary Hart), that "we have been woefully remiss in allowing our military preparedness to erode to its present unhappy state" (John Glenn), that "it is remarkable how much consensus there is . . . as to what we really have to do to strengthen our military capabilities" (John Culver). Only a few short years before, the debate had been over how much to cut from the defense budget. Now everyone agreed that defense spending had to be increased by a minimum of 3 percent in real terms, and the debate was over how much to add over and above that figure.*

The second great milestone on this particular journey was the seizure of the hostages in Iran. To the questions once posed by the Gonerils and Regans of the defense debate, our impotence in the face of this blatant act of aggression provided what seemed to most Americans an irrefutable answer. Surely we ought to have been able to respond

through covert action or with a successful rescue mission. But the CIA had for all practical purposes been robbed of the capacity to engage in covert action, and the fiasco of the rescue mission provided the sorriest demonstration imaginable of how poorly maintained our military equipment was and to what a low estate in preparedness and skill our forces had finally sunk.

This experience of impotence was deepened by the third great event in the emergence of the new consensus: the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan. In addition to discrediting the idea of the Soviet Union as a status-quo power, the invasion simultaneously made vast numbers of people aware that we had nothing with which to answer a possible Soviet drive on the oilfields of the Persian Gulf—a drive, that is, against the life-line of our civilization—but the threat of full-scale nuclear war. We had no bases, we had no rapid-deployment force, and the only way we could strengthen our military presence in the region was by stretching our naval power thin.

The same change which had become so strikingly evident in the Senate during the SALT II debate was now making itself felt in the media as well. Just as stories about the Soviet build-up were appearing in places where little or no attention had been paid to it before, so reports on the deplorable state of American military power began showing up in many of the same papers and on many of the same programs. Perhaps the most telling example was a series of prominently featured articles that ran day after day for a full week in the *New York Times* documenting in great and painful detail the deteriorating condition of our military defenses from every point of view.

But dwarfing even these great signs of change was the seismic upheaval in American public opinion. Between 1971 and 1979 (before the taking of the hostages) the proportion favoring more spending on defense rose steadily from 11 percent to 42 percent. "Since that time," Yankelovich and Kaagan write, "growing majorities have endorsed higher defense spending, and the events in Afghanistan pushed support for an enlarged military budget up to 74 percent." As of June 1980, the only area of federal spending that fewer people wished to see cut than the defense budget was social security. After Afghanistan, moreover, a solid majority of Americans came to favor reinstatement of the draft, and after Iran an astonishing 79 percent came out for "overhauling and stepping up" the activities of the CIA.

If Ronald Reagan was a more credible representative of the new attitude toward Soviet power than Jimmy Carter, he was even more closely in

* For a fuller account of these particular developments, see Joshua Muravchik's "Turnabout in the Senate" (COMMENTARY, November 1980), on which I have been drawing here.

tune with the new attitude toward American power. It hardly mattered that Carter (who had been elected on promises to cut the defense budget by at least \$5 billion and never to lie to the American people) now boasted of having increased defense spending and committed himself to further increases in the years ahead, or that he instituted registration for the draft, or that he authorized the building and deployment of a rapid-deployment force and the MX missile. Nor, on the other side, did it matter that Reagan came out against a peacetime draft and talked skeptically about both the rapid-deployment force and the MX. Most people knew that Carter was wary of American power and inhibited almost to the point of paralysis in the use of it, just as everyone knew that Reagan believed in American power and could be trusted to rebuild it and to use it if the need should arise.

And so Reagan was elected on a platform promising to restore American military superiority (later modified by the exigencies of the campaign to "a margin of safety"). The early indications were, moreover, that he would work much harder to keep this promise than Carter did (or was able to do, given the nature of things) to keep his pledge to cut defense spending.

III

WE HAVE, then, a new consensus on the need to respond more firmly and resolutely to the growth of Soviet power and to take extraordinary steps (extraordinary in that the defense budget is exempt from the demand arising out of the domestic side of the new consensus to cut federal spending all across the board) to arrest and reverse the decline of American power.

This new consensus embraces a solid majority of the American people, and it is also bipartisan, with Democrats (and a few Republicans like Mark Hatfield) dissenting only at the margin and on questions of degree. Even some of the most outspoken critics of American defense spending in the Senate supported an increase last year and voted to build the MX; and there are very few Democrats holding or aspiring to office who are willing to say in public (whatever they may think in the privacy of their own minds) that the growth of Soviet power is a statistical illusion conjured up by the Pentagon, or that the Soviets are interested only in security and peace and therefore pose no threat to the United States or anyone else.

Broad and solidly rooted and *national* though it is, however, the new consensus is as yet minimal. In saying this, I intend no denigration of what in my opinion is an immense achievement. The change in American political culture represented by the new consensus took years of ferocious struggle at those "bloody crossroads" where the late Lionel Trilling once said politics and culture

meet. Some of the heroes of that struggle have now been rewarded with success at the polls. Others who work not in the polity but in the world of ideas and attitudes—the universities, the media—have been left with grievous wounds to their reputations that will not easily be healed and damage to their positions that will not easily be repaired even by the vindication they have now received.

Indeed, although the influence of the new consensus is evident even in the universities and the media, they remain, to a greater degree perhaps than any other sector of our culture, mired in yesterday's conventional wisdom. On these issues, as on so many others, the universities and the media—usually considered to be on the front lines of change, in the vanguard of opinion—have become the repository of discredited ideas and shopworn attitudes, a kind of shrine at which the cultists of a dying religion gather to genuflect, chanting mindless invocations they imagine arise out of reason to a moribund god they still believe incarnates the living truth.

Nevertheless, these cultists, though a small minority, remain numerous enough and sufficiently well placed to obstruct or retard the progress of the new consensus beyond the minimal point it has already, after so much struggle, managed to reach. They will continue their efforts to prove that it is the growth of American power rather than the growth of Soviet power which is the problem to be addressed. With a greater or lesser degree of candor, they will resist the new consensus and keep faith with the one it has replaced (in this at least establishing their claim to be dissenters—a claim that was fraudulent in the heyday of the old orthodoxy to which they slavishly adhered). And they will be ready to pounce at the first development—perhaps an American intervention or a new Soviet peace offensive—that might seem to confirm their case.

Among the expressions of the old orthodoxy there is a variant that cleverly builds on the new consensus in order to arrive at a strategy that is the exact opposite of the one to which the new consensus actually points. This variant does not deny that the Soviet Union has become more powerful and that the position of the United States has become much weaker than it once was. But instead of drawing the conclusion that we must act to restore or reverse the balance, it calls for a return to isolationism. Earl C. Ravenal,* the most outspoken and articulate exponent of this point of view, puts it this way: "In the aftermath of Afghanistan, the comfortable middle options have dropped away. The only alternative now to the official strategy of resuscitated military interventionism is an isolationist foreign policy."

Nor does Ravenal shrink from the implications of his position. "The casualties of a general nu-

* "Doing Nothing," *Foreign Policy*, Summer 1980.

clear war," he says, "might be 125 million Americans; the casualties of even a conventional regional war [to prevent the oil fields from falling into hostile hands] might be 50,000-100,000, and it would lose the oil anyway. The other way, Americans would live less well, but live."

What we have here, of course, is an updated version of the "Better red than dead" slogan of twenty years ago, but Ravenal is even bolder than his predecessors in this tradition. He is willing, as few of them were, to apply the same logic retroactively to the struggle against Hitler. "If . . . the United States has really reached 1939, it should rethink World War II, not prepare to fight World War III. Imagine Hitler with nuclear weapons. Who would fight and who would negotiate? Who would be the villains and who the heroes? Who would be ready to put 125 million of his fellow citizens' lives on the line to defend his values?"

The intellectual honesty here is as admirable as the position it serves is dishonorable. But moral considerations aside, the strategy of isolationism and appeasement cannot deliver on its promise of "survival for ourselves and perhaps for future generations." When Churchill said that World War II had been an unnecessary war, he meant that Hitler might have been stopped short of war if the democracies had rearmed in time. Since they did not, they led themselves ineluctably into a choice of surrendering or fighting; faced with that choice they decided (in defiance of Hitler's expectations—he thought they were decadent) to fight.

