

THE MEANING OF THE NATIONAL TEACH-IN

The Teach-Ins were born in protest against United States policy in Vietnam. However, they are vehicles for a larger purpose. They are a means of vitalizing the process of discussion and debate without which democracy lacks significance.

A free society requires that its citizens not only express their will, but that they do so in a reasoned manner. The capacities for reasoned and autonomous judgment are difficult to achieve. A government that fails to encourage the exercise of these capacities does less than it should to improve the quality of the democratic process. A government that demands that exercise of these capacities be suspended for a period subverts the democratic process.

The Teach-In movement might never have occurred had not many in our government tried to manipulate the American people into consensus about the war in Vietnam. Officials thwart criticism of existing policies in contradictory ways. When it is claimed that government spokesmen oversimplify the challenge of communism and the problem of revolutionary discontent, they often reply that the fight between liberty and tyranny is as simple as it is basic. When criticized for acting mistakenly, their response is often that the matters involved are too complex for public discussion and judgment. Officials of our government tend then to oscillate between the view that there is almost nothing the American people needs to know, and the view that there is too much for them to know. Many who remain unconvinced and persist in their criticisms are told that they are being irresponsible and unpatriotic. The extraordinary sensitivity to criticism displayed by many in government raises the question of whether they are, after all, as confident as they would have the people believe of either the justice or the justifiability of American policy in Vietnam.

The claim that those outside of government do not

have the facts on which to base a decision has special importance. Stated simply, the argument is: "How can you presume to judge American policy when you do not have access to all the relevant information? Only those officials who have access to classified information are in a position to make responsible judgments about Vietnam."

The short reply to this argument is that Americans have not only the right, but the solemn obligation to make the best judgments of which they are capable on the facts available to them. The stringency of this obligation is great in proportion to the importance of the problem. Issues affecting war and peace deserve our most sustained and patient thought. What we may not do is abdicate that responsibility.

Nevertheless, there are times when one should defer to a government that is entitled to our confidence. But in the sequence of events leading to the present crisis in Vietnam serious blunders have been made by the present as well as previous administrations. If our government, given its privileged information, has made many serious mistakes in the past, does it deserve our unquestioning support in the present?

Most important of all, it is wrong to regard the judgments required as justified solely in terms of the kinds of facts to which the American public may lack access. A president's judgment in complex matters is inevitably affected not only by the information made available to him by government intelligence. It is also influenced by political and moral considerations, and by facts to which all have access. It is at best naive and self-deceptive to suppose that the entire disagreement between the government and its responsible critics results from the former alone having access to classified information.

The integrity of our democratic institutions and the good sense of our citizens is more directly challenged by the following argument. "Ameri-

can lives have been committed to battle. The United States is engaged in continuing aerial bombardment of North Vietnam. If the calculations upon which these military policies are based are correct, the North Vietnamese will agree to negotiate and will force the Viet Cong to comply. But this outcome is bound to be delayed by the widespread expression of dissenting opinion in the United States. For our enemies will interpret such dissent as a sign of weakness and lack of national determination. Therefore, it is every American's patriotic duty to refrain from criticism. For every day lost in achieving a successful outcome means a loss of additional American lives." The best one can say for this argument is that it is subversive of meaningful commitment to democracy. Those concerned about the expansion of the war in Vietnam are concerned for the fate of many hundreds of thousands more of lives—American lives as well as the lives of others, than are presently committed to battle. Moreover, the argument rests on a big "if"—"if the calculations upon which these policies are based are correct." Does an American have the right to remain silent if his reasoned judgment is that lives are presently being pointlessly jeopardized by our government? This question need only be asked, and the answer becomes obvious. Whether the administration is right in its judgment, or its critics in theirs, both have an obligation to expose their commitments to the fullest publicity possible.

Finally, to remain silent at this time may mislead our government into thinking that Americans are not concerned about the future course of the war. There has already been much discussion about the possibility of bombing industrial targets and population centers in North Vietnam. There is talk of a land war involving even greater United States military commitment. There is even talk of military engagement with China—and

the possibility of using nuclear weapons. Are these issues also matters about which only experts having access to privileged information can make responsible judgments?