The prospect we face today—the future danger—is not, in my judgment, an unnecessary war but rather an unnecessary surrender. "Imagine Hitler with nuclear weapons," says Ravenal; it is easy to do so, one need only think of the Soviet Union. "Who would fight and who would negotiate?" Assuming no change in the present balance of power, and given the conviction of the Soviet Union that a nuclear war is not only thinkable but winnable—as against the American belief that a nuclear war would be the end of the world and therefore inconceivable if deterrence should fail to enforce restraint on the Soviet Union—the high probability is that in a situation comparable to 1939, the United States would surrender. "Who would be the villains and who the heroes?" There would be no heroes, but it is easy to say who the villains would be: those like Ravenal who by counseling and supporting a policy of appeasement had led us into such a situation when, by rebuilding our military power in time, we might have been spared both the need to fight and the need to surrender.

For the moment the counsels of appeasement are muted, but this school of thought will always be potentially influential, appealing as it does to natural fears and to fantasies of evasion, all couched in the language of "realism," "national maturity," and "survival." A scare similar to the Cuban missile crisis, only this time with the roles

reversed and the United States forced to back away from an "eyeball-to-eyeball" confrontation, could energize the case for appeasement overnight, smoothing our slide into Finlandization with the assurance that if we surrendered all that would happen is that we "would live less well, but live."

IT IS, I take it, precisely this hideous conjunction of circumstances that Paul H. Nitze wishes to head off in telling us how to develop a "strategy from relative weakness."* Nitze, of course, accepts the new consensus. In fact, as much as any single individual in this country, he may be said to have created it. A founder and leader of the Committee on the Present Danger, and a tireless Churchillian voice sounding the alarm over the growth of Soviet power and the decline of our own, he has brought into play the unique authority of his long experience as a specialist in defense as well as in arms control (he helped to negotiate SALT I and then led the fight against ratification of SALT II).

From all this we would expect him to recommend an urgent program of rearmament; and he does. But he begins with a rehearsal of the facts that lead him to conclude that the military balance is already unfavorable to the United States "and that over the next five years it will probably become more unfavorable."

Thus: in the area of strategic nuclear weapons, the balance is now such that "If there were a strategic nuclear war, U.S. fatalities might be between five and twenty times those of the Soviet Union" and such a war would "end up with more powerful Soviet than U.S. strategic nuclear forces remaining after the exchanges as well as faster Soviet recovery times."

So too "the theater nuclear balance has also swung to a position adverse to the United States." As for the balance of conventional forces, it "has favored the Soviet side ever since World War II," and with "the decline in combat quality of the U.S. Army since Vietnam and the institution of the volunteer army, that balance has become even more negative."

So much for the land and the air. On the sea there are still areas where the balance remains favorable to the United States, but Nitze believes that "one cannot say that the overall naval force balance . . . is favorable." What all this means is that we would be unable to defend Saudi Arabia in the event of a Soviet invasion—certainly not with conventional forces and not even by threatening nuclear war:

. . . the strategic nuclear balance has shifted so that any [conventional] moves on the Eurasian landmass would be affected by Soviet escalation

* "Policy and Strategy from Weakness," in *From Weakness to Strength*, W. Scott Thompson, ed. (Institute for Contemporary Studies, 1980).

control: that is to say, Soviet nuclear predominance carries the implied threat of an ability to escalate a conflict up the nuclear ladder just as the U.S. predominance in the Cuban missile crisis in 1962 implied such a threat to the Soviet Union.

The promise that Kuznetsov made to McCloy has, then, been kept. The danger we face is a Cuban missile crisis in reverse—and with our most vital interests at stake.

In spite of all this, Nitze, it goes without saying, counsels neither appeasement nor surrender. Speaking the language of the new consensus, he calls for a crash program of rearmament, with first priority given to repairing the strategic nuclear umbrella and the second to repairing the navy; he speaks also of reinstating the draft and of undertaking a program of civil defense. The trouble is that the time it takes to build new weapons systems is so great that "Even if we move resolutely and wisely to correct the adverse trends, [we] cannot do much to change the balance in less than ten or fifteen years."

What then are we to do in the meantime? We will, says Nitze, have to learn how to conduct "strategy from relative weakness." We will have to "recognize that the correlation of forces now is negative for us, that it is going to be negative for the next five years at least, and that the object of policy should be to throw dust in the enemy's eyes while getting on with reversing the trends and making them positive."

Throwing dust in the enemy's eyes involves becoming more aggressive in the waging of ideological and psychological warfare. Yet while I myself am if anything more enthusiastic than Nitze about the possibilities of greater aggressiveness in the war of ideas, I find it hard to understand why the Soviet Union should stand by passively while we are reversing the balance of power. *We* of course did precisely that in relation to them, when we deliberately decided to give up our advantage in strategic nuclear weapons in the expectation that the Soviets would rest content with parity and then cooperate with us in putting an end to the "arms race." But Nitze of all people should know—in fact, does know and has said many times—that the Soviets have been pursuing superiority in order to intimidate and ultimately dominate even without having to fight. Why then does he think that they will now follow in our footsteps, applauding (as we did with them) every step we take to close the gap between us?

"There is," Nitze writes, "no inherent reason, save a willful—and we hope unlikely—desire of the Soviet Union to confront us militarily in the near future, why we as a nation cannot conduct policy from an honest appraisal of our current position while refashioning our policies and forces and thus improve our position eventually to an honest parity." But on Nitze's own analysis, the

Soviets have every reason "to confront us militarily in the near future." It is, as he himself tells us, in the near future that they will continue to enjoy a superiority which could easily be canceled by the coming together of a serious program of American rearmament and the decline in their own economic and technological capabilities that most experts expect to set in (for demographic and other reasons) during the latter part of the 80's.

With the stage thus set in the Persian Gulf for a Cuban missile crisis in reverse, why should the Soviets not provoke it, forcing us to back down as they seize control of the oil, and with it the power to dominate the West?

TO THIS question Nitze has no answer; he only has a hope. So of course do we all, but intellectual honesty requires us to place a minimum of faith in that hope and to acknowledge that if Nitze is right in his analysis—and *he may be*—then all is lost. If he is right, it can only be a year or two or three, no more, before a Cuban missile crisis in reverse is staged in the Persian Gulf, with the Finlandization of the West following inexorably in its wake.

Is Nitze right? About the present military balance he is almost certainly right: in that sense the obverse analogy with the Cuban missile crisis holds (though our strategic advantage in 1962 was much greater than theirs today). But as Robert W. Tucker points out,* there is a crucial difference between "the balance of interest" then and the balance of interest today. That is, Cuba was much less important to the Soviet Union in 1962 than the Persian Gulf is to the United States today. "By confronting us in the Gulf, the Russians would in effect confront us in Europe. . . . Indeed, by threatening our position in the Gulf, the Russians would in effect threaten our position everywhere but this hemisphere." (I would include this hemisphere.)

What this means is that our incentive to fight is so great that it must give the Soviets pause. They must assume that to confront us in the Persian Gulf—especially when we are so decisively outgunned in conventional forces—is to risk an all-out nuclear war.

Whether their estimate of the nuclear balance coincides with that of the optimists in this country who claim that a condition of rough strategic parity now exists (hardly anyone still believes that we still enjoy superiority); or whether the Soviets share Nitze's belief that they now enjoy a clear "nuclear predominance," and that they could fight a nuclear war and emerge as the victor—they would still obviously prefer to avoid the worst. Especially would they prefer it if they could prevail without fighting. Therefore, so long as they be-

* "American Power & the Persian Gulf," COMMENTARY, November 1980.

lieve that we would fight a nuclear war rather than surrender our vital interests to their control, they will probably be deterred from trying to stage an obverse Cuban missile crisis in the Persian Gulf. This is why Tucker advocates the stationing of American ground forces in the Persian Gulf. Though part of their function would be to defend against non-Soviet threats to our access to the oil, they would also serve the same deterrent function our troops have served in Europe against a direct Soviet invasion.

By invading, the Soviets would automatically be at war with the United States; and given their advantage in conventional forces, such a war would almost certainly become nuclear.

So, at any rate, goes the theory upon whose credibility peace between the two nuclear superpowers has rested for more than thirty years. (Of course if the day ever arrived when the Soviets became convinced that we would back down even if our vital interests were at stake rather than risk, let alone fight, a nuclear war, the theory would collapse along with the United States itself. It would also collapse if the Soviets ever achieved a clear first-strike capability and could thereby present us with the choice of surrender or certain suicidal defeat.)

Thus for the time being there is a better chance than Nitze's analysis allows to avert a reverse Cuban missile crisis in the Persian Gulf. But it is a chance that depends on more than a strategy of throwing dust in the enemy's eyes while embarking on a five-to-ten year program of rearmament. The long-range program is certainly necessary, but in the meantime Tucker is right in arguing that we will, at a minimum, have to station ground forces in the Middle East. Otherwise there will be no credible deterrent to a Soviet invasion, or a Soviet-sponsored coup.

Granting this, the question arises as to what we can or should do beyond it. In other words, what is to be the guiding principle of the refurbished strategy of containment called for by the new consensus?

IV

IN another piece, an ambitious and densely reasoned essay entitled "The Purposes of American Power,"* Tucker attempts to answer this question. "The containment of today and tomorrow," he says, will have to be more "limited" and more "moderate" than the containment of yesterday. Our "First priority is the restoration of American power generally and, above all, in the Persian Gulf"—and this, he reiterates, entails the stationing of American ground forces there.

While, in opposition to Nitze, he thinks that we are still powerful enough to undertake such a policy of containment, he also thinks that we are not powerful enough to return even to what he him-

self characterizes as "the moderate containment of the late 1940's." "The containment of today and tomorrow will have to make concessions and compromises in areas of contention where concession and compromise were once spurned."

Specifically, we are not to concern ourselves with the domestic character of other countries, and we are almost certainly not to intervene in support of one side or another in an internal dispute. We may not like it when a "radical"—that is, Marxist, or Marxist-Leninist, or Communist—regime comes to power, but (except in the Persian Gulf) the only "coherent policy is to observe a hands-off position."

Courageously taking on the argument at its most prickly point, Tucker applies this rule even to Central America. Even though it is an area that falls within our historic sphere of influence and one where "our pride is engaged as it cannot possibly be engaged" in Africa or in Southeast Asia, "In Central America there are no vital raw materials or minerals whose loss might provide the basis for legitimate security concerns." Therefore we should "view with equanimity" the coming to power there of radical Marxist regimes—so long, that is, as they do not "enter into a relationship with the Soviet Union that resembles the relationship with Cuba." This *would* in Tucker's judgment affect our vital interests.

That there are difficulties with this position is obvious. Thus, for example, even though in Africa there *are* "vital raw materials . . . whose loss might provide the basis for legitimate security concerns," Tucker would presumably oppose intervention there, including when (as in Angola) Soviet involvement is unambiguous. Conversely, one wonders how serious he is about supporting intervention to prevent the establishment of another Cuba in Central America when the evidence of indirect Soviet and direct Cuban influence in Nicaragua and El Salvador nevertheless leads him to advocate giving economic aid to the pro-Soviet Sandinistas in Nicaragua and cutting off military aid to the anti-Soviet junta in El Salvador.

It is perhaps for this reason that Tucker's position has found support among political commentators like Anthony Lewis of the *New York Times* who have generally been hostile to the very idea of American power and who might otherwise have been expected to react with horror to his call for so strong an anti-Soviet stand. In Tucker's conception of containment, it may be, such commentators have found a way of accommodating themselves to the new consensus without seriously endangering the essence of the old orthodoxy—that American power cannot be used to block Soviet expansionism and should not be used to prevent "radical" or "revolutionary" (i.e., Communist) regimes from establishing themselves in the Third

* *Foreign Affairs*, Winter 1980/81.

World. Lewis well knows that it will always be difficult to prove direct Soviet involvement in a given conflict—not even the overwhelming evidence compiled by the State Department in the case of El Salvador has convinced everyone—and that if American intervention has to wait upon such proof, the chances are that it will wait forever.

But leaving tactical problems aside for the moment, how viable is the overall strategy of moderate containment outlined by Tucker? On paper it is undoubtedly viable in the sense of being realistic in its view of the world and coherent in conception. It represents, moreover, a great advance over the prevalent ideas of the recent past. There are no illusions here about the transformation of the Soviet Union into a status-quo power, or about its readiness to cooperate with us in “crisis management,” or about our ability to induce it to behave moderately. In fact, some of Tucker’s best pages are devoted to a devastating critique of the strategy of “containment without confrontation” recommended by those like Robert Legvold* who use this phrase as a euphemism for a resurrected policy of détente. (Tucker’s main point is that if the Soviets confounded our expectations of 1972 in a period when their incentives to cooperate were much greater, why should they behave better today, when the military balance has shifted in their favor and the temptations to score gains in the Third World have increased?)

In addition to being realistic about Soviet power and Soviet intentions, Tucker is hard-headed about the necessary American response. We need “to redress the overall arms balance, to insure Western access to the oil supplies of the Persian Gulf, and generally to restore confidence abroad that America has the understanding and the discipline to maintain a solvent foreign policy.”

Though he describes these steps as “moderate containment,” he himself is wryly aware that there are those to whom it would seem deserving of the epithet extremist. And indeed, this “moderate” or “limited” strategy of containment does call for very strong measures and very resolute nerves. It even goes so far as to insist upon the necessity of extending the threat of nuclear war from Europe to the Persian Gulf. It is limited, then, not in the military measures it contemplates but in the definition of the enemy. The enemy to be contained by this strategy is the Soviet Union, nothing and no one else.

What we have here, then, is containment as *Realpolitik*. Tucker is by no means blind to the importance of values or ideology in the conflict between the Soviet Union and the United States, and he pauses from time to time to pay his obeisances to such factors. But like all writers in the *Realpolitik* tradition, he is much more comfortable with the categories of physical security and material interest, becoming suspicious and uneasy whenever the discussion shifts from geography or

commerce or raw materials to talk of ideologies and values, of democracy and Communism. He dislikes “the sweeping language of the Truman Doctrine” (e.g., “We must assist free peoples to work out their destinies in their own way”) and he fears “its sense of universal crisis” (“At the present moment in world history every nation must choose between alternative ways of life”). In language like that, he says, “we can see the subsequent course of a policy that led to the equation of American security with world order, world order with the containment of Communism, and the containment of Communism with the conflict—Vietnam—that brought an end to the policy of global containment.”

For Tucker the great lesson of Vietnam, and the one that should guide us in fashioning a new policy of containment, is that an emphasis on “ideology” over “security” leads to disaster.

ATTRACTIVE though this position is, however, it no more amounts to a truly viable strategy than Nitze’s “throwing dust in the enemy’s eyes.” In the case of Nitze’s prescription, it is the Soviets who are the obstacle. In the case of Tucker’s, it is the American people.

Analysts and theorists of the *Realpolitik* school have always lamented the absence in the United States of a geopolitical tradition in the shaping of foreign policy. From Hans J. Morgenthau and George F. Kennan in the 50’s to Henry Kissinger and Robert W. Tucker today, they have been telling us that the time has come for the United States to stop oscillating so wildly between isolationism and Wilsonianism, between withdrawing from the world and sallying forth on moral crusades to save it.

Yet the truth is that however desirable it might be for the United States to “Europeanize” its relations with the rest of the world, no amount of exhortation is likely to transform the character of this country as it expresses itself, and has always expressed itself, in the conduct of foreign policy. (Considering that the European tradition of conducting international affairs has resulted in two world wars in the 20th century alone, one wonders, indeed, what makes it so self-evidently superior a model.) For better or worse, the Americans have always been and still are a people who have no fondness for “standing armies,” and who are very reluctant to support such armies—let alone their deployment in war—merely for the sake of maintaining a balance of power among nations competing with more or less equal justification for position and advantage.