A charge connected with the one just discussed is that critics of American policy close their eyes to the unjustified actions committed by the other side. It is even insinuated that those who oppose our Vietnam policies ipso facto endorse the policies advocated by the other side. This line of reasoning is completely invalid. If the other side does wrong things, they are to be condemned. But unwarranted actions by them do not cancel ours. Moreover, there is, after all, a special appropriateness to American citizens addressing ourselves to the government we elect and which acts in our name. We are citizens of this nation, and thereby have a special interest in and responsibility for the actions of our government. Criticism of our government's policies should in no sense be construed as endorsement of the policies advocated by North Vietnam, Communist China and the Soviet Union. Indeed, opposition in no way implies agreement about any particular alternative to American policy.

On May 15, 1965, scores of expert scholars as well as concerned responsible citizens from other walks of life will come to Washington, D.C. for this National Teach-In. They will discuss, debate, and examine our nation's Vietnam policy with government spokesmen and with academic colleagues who support the government position.

We view this Teach-In as a beginning as well as a culmination. It is the culmination of a series of over fifty Teach-Ins at campuses across the land. It is the beginning of a serious and sustained effort to ensure that all matters vitally affecting our nation's welfare will be responsibly discussed and debated. We especially aim to make sure that the wisdom, knowledge, and moral insight of thoughtful and knowledgeable persons outside

of government will be brought to bear on these issues. We want to forestall future "blunders" and to improve the quality of the democratic process. In this effort we will not be ignored. And we will not be silenced by illicit political pressure. We have every con-

fidence that the administration's encouraging response to our invitation will mark a new phase in the development of the American democracy. For informed dissent is the highest form of cooperation of which a democratic people is capable.

"Things have been going badly for the United States in South Vietnam for some time and to those of us who have been roughly in touch with the situation the reasons have seemed tolerably clear. The advocates of the wrong policy have been in charge and are deeply committed to their error. When things go wrong, they redouble their efforts, which, inevitably, makes things twice as bad."

Ambassador Kenneth Galbraith
N.Y. Herald Tribune
Book Review Section
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'We Are Deluding Ourselves in Vietnam'

By HANS J. MORGENTHAU

THE address which President Johnson delivered on April 7 at Johns Hopkins University is important for two reasons. On the one hand, the President has shown for the first time a way out of the impasse in which we find ourselves in Vietnam. By agreeing to negotiations without preconditions he has opened the door to negotiations which those preconditions had made impossible from the outset.

By proposing a project for the economic development of Southeast Asia—with North Vietnam a beneficiary and the Soviet Union a supporter—he has implicitly recognized the variety of national interests in the Communist world and the need for varied American responses tailored to those interests. By asking "that the people of South Vietnam be allowed to guide their own country in their own way," he has left all possibilities open for the future evolution of relations between North and South Vietnam.

On the other hand, the President reiterated the intellectual assumptions and policy proposals which brought us to an impasse and which make it impossible to extricate ourselves. The President has linked our involvement in Vietnam with our war of independence and has proclaimed the freedom of all nations as the goal of our foreign policy. He has started from the assumption that there are two Vietnamese nations, one of which has attacked the other, and he sees that attack as an integral part of unlimited Chinese aggression. Consistent with this assumption, the President is willing to negotiate with China and North Vietnam but not with the Vietcong.

Yet we cannot have it both ways. We cannot at the same time embrace these false assumptions and pursue new sound policies. Thus we are faced with a real dilemma. This dilemma is by no means of the President's making.

WE are militarily engaged in Vietnam by virtue of a basic principle of our foreign policy that was implicit in the Truman Doctrine of 1947 and was put into practice by John Foster Dulles from 1954 onward. This principle is the military containment of Communism. Containment had its

origins in Europe; Dulles applied it to the Middle East and Asia through a series of bilateral and multilateral alliances. Yet what was an outstanding success in Europe turned out to be a dismal failure elsewhere. The reasons for that failure are twofold.