One of the “lessons of Vietnam” that is rarely mentioned is that public support became impossible to maintain in the absence of a convincing

* “Containment Without Confrontation,” *Foreign Policy*, Fall 1980.

moral rationale for our effort there. Having, paradoxically, gone into Vietnam for idealistic reasons (in the strict sense that there was no vital geopolitical or material interest at stake, and that what we were actually trying to do was save the South Vietnamese from the horrors of Communist rule that have now befallen them), we then tried to justify our involvement in the language of *Realpolitik*. But no good case could be made in that language for American military intervention; and even if it could, it would not in the long run have convinced the American people.

The same lesson can be drawn from the decline of support for military spending in the 1970's. To some extent the anti-defense climate that developed in those years was a product of revulsion against Vietnam. But the policy of *détente* was an even greater source of nourishment. By representing the Soviet Union as a competing superpower with whom we could negotiate peaceful and stable accommodations—instead of a Communist state hostile in its very nature to us and trying to extend its rule and its political culture over a wider and wider area of the world—the Nixon, Ford, and Carter administrations robbed the Soviet-American conflict of the moral and political dimension for the sake of which sacrifices could be intelligibly demanded by the government and willingly made by the people.

No wonder, then, that the country drifted into apathy in response to the growth of Soviet power on the one side and the decline of American power on the other. What, after all, did it matter? Even if the Soviet Union really were to seize the oil fields of the Persian Gulf, what real difference would it make to us? To Tucker the Persian Gulf “forms the indispensable key to the defense of the American global position, just as it forms the indispensable key without which the Soviet Union cannot seriously aspire to global predominance.” But if the Soviet Union is only another superpower—just as we ourselves are—why risk nuclear war to hold it back? If the Soviets were to take over the oil fields, might they not even prove a more reliable supplier than the Arabs?

There have been those who thought so. In an editorial bouncily entitled “Soviet Gas Won't Choke the Allies” (January 16, 1981) and supporting an arrangement that would make the West Europeans highly dependent on the Soviet Union for supplies of natural gas, the *New York Times* assured us that “The Soviet Union is probably a much more reliable supplier than OPEC, certainly more reliable than the mercurial regimes of Iran, Libya, and Iraq” and expressed its confidence that the Soviets would never use the threat of a cut-off to enforce political demands.

As has so often been the case in recent years, the attitude of the American people on this issue is sounder than the ideas of their leaders and putative betters. American public opinion, as we have

seen, has not viewed Soviet control of our energy supplies with equanimity. But would public opinion continue to support the huge increases in defense spending that even Tucker's strategy of limited containment requires, and the risks of confrontation that he freely admits would flow from such a strategy, if the Soviet Union were seen as nothing more than another superpower bent on aggrandizing itself? Would not a nearly irresistible isolationist pressure arise from the depths of the national psyche, allowing the Soviets to control what they could (including even Western Europe), seeking protection from actual Soviet conquest of the United States in an invulnerable second-strike capability—the kind of nuclear Maginot line recommended by theorists of “minimal deterrence”—and counting on the Soviets to behave toward us in strict accordance with whatever economic deals we might persuade them to accept?

What I am suggesting, in short, is that a strategy of containment centered on considerations of *Realpolitik* would be unable to count indefinitely on popular support. Sooner or later (probably sooner rather than later) it would succumb to a resurgence of isolationism, leaving a free field for the expansion of Soviet power. Since in my judgment the United States would be unable to maintain itself for very long as a free society if it were an island surrounded by a sea of varying shades of red, the strategy of limited containment would turn out to be a long detour on the road to Finlandization.

V

BUT if the Soviets will not allow us to follow Nitze's strategy of throwing dust in their eyes while we are racing to close the military gap between us, and if the American people will not allow us to follow Tucker's strategy of containing Soviet expansion while looking with equanimity upon the expansion of Communism, what is to be done? The obvious answer is that we will have to adopt a strategy aimed at containing the expansion of Communism.

In its recent “white paper” on El Salvador, the State Department made surprisingly free use of the word Communism, but anyone attempting to introduce, or rather reintroduce, that word into the discussion of these matters within the intellectual community is certain to encounter shock and resistance. This, more than anything else, is the ironic legacy left to our political culture and our political discourse by McCarthyism. Euphemisms like “radical” or “revolutionary” or “progressive” or “far-Left” or “Marxist” or even “Marxist-Leninist” are permitted, but the word Communism itself has been interdicted, banished, excommunicated. So effective has the ban become that even when someone joins the Communist party and proudly calls himself a Communist, the term is

avoided in the press. Thus, for example, Angela Davis, who not only belongs to the Communist Party U.S.A. but ran for Vice President on its ticket in the 1980 election, is still rarely described by the media as a Communist; she remains a "black militant."

It is understandable that a word whose loose application once damaged many people of whom it was mistakenly or ignorantly or maliciously used should have become suspect in itself. It is also understandable that the term Communist, which in the past accurately designated obedience to the dictates of a party under the control of the Soviet Union, should have been discarded as misleading once several national parties, most notably the Chinese, had broken out of the Soviet orbit. The term Communist once clearly meant pro-Soviet or Soviet-controlled; by now it can mean anti-Soviet, or pro-Chinese, or even neutral with respect to both.

Nevertheless, to deny ourselves the use of this term is to make intellectual clarity, and therefore also clarity of purpose, more difficult to achieve. To begin with, until we can talk about Communism again, we will be unable to explain—above all to ourselves, but also to others—why the Soviet Union poses so mortal a threat. There are those who tell us that Communism is no longer a significant factor in Soviet policy, that no one there still really believes in Marx or even Lenin. Some who tell us this admit that the Soviet Union is expansionist, but the purpose as they interpret it is not to export Communism. Rather it is to follow through on age-old Russian imperial ambitions (the Czarist search for a warm-water port, for example, forming in this view the ground for the invasion of Afghanistan).

Unlike the idea that the Soviet Union is neither Communist nor expansionist, this interpretation at least has the merit of recognizing the Soviet Union's imperialistic ambitions. Indeed, the model pointed to by this school of Sovietology is Germany in the pre-World War I period—an expansionist power whose objectives, however, were limited to achieving what it regarded as a fair share of the imperial spoils. In other words, while this Germany, *Wilhelmine Germany*, was expansionist, it did not seek to overthrow the going international system. Its conflict with its adversaries was not a struggle between competing civilizations or ideologies but a quarrel within the same family of nations (literally so, since the monarchs of most of these countries were cousins).

But if the Soviet Union of today resembles the Germany of the past, it is not the Germany of Kaiser Wilhelm but the Germany of Adolf Hitler. Unlike *Wilhelmine Germany*, but like Nazi Germany, the Soviet Union is a totalitarian state. Unlike *Wilhelmine Germany* but like Nazi Germany, the Soviet Union represents a radically different idea about how to organize social, political, and

economic life on this earth from the one that prevails in the world of its adversaries. And unlike *Wilhelmine Germany* but like Nazi Germany, the Soviet Union aims to overthrow the present international system and to replace it with one in which its own power is dominant and its own political culture becomes the model and the norm.

IN SUM: the conflict between the United States and the Soviet Union is a clash between two civilizations. More accurately, it is a clash between civilization and barbarism. What makes the Soviet Union barbaric is, precisely, Communism—a system that assumes the right of total control over every aspect of life, that denies any degree of freedom to the individual, that brings economic misery and cultural starvation to all who live under it. Whether or not the rulers of the Soviet Union "believe" in Communism, they are themselves slaves to it in the sense that it supplies the only legitimation of their rule (who elected them? who appointed them?); and whether or not they "believe" in expansionism, their claim to leadership cannot be validated unless they remain true to the international mission dictated by the same ideology that keeps them in power at home.