First, the threat that faced the nations of Western Europe in the aftermath of the Second World War was primarily military. It was the threat of the Red Army marching westward. Behind the line of military demarcation of 1945 which the policy of containment declared to be the westernmost limit of the Soviet empire, there was an ancient civilization, only temporarily weak and able to maintain itself against the threat of Communist subversion.

The situation is different in the Middle East and Asia. The threat there is not primarily military but political in nature. Weak governments and societies provide opportunities for Communist subversion. Military containment is irrelevant to that threat and may even be counterproductive. Thus the Baghdad Pact did not protect Egypt from Soviet influence and SEATO has had no bearing on Chinese influence in Indonesia and Pakistan.

Second, and more important, even if China were threatening her neighbors primarily by military means, it would be impossible to contain her by erecting a military wall at the periphery of her empire. For China is, even in her present underdeveloped state, the dominant power in Asia. She is this by virtue of the quality and quantity of her population, her geographic position, her civilization, her past power remembered and her future power anticipated. Anybody who has traveled in Asia with his eyes and ears open must have been impressed by the enormous impact which the resurgence of China has made upon all manner of men, regardless of class and political conviction, from Japan to Pakistan.

The issue China poses is political and cultural predominance. The United States can no more contain Chinese influence in Asia by arming South Vietnam and Thailand than China could contain American influence in the Western Hemisphere by arming, Nicaragua and Costa Rica.

If we are convinced that we cannot live with a China predominant on the

mainland of Asia, then we must strike at the heart of Chinese power—that is, rather than try to contain the power of China, we must try to destroy that power itself. Thus there is logic on the side of that small group of Americans who are convinced that war between the United States and China is inevitable and that the earlier that war comes, the better will be the chances for the United States to win it.

Yet, while logic is on their side, practical judgment is against them. For while China is obviously no match for the United States in overall power, China is largely immune to the specific types of power in which the superiority of the United States consists—that is, nuclear, air and naval power. Certainly, the United States has the power to destroy the nuclear installations and the major industrial and population centers of China, but this destruction would not defeat China; it would only set her development back. To be defeated, China has to be conquered.

Physical conquest would require the deployment of millions of American soldiers on the mainland of Asia. No American military leader has ever advocated a course of action so fraught with incalculable risks, so uncertain of outcome, requiring sacrifices so out of proportion to the interests at stake and the benefits to be expected. President Eisenhower declared on Feb. 10, 1954, that he "could conceive of no greater tragedy than for the United States to become involved in an all-out war in Indochina." General MacArthur, in the Congressional hearings concerning his dismissal and in personal conversation with President Kennedy, emphatically warned against sending American foot soldiers to the Asian mainland to fight China.

IF we do not want to set ourselves goals which cannot be attained with the means we are willing to employ, we must learn to accommodate ourselves to the predominance of China on the Asian mainland. It is instructive to note that those Asian nations which have done so—such as Burma and Cambodia—live peacefully in the shadow of the Chinese giant.

This *modus vivendi*, composed of legal independence and various degrees of (Continued on Following Page)

actual dependence, has indeed been for more than a millennium the persistent pattern of Chinese predominance on the mainland of Asia. The military conquest of Tibet is the sole exception to that pattern. The military operations at the Indian border do not diverge from it, since their purpose was the establishment of a frontier disputed by both sides.

On the other hand, those Asian nations which have allowed themselves to be transformed into outposts of American military power—such as Laos a few years ago, South Vietnam and Thailand—have become the actual or prospective victims of Communist aggression and subversion. Thus it appears that peripheral military containment is counterproductive. Challenged at its periphery by American military power at its weakest—that is, by the proxy of client-states—China or its proxies respond with locally superior military and political power.

In specific terms, accommodation means four things: (1) recognition of the political and cultural predominance of China on the mainland of Asia as a fact of life; (2) liquidation of the peripheral military containment of China; (3) strengthening of the uncommitted nations of Asia by nonmilitary means; (4) assessment of Communist governments in Asia in terms not of Communist doctrine but of their relation to the interests and power of the United States.

In the light of these principles, the alternative to our present policies in Vietnam would be this: a face-saving agreement which would allow us to disengage ourselves militarily in stages spaced in time; restoration of the status quo of the Geneva Agreement of 1954, with special emphasis upon all-Vietnamese elections; cooperation with the Soviet Union in support of a Titoist all-Vietnamese Government, which would be likely to emerge from such elections.

This last point is crucial, for our present policies not only drive Hanoi into the waiting arms of Peking, but also make it very difficult for Moscow to pursue an independent policy. Our interests in Southeast Asia are identical with those of the Soviet Union: to prevent the expansion of the military power of China. But while our present policies invite that expansion, so do they make it impossible for the Soviet Union to join us in preventing it. If we were to reconcile ourselves to the establishment of a Titoist government in all of Vietnam, the

Soviet Union could successfully compete with China in claiming credit for it and surreptitiously cooperate with us in maintaining it.

Testing the President's proposals by these standards, one realizes how far they go in meeting them. These proposals do not preclude a return to the Geneva agreement and even assume the existence of a Titoist government in North Vietnam. Nor do they preclude the establishment of a Titoist government for all of Vietnam, provided the people of South Vietnam have freely agreed to it. They also envision the active participation of the Soviet Union in establishing and maintaining a new balance of power in Southeast Asia. On the other hand, the President has flatly rejected a withdrawal "under the cloak of a meaningless agreement." The controlling word is obviously "meaningless," and only the future can tell whether we shall consider any face-saving agreement as "meaningless" regardless of its political context.

HOWEVER, we are under a psychological compulsion to continue our military presence in South Vietnam as part of the peripheral military containment of China. We have been emboldened in this course of action by the identification of the enemy as "Communist," seeing in every Communist party and regime an extension of hostile Russian or Chinese power. This identification was justified 20 or 15 years ago when Communism still had a monolithic character. Here, as elsewhere, our modes of thought and action have been rendered obsolete by new developments.

It is ironic that this simple juxtaposition of "Communism" and "free world" was erected by John Foster Dulles's crusading moralism into the guiding principle of American foreign policy at a time when the national Communism of Yugoslavia, the neutralism of the third world and the incipient split between the Soviet Union and China were rendering that juxtaposition invalid.

Today, it is belaboring the obvious to say that we are faced not with one monolithic Communism whose uniform hostility must be countered with equally uniform hostility, but with a number of different Communisms whose hostilities, determined by different national interests, vary. In fact, the United States encounters today less hostility from Tito, who is a Communist, than from de Gaulle, who is not.

We can today distinguish four different types of Communism in view of the kind and degree of hostility to the United States they represent: a Communism identified with the Soviet Union—e.g., Poland; a Communism identified with China—e.g., Albania; a Communism that straddles the fence between the Soviet Union and China—e.g., Rumania, and independent Communism—e.g., Yugoslavia. Each of these Communisms must be dealt with in terms of the bearing its foreign policy has upon the interests of the United States in a concrete instance.

It would, of course, be absurd to suggest that the officials responsible for the conduct of American foreign policy are unaware of these distinctions and of the demands they make for discriminating subtlety. Yet it is an obvious fact of experience that these officials are incapable of living up to these demands when they deal with Vietnam.

Thus they maneuver themselves into a position which is antirevolutionary per se and which requires military opposition to revolution wherever it is found in Asia, regardless of how it affects the interests—and how susceptible it is to the power—of the United States. There is a historic precedent for this kind of policy: Metternich's military opposition to liberalism after the Napoleonic Wars, which collapsed in 1848. For better or for worse, we live again in an age of revolution. It is the task of statesmanship not to oppose what cannot be opposed with a chance of success, but to bend it to one's own interests. This is what the President is trying to do with his proposal for the economic development of Southeast Asia.

Why do we support the Saigon Government in the civil war against the Vietcong? Because the Saigon Government is "free" and the Vietcong are "Communist." By containing Vietnamese Communism, we assume that we are really containing the Communism of China.