One need not go as far as Solzhenitsyn does in seeing Russia as the entirely innocent victim of an alien ideology to recognize that the threat we face comes not from Russia but from the Soviet Union—that is, from *Communist Russia*. A non-Communist Russia might still be expansionist and still pose problems, but it would hardly pose the kind of menace to us that Communism has made of that country. For since the defeat of fascism in World War II, Communism has emerged as the single greatest threat to liberty on the face of the earth. It is, today, the only such threat that is backed by the military might of a major power—a nation, as Sakharov says, "armed to the teeth" and inescapably committed to the evangelism of the sword. But whereas fascism—and still more Nazism, its most malignant variant—lacked widespread ideological appeal and depended entirely on force to impose its influence (a condition that remains true of fascist regimes today), Communism has proved itself a threat to liberty in the world of ideas as well.

This ideological threat has undoubtedly grown weaker in recent years than it used to be (just as the military component of the threat has grown stronger). Neither in the Soviet Union, nor in its East European colonies, nor at the moment in mainland China do the doctrines of Marx and Lenin or the "praxis" of Stalin and Mao seem to arouse much enthusiasm. Yet what this demonstrates is only that the people who actually live under Communism sooner or later cease believing in it and even come to hate it. In the non-Communist world, on the other hand, illusions about

Communism continue to enjoy an amazingly hardy existence.

It is true that some Communist parties in the West which used to look to the Soviet Union as a workers' paradise and as a model for their own future have lost a bit of their pro-Soviet fervor. But despite optimistic forecasts, these parties have not renounced Communism (nor, except as concerns Soviet intervention into other Communist countries, have they opposed Soviet foreign policy to any significant degree). All they have done is to shift their utopian claims from the Soviet present to a thus-far nonexistent future when, against all the evidence of the past sixty years, "Communism with a human face" will make its smiling appearance in the world.

It is also true that many non-Communist intellectuals in the West, and especially in France, have with the help of Solzhenitsyn's books finally begun freeing themselves from the mystique of revolution which turned so many of them for so long into apologists for the Soviet Union. Some, like Bernard-Henri Lévy, have even gone further and located the seeds of the Gulag in the previously sacred scriptures of Marx himself. Yet the poisoning of the intellectual wells, the corruption of key terms like *freedom* and *democracy* by Marxist thought and Communist praxis, remains an obstacle to a proper appreciation of the free societies of the West, and the concomitant willingness—or indeed ability—to defend them against ideological attack.

IT is, however, in the Third World rather than in the United States or Europe that Communism remains the greatest ideological menace. We are often told that the Marxist-Leninist rhetoric of Third World leaders should not be taken seriously; all they really are is nationalists struggling to achieve independence and an identity of their own. But it was ideas—Communist ideas, some of them absorbed in the cafés of Paris—that turned Cambodia into the Auschwitz of Asia, that created a new Gulag in Communist Vietnam, that sent Cuban troops into Africa and the Middle East.

All these countries are Soviet clients and dependencies. But whether they are allied to the Soviet Union or not—and even though the appeal of Soviet-style Communism may have declined in Western Europe—it is the Marxist-Leninist ideology of such movements as SWAPO in Namibia, the Sandinistas in Nicaragua, and the leftist guerrillas in El Salvador, that accounts for the sympathy they invariably get in the West.

When, for example, the Socialist International, representing the social-democratic parties of the West, throws its support behind these movements, the assumption is that they will create better regimes than the ones against which they have gone to war. There was a time when democratic social-

ists like Willy Brandt understood that Communist regimes could not be expected to make things better for the people who lived under them, but that time has long since passed. Today Brandt and his fellow socialists are a major exception to the rule that non-Communist intellectuals in Europe have become more critical of the Soviet Union and of Communism in general than they used to be; the Socialist International has been moving in exactly the opposite direction. And nowhere does this new tendency show itself more clearly than in the SI's policy toward Central America.

Yet if we wonder on what the assumption guiding this policy is based, the answer cannot be the experience of Third World countries under Communism. Are the Cubans today better off than they were under Batista? Ask the many thousands who have already left and the countless other thousands who are clamoring to get out. Are the South Vietnamese better off under the rule of the North than they were under Thieu? Ask the boat people. Are the Cambodians better off as Kampuchians? Ask the grave.

Why then take it for granted that the Sandinistas, once they consolidate their power, or the FDR in El Salvador if it succeeds in toppling the junta, will be different? The only answer can be that the ideological commitment to "socialism" is enough to establish a legitimate claim for support of a movement fighting any regime of the Right.

So much for the contention that ideology has become irrelevant; so much too for the argument that Communism no longer has any ideological appeal. But a word also needs to be said about the obstacle posed by Communism—again, whether or not allied to the Soviet Union—to the development of institutions under which human rights can flourish.

The fact that talk of human rights trips so glibly off the tongues of many whose sympathies lie with Communist insurgencies like the one in El Salvador should not blind us to the moral impudence involved here. For human rights have invariably fared worse under Communism than under the regimes it has replaced. I have already mentioned the most hideous illustrations of this rule, but it is important to understand that the horrors perpetrated by Communists in power are not accidental or arbitrary. They follow from the totalitarian nature of Communist regimes.

As writers from Hannah Arendt in the 50's to Jeane Kirkpatrick today have been trying to tell us, there is a fundamental distinction between Communist regimes and the more traditional authoritarian regimes of the Right we are familiar with in the Third World. The main and often only source of repression in the latter is their determination to eliminate *political* opposition. Communist regimes, by contrast, permit no area of life to escape the control of the state. Even authoritarian regimes at their worst generally allow more

freedom—economic, cultural, religious—than the mildest of Communist states; this indeed is the main reason non-Communist autocracies can sometimes be overthrown or even peacefully replaced by democratic regimes (as in Spain, Portugal, and Greece). But not a single country has ever broken free once the Communist yoke has been forced onto its neck; and to this day not a single country (with the possible exception of Chile where Allende was elected by 35 percent of the vote and where he was overthrown before he had a chance to turn the country into a full-fledged Communist state) has ever voluntarily submitted to that yoke. Not one, not ever.

To oppose Communism in the world of ideas and ideologies is therefore in itself a necessary condition of fighting for human rights; anyone who fails to oppose Communism forfeits the intellectual and moral right to speak in the name of human rights. And this is equally true of opposing the spread of Communism—which means the establishment of totalitarian rule and the virtual destruction of any hope of eventual democratization—in practice.

In an attack on the signs of a resumption by the Reagan administration of friendly American relations with Argentina and South Korea, the columnist Richard Reeves,* misapplying a statement once made by Daniel Patrick Moynihan at the UN, writes: "We are Americans. If we are not for freedom, what are we for?" Indeed we are for freedom, which is why we should prefer authoritarian regimes of the Right to the totalitarian states of the Communist world.

At the same time, where a democratic opposition exists in those authoritarian regimes, our sympathies will naturally be drawn to it. But the question always arises as to whether encouraging such an opposition and putting pressure on the authorities to give it freer rein will so weaken them as to lead eventually to their overthrow and replacement by something worse—worse both from the point of view of the people there and from the standpoint of American interests.

As the case of Iran demonstrates, the worse alternative need not be a Communist state; yet as things go in the contemporary world, it usually is. When another columnist, Hodding Carter III† (who served as the State Department spokesman under Carter), sneers at the welcome given by President Reagan to "that resolute guardian of his subjects' freedom, the current South Korean dictator," his smug sarcasm blinds him to the fact the Chun is the resolute guardian of South Korea's freedom: its freedom from a takeover by North Korea which would result (as the example of Vietnam should have taught Mr. Carter and everyone else once and for all) in a society that would make South Korea even at its most repressive look like a libertarian paradise.

Is there then nothing the United States can do

to encourage the gradual liberalization of countries like South Korea, Taiwan, Argentina, etc.? The answer is that there are things we can do, but our pressures have to be guided by the rule of prudence. They must be informed, that is, with a greater sense of the local conditions and dangers than we have shown in the recent past. Otherwise, in the name of promoting human rights, we will—as we already have in Iran and Nicaragua—find ourselves cooperating in the replacement of a lesser evil by a greater one.