Yet this assumption is at odds with the historic experience of a millennium and is unsupported by contemporary evidence. China is the hereditary enemy of Vietnam, and Ho Chi Minh will become the leader of a Chinese satellite only if the United States forces him to become one.

Furthermore, Ho Chi Minh, like Tito and unlike the Communist governments of the other states of Eastern Europe, came to power not by courtesy of another Communist nation's

victorious army but at the head of a victorious army of his own. He is, then, a natural candidate to become an Asian Tito, and the question we must answer is: How adversely would a Titoist Ho Chi Minh, governing all of Vietnam, affect the interests of the United States? The answer can only be: not at all. One can even maintain the proposition that, far from affecting adversely the interests of the United States, it would be in the interest of the United States if the western periphery of China were ringed by a chain of independent states, though they would, of course, in their policies take due account of the predominance of their powerful neighbor.

THE roots of the Vietnamese civil war go back to the very beginning of South Vietnam as an independent state. When President Ngo Dinh Diem took office in 1954, he presided not over a state but over one-half of a country arbitrarily and, in the intentions of all concerned, temporarily severed from the other half. He was generally regarded as a caretaker who would establish the rudiments of an administration until the country was united by nationwide elections to be held in 1956 in accordance with the Geneva accords.

Diem was confronted at home with a number of private armies which were politically, religiously or criminally oriented. To the general surprise, he subdued one after another and created what looked like a viable government. Yet in the process of creating it, he also laid the foundations for the present civil war. He ruthlessly suppressed all opposition, established concentration camps, organized a brutal secret police, closed newspapers and rigged elections. These policies inevitably led to a polarization of the politics of South Vietnam—on one side, Diem's family, surrounded by a Pretorian guard; on the other, the Vietnamese people, backed by the Communists, declaring themselves liberators from foreign domination and internal oppression.

Thus, the possibility of civil war was inherent in the very nature of the Diem regime. It became inevitable after Diem refused to agree to all-Vietnamese elections and, in the face of mounting popular alienation, accentuated the tyrannical aspects of his regime. The South Vietnamese who cherished freedom could not help but oppose him. Threat-

ened by the secret police, they went either abroad or underground where the Communists were waiting for them.

UNTIL the end of last February, the Government of the United States started from the assumption that the war in South Vietnam was a civil war, aided and abetted—but not created—from abroad, and spokesmen for the Government have made time and again the point that the key to winning the war was political and not military and was to be found in South Vietnam itself. It was supposed to lie in transforming the indifference or hostility of the great mass of the South Vietnamese people into positive loyalty to the Government.

To that end, a new theory of warfare called "counter-insurgency" was put into practice. Strategic hamlets were established, massive propaganda campaigns were embarked upon, social and economic measures were at least sporadically taken. But all was to no avail. The mass of the population remained indifferent, if not hostile, and large units of the army ran away or went over to the enemy.

The reasons for this failure are of general significance, for they stem from a deeply ingrained habit of the American mind. We like to think of social problems as technically self-sufficient and susceptible of simple, clear-cut solutions. We tend to think of foreign aid as a kind of self-sufficient, technical economic enterprise subject to the laws of economics and divorced from politics, and of war as a similarly self-sufficient, technical enterprise, to be won as quickly, as cheaply, as thoroughly as possible and divorced from the foreign policy that preceded and is to follow it. Thus our military theoreticians and practitioners conceive of counterinsurgency as though it were just another branch of warfare like artillery or chemical warfare, to be taught in special schools and applied with technical proficiency wherever the occasion arises.

This view derives of course from a complete misconception of the nature of civil war. People fight and die in civil

wars because they have a faith which appears to them worth fighting and dying for, and they can be opposed with a chance of success only by people who have at least as strong a faith.

Magsaysay could subdue the Huk rebellion in the Philippines because his charisma, proven in action, aroused a faith superior to that of his opponents. In South Vietnam there is nothing to oppose the faith of the Vietcong and, in consequence, the Saigon Government and we are losing the civil war.