VI

THE same rule of prudence—the same practical political wisdom—is the only protection against the obverse danger of a strategy aimed at the containment of Communism. This danger is the "globalism" that so worries Tucker and others because in their view it is what drove us into Vietnam in the past and could be expected to generate an equivalent disaster in the future.

But was it anti-Communism that drove us into Vietnam? In a sense, of course, it was: we went in to prevent a Communist takeover of the South. Yet even at the time there were those like Hans J. Morgenthau who opposed military intervention not because they were against the objective of holding the line against the spread of Communism (or because they thought we had no moral right to do so, or because they sympathized more or less frankly with the Communist side). They opposed intervention because they believed that Vietnam was "the wrong war in the wrong place at the wrong time." This was a prudential judgment that turned out to be right: the United States was in the event unwilling to pay the price of victory, and was therefore doomed to lose the war and suffer consequent political damage both at home and abroad.

Of all the putative "lessons of Vietnam," the most important is the one least frequently mentioned: never to undertake a military operation without the will and the means (including the domestic political support) to win. The "best and the brightest" who led us into Vietnam were in fact neither the best nor the brightest. Typically they were arrogant and singularly unendowed with prudential intelligence. Is there any guarantee that an anti-Communist strategy of containment would be applied in the future with greater prudence—with a more finely tuned feel *both* for the limits and the extent of our power? The answer is no—although those who are now warning us against indiscriminate interventionism remind me of the Pope in Latin America warning people who have only just begun to afford wearing shoes

* New York Daily News, February 19, 1981.

† Wall Street Journal, February 19, 1981.

about the dangers of consumerism and rampant materialism. No doubt the danger is there, but it is not the most urgent or immediate one we face.

The other great criticism of an anti-Communist strategy is that it would rob us of the ability to exploit the many divisions in the Communist world. Most significantly, would it not rule out cooperation with China? No more, and no less, I would say, than the fight against Hitler ruled out an alliance with Stalin, an equally malevolent totalitarian tyrant. For here too the rule of prudence applies, permitting tactical flexibility within an overall strategy. As Hitler was the more dangerous evil at that moment, and as Stalin for reasons of his own (which were not the same as ours) joined in the war to defeat the common enemy, we were justified—indeed required—by prudential considerations to do what we did.

There is thus no reason why an anti-Communist strategy would preclude a temporary tactical alliance with Communist China against the Soviet Union. But the same rule of prudence that allows for this alliance also provokes serious doubts about its advisability. In World War II, the Soviet Union was strong enough to make a major contribution to the defeat of Nazi Germany. But is Communist China a comparable asset in our struggle with the Soviet Union? In terms of actual military capability, obviously not. Admittedly a hostile China requires the Soviet Union to pin down some 45 divisions on its eastern borders that might otherwise be deployed in the West. Yet those divisions were not put on the Chinese border in the first place because of anything we did or did not do. Nor are they likely to be removed by any act of our own.

Therefore it is hard to see what benefits accrue to us from helping to build up the Chinese economically and militarily. On the other hand, it is easy to spell out the risks. In helping one Communist country while struggling against another, we risk a loss of clarity about our purposes just at a time when we have a chance to regain such clarity. We also risk helping to create an additional menace to our children and grandchildren.

Of course if, as we often hear, China is really in the process of abandoning Communism and becoming "Americanized," these risks would simply evaporate. But while the evidence for this theory of Chinese development is intriguing, the historical record must inspire skepticism. No Communist regime has ever abandoned Communism. Furthermore, there are precedents in the Soviet experience itself for the kind of internal changes now taking place in China, as well as for alliances with "bourgeois" nations. Yet neither the loosening up of the Soviet economy at various times nor the popular-front strategy of the late 30's resulted in an alteration of the country's basic totalitarian structure or in the discarding of the ideological imperatives of Marxism-Leninism. If there is any

reason to believe that China will prove to be different, it has yet to make itself manifest.

THE third great argument against an anti-Communist strategy of containment is that it would, in the words of the regnant cliché of this debate, "put us on the wrong side of history." The theory here is only a version of the historical determinism that forms so crucial a part of the Marxist scheme of things. It is an attenuated version in that it assumes a vague tendency toward the triumph of the Left rather than an iron law dictating the eventual overthrow of the bourgeoisie by the proletariat; and it is sanitized in that it does not refer explicitly to the Communist party as the only possible leader of the process. Translated into these relatively bland terms, with the radical spice and bite removed, the idea has been rendered fit for liberal consumption.

From the tenacity with which it has taken hold, one might suppose that the evidence for it is so overwhelming as to be irresistible to any rational person. Yet the odd truth is that, like so many ideas in the Marxist canon, this one has been confounded over and over again by that very history whose laws Marx purported to have discovered. If anything is clear from the experience of these matters over the past century, it is that the only inevitable law of history is that Marx's predictions will not come true. Thus in defiance of the conditions Marx had specified, Russia became the first Communist state; Germany, which he supposed would enjoy this honor, declined it and went the other way; nor did the "internal contradictions" of capitalism lead to the increasing impoverishment of the working class or to the emergence of a revolutionary proletariat; and so on and on into the endless night of a tiresome debate that, on the evidence, should have been settled ages ago.

Belief in the inevitable triumph of "socialism" has led to the conviction that the United States should not oppose, and in some instances should even sponsor, the establishment of "socialist" regimes. In addition to putting us on the side of the "progressive" tide of history against the "reactionary" forces trying in vain to hold it back, this strategy has sometimes been represented as a better way of containing Soviet expansionism than a policy that defines Marxists as the enemy. By opposing the Marxists, we "drive them into the arms" of the Soviet Union; conversely, by helping them, we can limit the extent of Soviet influence.

I once described this peculiar strategy of containment as "saving Communism from the Russians,"* and I pointed to the comedy of the fact that so many people who had always ridiculed the old Wilsonian idea of using American power to make the world safe for democracy were urging us

* "Making the World Safe for Communism," COMMENTARY, April 1976.

to use it for the truly ridiculous purpose of "making the world safe for Communism in a variety of national forms." I found it hard then, and I find it hard still, to understand why the United States should cooperate in the spread of a political culture hostile to our own and inimical to the welfare of the people under its sway.

It may well be that in certain instances we can do nothing to *prevent* the spread of this culture; and where that is the case, we have no prudent alternative but to make the best of things. But why should we help it along? And why should we not stand in its way wherever we can prudently do so? Such a policy cannot put us on the wrong or indeed on the right side of history: history has no side. But it can put us on the side of liberty, which is where we belong and where we have a duty both to our own interests and to our ideals to be.

VII

IN ADVOCATING an anti-Communist strategy of containment, however, am I calling for an eternity of confrontation and the risk of war without let-up, without surcease, and without any hope of victory at the end? It would be dishonest and a species of cant to deny that this might indeed be the prospect. It is a horrifying prospect from which one's first impulse is to shrink. But the prospect from the other side is more horrifying still: a universal Gulag and a life that is otherwise nasty, brutish, and short.

If, however, it would be cant to deny that an anti-Communist strategy holds out the possibility of an endless stalemate—a kind of cold-war equivalent of World War I—it would be conversely wrong to fall into what the late C.P. Snow once called "sentimental cynicism" by failing to acknowledge the possibility of a much brighter prospect as well.

Almost thirty-five years ago, when George F. Kennan (under the pseudonym of Mr. X) outlined the original strategy of containment in his historic essay, "The Sources of Soviet Conduct," he addressed himself to the same question of what could be hoped for from "a long-term, patient but firm and vigilant containment of Russian expansive tendencies" involving "the adroit and vigilant application of counter-force at a series of constantly shifting geographical and political points, corresponding to the shifts and maneuvers of Soviet policy." Kennan's answer was that by holding the Soviets behind the lines drawn at the end of World War II, we would promote "tendencies which must eventually find their outlet in either the breakup or the gradual mellowing of Soviet power."

This would, Kennan thought, take about fifteen years. Fifteen years later, however, came the Cuban missile crisis, which as we have seen promoted neither the breakup nor the mellowing of

Soviet power but a tremendous increase in that power, and the beginnings of American involvement in Vietnam, which led to an equally spectacular decline of American power. Yet even though his timing was so badly off, Kennan's prediction may still have been at least partially sound. Today, thirty-five years after his essay was published, hardly anyone but Kennan himself still hopes for the mellowing of Soviet power, but there is a more reasonable ground than ever for hope of a breakup of Soviet power.

To Kennan in 1947 it seemed "that Soviet power, like the capitalist world of its conception, bears within it the seeds of its own decay, and that the sprouting of these seeds is well advanced." They were not, evidently, quite so well advanced as he imagined. Today, however, buds and even flowers have begun to become visible.

Within the heartland of the Soviet empire both the agricultural and the highly developed technological sectors remain dependent on Western help. Economic and demographic problems are bound to grow more and more severe as the Russian majority begins giving way to a less advanced and less productive Muslim population. We even hear of a "health crisis" which has brought life expectancy within the Soviet Union to a lower point than it was under Stalin, when so many millions were murdered.* Moving outside the heartland and into the empire, we find Poland to the West exerting an even greater political challenge to Communist rule than Hungary in 1956 and Czechoslovakia in 1968; and we find Afghanistan to the South still offering resistance against a Soviet army 85,000-strong.

There are those who cite these facts, and others like them, to support the argument that the United States has nothing to fear from the Soviet Union. We do not, they contend, need to rearm or to strengthen our position in the Persian Gulf; we need only stand by and watch as the Soviets sink helplessly into a Vietnam-like "quagmire" in Afghanistan and as they lose control of their East European satellites. But the only reason Vietnam became a quagmire for us is that the Soviet Union gave the Communists there the arms with which to fight and ultimately win. Unless we do the same for the Afghans, the Soviets will simply wipe out the resistance at a cost they are entirely willing and easily able to afford.

Interestingly, those who counsel passivity toward Afghanistan are invariably among the voices calling on us to help the Communist authorities in Poland satisfy the economic demands of the newly—and temporarily?—independent unions. As Congressman Les Aspin† puts it: "... we could help underwrite a peaceful resolution of the eco-

* Nick Eberstadt, "The Coming Health Crisis in the USSR," *New York Review of Books*, February 19, 1981.

† *New York Times*, February 6, 1981.

conomic and political crisis. For Warsaw and Moscow, the price would be toleration of an independent source of political authority: Solidarity." William Safire* of the *New York Times*, recognizing that the Soviets are unlikely to accept such a condition, or to honor it if they did, has a better suggestion: "Let the Russians," he writes, who imposed an unworkable economic system on Poland which has pushed it into bankruptcy, "bail it out": "If they cannot pay the costs of their imperialism, let them withdraw to their own borders." Safire knows, of course, that they will not withdraw; therefore "we should let history take its course." This means refusing to help the Soviets evade the choice of once again using military force to repress a movement for greater freedom within its imperial domains.

LISTENING to certain Europeans and their American counterparts, we hear no expressions of admiration for the nobility—another word that ought to be reintroduced into our political discourse—shown by the Afghans and the Poles. We hear only of hypocritical plans for the neutralization of Afghanistan and plaintive prophecies to the effect that a Soviet invasion of Poland would be the worst thing that could happen to the Poles. How do these people know? Might not a Soviet invasion be the worst thing that could happen to the Soviets? Might they not encounter a degree of resistance from the Poles they did not meet with in Hungary or Czechoslovakia? And might this not trigger other uprisings against Soviet rule?

In any case, if the people of Poland, fighting for freedom, are willing to risk a Soviet invasion, how dare we join with their totalitarian rulers in trying to buy them off? Have we sunk so low in our fear of trouble that we are no longer even able to respond with anything other than trepidation to the spectacle of political courage?

It is ironic—to use the mildest possible term—that the very people who keep informing us that imperialism has had its day simultaneously talk as though the Soviet empire, the last great empire on earth, must be regarded as eternal. The Roman empire was not eternal, the British empire was not eternal, but the Soviet empire is. If we ask why, their answer is that its breakup would be too dangerous. It would be a convulsion sucking others in and leading in all probability to a new world war.

Unquestionably the breakup of the Soviet empire would be dangerous. But the alternative is even more dangerous: it is, in the words of Deputy Prime Minister Rajaratnam† of Singapore, "a socialist world order under Soviet leadership." He goes on:

If the non-Communist industrial powers cannot roll back the rising tide of Soviet power, then the small nations of Asia and of the Third

World generally must come to terms with the new Caesar. In fact, I know that many Asian countries are already, mentally, trying out Pax Sovietica for size. "Better red than dead," if repeated long enough might, hopefully, exorcise their time-sanctioned fears about having to live under a Communist world leader.

What Rajaratnam is saying is that the internal problems of the Soviet Union, and even the problems at its imperial frontiers, can be overcome by the classic imperial technique of further expansion.

If, however, we can deny them this outlet, the internal pressures already boiling behind their present imperial borders will mount of their own accord. To deny them means refraining (as in Poland) from cooperating with them in cooling such pressures off. It also means turning up the heat where the opportunity presents itself. Sending arms to the Afghans is one example; another is backing the pro-Western guerrilla force of Jonas Savimbi against the Soviet puppet regime in Angola. These are measures that carry a very low risk of direct confrontation with the Soviet Union. Indeed, they amount to nothing more than doing unto them what they have been doing to us for a very long time.

VIII

THERE are commentators like Tucker who think the new consensus provides no mandate for so ideological a policy and one so global in its reach. Others believe that the new consensus would be only too happy to support an anti-Communist foreign policy, but they fear the domestic repercussions. Going on an anti-Communist "crusade" would, they warn, bring back all the horrors of McCarthyism; already they detect a "whiff" of it in the air. But if McCarthyism means holding people guilty by association and damaging them with loose charges, then there has in recent years been not a "whiff" of it in the air but a powerful stench, only it has come from the Left rather than the Right.

Naturally it is the McCarthyites of the Left who are now raising the loudest alarms over a resurgence of the old McCarthyism (which they sometimes seem almost to crave in the expectation that it might pump the blood back into their hardening ideological arteries). A good example is the *Nation*, which has run several pieces since the election of Reagan announcing the arrival of the new McCarthyism. One of these pieces was written by the same member of the editorial board who produced an attack on Jeane Kirkpatrick, after her appointment as Ambassador to the UN, in which he referred to "two brothers, Lyman and Evron Kirkpatrick. The former served for years

* *New York Times*, February 12, 1981.

† *Washington Star*, February 1, 1981.

with the Central Intelligence Agency. "The latter [was] Jeane's husband. . . ." * Now Lyman Kirkpatrick is *not* the brother of Jeane Kirkpatrick's husband; they are in fact not related at all, and his service with the CIA (at least that detail is accurate) has no bearing of any kind on her. Though some of us may have difficulty in understanding why there is anything wrong with working for the CIA, if we remind ourselves that what Communism was to Joe McCarthy, the CIA is to the *Nation*, we can recognize here a classic McCarthyite smear: the assumption of guilt by association with even the evidence for the association turning out to be false.

Be that as it may, at a time when it is still widely regarded as illegitimate to call a Communist a Communist, the fear that liberals or socialists are in imminent danger of being smeared as Communists seems at the very least premature. It is the political counterpart of the fear that we are about to overreach ourselves in the use of military power when the real question is whether we have enough power at the moment to do anything with it at all. This fear of overreaching easily translates into an argument for a "restraint" indistinguishable in practice from supine passivity. Similarly, the alarm over a new McCarthyism becomes a polemical weapon with which preemptive strikes are launched against any criticism; when criticism does manage to get through, the same weapon is used to discredit it.