A guerrilla war cannot be won without the active support of the indigenous population, short of the physical extermination of that population. Germany was at least consistent when, during the Second World War, faced with unmanageable guerrilla warfare throughout occupied Europe, she tried to master the situation through a deliberate policy of extermination. The French tried "counter-insurgency" in Algeria and failed; 400,000 French troops fought the guerrillas in Indochina for nine years and failed.

The United States has recognized that it is failing in South Vietnam. But it has drawn from this recognition of failure a most astounding conclusion.

THE United States has decided to change the character of the war by unilateral declaration from a South Vietnamese civil war to a war of "foreign aggression." "Aggression from the North: The Record of North Vietnam's Campaign to Conquer South Vietnam" is the title of a white paper published by the Department of State on the last day of February, 1965. While normally foreign and military policy is based upon intelligence—that is, the objective assessment of facts—the process is here reversed: a new policy has been decided upon, and intelligence must provide the facts to justify it.

The United States, stymied in South Vietnam and on the verge of defeat, decided to carry the war to North Vietnam not so much in order to retrieve the fortunes of war as to lay the groundwork for "negotiations from strength." In order to justify that new

policy, it was necessary to prove that North Vietnam is the real enemy. It is the white paper's purpose to present that proof.

Let it be said right away that the white paper is a dismal failure. The discrepancy between its assertions and the factual evidence adduced to support them borders on the grotesque. It does nothing to disprove, and tends even to confirm, what until the end of February had been official American doctrine: that the main body of the Vietcong is composed of South Vietnamese and that 80 per cent to 90 per cent of their weapons are of American origin.

This document is most disturbing in that it provides a particularly glaring instance of the tendency to conduct foreign and military policy not on their own merits, but as exercises in public relations. The Government fashions an imaginary world that pleases it, and then comes to believe in the reality of that world and acts as though it were real.

It is for this reason that public officials are so resentful of the reporters assigned to Vietnam and have tried to shut them off from the sources of news and even to silence them. They resent the confrontation of their policies with the facts. Yet the facts are what they are, and they take terrible vengeance on those who disregard them.

However, the white paper is but the latest instance of a delusory tendency which has led American policy in Vietnam astray in other respects. We call the American troops in Vietnam "advisers" and have assigned them by and large to advisory functions, and we have limited the activities of the marines who have now landed in Vietnam to guarding American installations. We have done this for reasons of public relations, in order to spare ourselves the odium of open belligerency.

THERE is an ominous similarity between this technique and that applied to the expedition in the Bay of Pigs. We wanted to overthrow Castro, but for reasons of public relations we did not want to do it ourselves. So it was not done at all, and our prestige

was damaged far beyond what it would have suffered had we worked openly and single-mindedly for the goal we had set ourselves.

Our very presence in Vietnam is in a sense dictated by considerations of public relations; we are afraid lest our prestige would suffer were we to retreat from an untenable position.

One may ask whether we have gained prestige by being involved in a civil war on the mainland of Asia and by being unable to win it. Would we gain more by being unable to extricate ourselves from it, and by expanding it unilaterally into an international war? Is French prestige lower today than it was 11 years ago when France was fighting in Indochina, or five years ago when she was fighting in Algeria? Does not a great power gain prestige by mustering the wisdom and courage necessary to liquidate a losing enterprise? In other words, is it not the mark of greatness, in circumstances such as these, to be able to afford to be indifferent to one's prestige?

The peripheral military containment of China, the indiscriminate crusade against Communism, counterinsurgency as a technically self-sufficient new branch of warfare, the conception of foreign and military policy as a branch of public relations—they are all misconceptions that conjure up terrible dangers for those who base their policies on them.

One can only hope and pray that the vaunted pragmatism and common sense of the American mind—of which the President's new proposals may well be a manifestation—will act as a corrective upon those misconceptions before they lead us from the blind alley in which we find ourselves today to the rim of the abyss. Beyond the present crisis, however, one must hope that the confrontation between these misconceptions and reality will teach us a long-overdue lesson—to rid ourselves of these misconceptions altogether.

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