It is, indeed, precisely because the only effective way to fight such ideas is with strong and candid criticism that those within the New Right who want to revive instrumentalities of the old McCarthyism like the congressional investigation are making a great mistake. First of all, a new wave of congressional investigations into "internal security"—even if it were conducted with a scrupulous regard for due process and avoided all the sins of the old—would only create sympathy for what would be represented as a martyred cause. Secondly, it would disarm those of us trying to fight the radical Left in the world of ideas (which is, after all, where its power mainly resides). We would be inhibited in our criticism for fear that it might call the authorities down upon the heads of people whose proper punishment is to be discredited intellectually and morally and thereby deprived of influence in the court of informed opinion rather than in a court of law. The old McCarthyism led to the crippling of anti-Communism in the intellectual community for an entire generation, with immense consequent damage to the political consciousness of the past twenty years. A new McCarthyism would do even greater damage in the climate of today.

For despite the hysteria of both the Left and the Right, the climate of today—the new consensus—is not a mandate for "counterrevolution" and "witch-hunts." What it demands at this stage is a

massive effort to reverse the decline of American power and to hold the line against the Soviet drive for imperial hegemony. There is no trace of vindictiveness in this demand. On the contrary: its emotional quality is best reflected in the amazingly even-tempered but strong personality of the man it chose to satisfy it.

IN THE early days of Ronald Reagan's administration, he has shown every sign of fidelity to the new consensus, both in spirit and in substance. Without resort to demagoguery and without even attacking his opponents, he has, as he promised he would do, moved to reverse the decline of American military power by exempting defense spending from the budgetary cuts which form part of his strategy for reversing the correlative decline of American economic power. He has moved toward an unambiguous stand against Soviet expansionism in the Western hemisphere. And he has spoken of stationing American ground forces in the Middle East as a deterrent and a trip-wire.

It is important to recognize that none of this goes beyond the strategy of "limited" containment as outlined by Tucker. Even the very strong stand on El Salvador taken by the new Secretary of State bases itself on the need to hold back Soviet expansionism and not on the wish to prevent the establishment of a Communist regime there.

Indeed, when Secretary Haig speaks of establishing "norms of international behavior" to govern the conduct of both the Soviet Union and the United States, he even seems to be invoking the 1972 Basic Principles of Détente as the objective toward which a new strategy of containment should aspire. Yet as he must surely know, experience suggests that no such arrangement is possible. Within months of signing the 1972 document, the Soviets violated one of its main provisions by encouraging the Egyptian attack on Israel instead of using their influence to dampen down a conflict between third parties that could—and in the event did—pull the superpowers themselves into a direct confrontation.

Since then, the Soviets have made it plain over and over again that they will never bind themselves to the "rules" of any "game" which would prevent them from intervening to consolidate "socialism" where it already exists (this is known as the Brezhnev Doctrine) or from helping to establish it wherever the opportunity arises. "The armies of socialism," they say, "march in only one direction." The Soviets justify all this not in terms of national security nor even in the language of *Realpolitik* but on moral grounds: "socialism" is superior to any alternative system and they have a duty to make it prevail.

We for our part have not yet begun saying as much for liberty. We have not, for example, been

* "Jeane's Designs," *Nation*, February 7, 1981.

saying that taking steps to save El Salvador from Communism is more than a matter of preserving an American sphere of influence; that it is also a matter of sparing the people of that country from the ravages of a system far worse in itself than the government it seeks to replace and far more destructive of the chance of future improvement. Nor have we been emphatic enough in rejecting the argument that the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan is morally comparable to American intervention in Latin America. And we have not been saying that a Soviet invasion of Poland would be immoral less because it would violate another country's territorial integrity—Poland, after all, is already a colony of the Soviet empire—than because it would represent the extirpation of a nascent possibility of freedom by the armies of Communist totalitarianism.

The Reagan administration, in short, while losing no time in coping with the present danger, has thus far taken no clearly visible steps to deal with the future danger—the danger that a strategy of containment which defines the problem as Soviet expansionism alone will be unable to sustain the requisite political support and will therefore lead

almost as surely as the retrenchments of the Carter era to the Soviet-dominated world that Rajaratnam, writing toward the end of that era, pronounced to be “inevitable” by the end of the 1980's.

A strategy of limited containment to deal with the present danger does not go far enough to head off this, the future danger. Only a strategy based on the containment of Communism can confound Rajaratnam's prophecy. That there are terrible risks in implementing such a strategy is true and has to be acknowledged and faced. But what has to be equally emphasized is that an anti-Communist strategy holds out a double hope. It holds out the hope of a breakup of the Soviet empire, and it thereby offers the prospect of a world in which for the first time since the Russian revolution countries under Communist rule might succeed in throwing off the yoke, in which Communism would lose the last vestiges of its appeal, and in which the free institutions and the prosperity we in the West have enjoyed would have a much better chance of spreading and finding local nourishment.

If such a world is not worth taking risks for, what is?

Ideology & Supply-Side Economics

Irving Kristol

THE terms being applied—by the media, by politicians, by economists—to President Reagan's economic program, and most particularly to the tax-cutting aspect of this program, are "bold," "revolutionary," "a risky experiment," and so on. Clearly, a great many people are nervous about "supply-side" economics, and seem to have difficulty understanding its rationale. This is quite odd. For there is nothing really bold, or revolutionary, or experimental about this program. Nor is it at all difficult to understand.

Indeed, the trouble with the thing we call supply-side economics is that it is just too simple, too easy to understand. Accustomed as we are to the increasing complexity of the natural sciences, and the occult jargon of the social sciences, we are inclined to be suspicious of transparent simplicity, which we are likely to equate with naiveté or wishful thinking. The average person, listening to an exposition of supply-side economics, will nod his head at every point—but, after it is done, will remain incredulous: if it is that obvious, what is the fuss and controversy all about? The average economist, on the other hand, is only too likely to be indignant, outraged, and contemptuously dismissive: what is the point of his hard-won expertise in sophisticated economic theory if economic policy can be reduced to such plain terms?

It must be said that the term itself, "supply-side economics," may be a source of initial confusion. It originates in deliberate contrast to the prevailing Keynesian approach, which emphasizes the need for government to manage and manipulate—through fiscal and monetary policies—aggregate demand so as to maintain full employment. Supply-side economists say government cannot really do this, no matter how many clever economists it hires, but that if business enterprise is permitted to function with a minimum of interference, it will invest and innovate, so as to *create* the requisite demand for the goods it produces.

There is certainly a difference in perspective here. Supply-side economists look at the economy from ground level, as it were—i.e., from the point

of view of the entrepreneurs and investors who are identified as the prime movers. Keynesian economists look at the economy from above—from the standpoint of a government that is a *deus ex machina*, and which, in its omniscience, intervenes discreetly to preserve a harmonious economic universe. But it is wrong to infer that we live in a Manichean world in which Supply and Demand are continually at odds, so that we always are having to declare allegiance to one as against the other. They are, rather, opposite sides of the same coin, coexisting of necessity, and there can be no question of *choosing* between them.

More precisely, it is absurd *economically* to think in terms of such a choice. Beyond a certain point, a tax on production becomes a tax on consumption—the goods become too expensive and demand falls. Similarly, beyond a certain point a tax on consumption becomes a tax on production—the decrease in demand inhibits supply. Shifting taxes from the one to the other may provide marginal benefits on occasion. But a tax on commercial transactions and economic activity is always a tax on *both* production and consumption.

When, however, one moves from a purely analytical-economic mode of thought to a political-ideological one—when, in short, one moves from economic analysis to economic policy—then the difference in perspective has significant implications. Supply-side economics naturally gives rise to an emphasis on growth, not redistribution. It aims at improving everyone's economic circumstances over time, but not necessarily in the same degree or in the same period of time. The aggregate demand created by economic activity, as seen from the supply-side, is indifferent to the issue of equality. Its bias is consequently in favor of a free market for economic activity, because this provides the most powerful economic incentives for investment, innovation, and growth. Those, on the other hand, for whom economic equality is at least as important as economic growth will always want to see government "restructure" this aggregate demand and will be indifferent to the issue of economic incentives.

However, there is another—incidental but important—source of controversy which has already been referred to, and that is the threat that sup-

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