

COLLAGE

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This is Vietnam, where Americans in growing numbers fight and die to honor a pledge. Vietcong guerrillas move along its jungle trails and even into the metropolis of Saigon, capital of South Vietnam. Seat of the Communist government of North Vietnam is Hanoi. The divided country's neighbors are Laos, Cambodia—and China. Smaller maps show its physical characteristics and its key position on the far eastern chess board.

Map by Sentinel Artist James Gehr

BOOKMARKS

Book examines issues of today

By DAVID GILBERT

New American Review No. 2
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The second annual edition of the *New American Review* is out. As a sort of sophisticated *Red Cedar Review*, it can really claim only better name-writers (John Barth, Gunter Grass, Nat Hentoff, Stanley Kauffmann) and a definite orientation to, as the blurb puts it, "the issues of American experience here and now."

Frankly, I was not overly impressed by the volume. John Barth's four page *Autobiography* was in his typical *End Of The Road* style, self-consciously self-conscious. In a harking back to James Joyce and the theme of fatherhood, Barth relates

From my conception to the present moment Dad's tried to turn me off; not ardently, not consciously, not successfully so far; but persistently, with at least half a heart. How do I know. I'm his bloody mirror!

with perception, but not too much concern. James McCormick's *Mr. Twohands Among The Rune Stones* is a slightly more compelling account of the loneliness and isolation that produce psychotic fear in a shakily insecure tourist. Mr. Twohands feels that the natives regard him with contempt, and the story's climactic point expresses man's need to establish some sort of communication to preserve healthy self-feelings, and that the blocking of this communication can have devastating results.

Then there is Alan Friedman's *Willy-Nilly*, the story of a hermaphrodite who decides first to change from a sixteen-year-old girl to a boy, and later back to a girl. The idea is gorgeous: the extent of man-feelings in women and of woman-feelings in men, and the frustrated attempt to realize both. Friedman handles the first person style comfortably and manages to make an unbelievable story feasible.

Nat Hentoff provides a dialogue within himself on the pros and cons of Black Power. His final statement is that segregation is the first step to equality, even to the degree of a national black homeland in the Andes Mountains, financed by white America if necessary. What scares me about Hentoff's article is the assumption that there can be no meaningful communication between black and white, and the sooner everyone realizes it, the better. Am I to be denied my friends (who happen to be Negro) because I'm supposed to feel (since I happen to be white) that they are inferior? Somewhere, somebody is making very little sense.

Neil Compton has an interesting, if slightly confused literary biography of Marshall McLuhan. Compton says that McLuhan's progress from a "straitlaced and pessimistic conservatism to his present euphoric and approving interest in everything" stems from McLuhan's aversion to Protestant and capitalistic individualism and his belief in Catholicism.

Just why and in what way, Compton doesn't say, though he does illumine some of the puzzling inconsistencies and rough spots in McLuhan's philosophy. For example, he notes that McLuhan's attitude toward the Freudian unconscious (as a simple product of Gutenberg technology) has some merit, but that to present a really convincing case, he "ought to offer at least the outlines of an acceptable alternative theory of human behavior."

Finally, there are several really fine and interesting pieces. One is Franklin Russell's account of the mating of the capelins along the Newfoundland coast, *A Madness Of Nature*. Russell relates with infinite care the details of the slaughter wreaked upon the billions of mating fish by other fish, by seabirds and by men. The author is both drawn and repelled by the savage waste of life, and the story ends with the least gimmicky and most profound trick ending that I have ever encountered. The book is worth buying for this one story.

Stanley Kauffmann has some interesting views to express in his *Looking At Films*, particularly in connection with Bergman's *Persona*, Penn's *Bonnie and Clyde* and Lester's *How I Won The War*. Bergman is concerned with the tremendous attraction of the truth of the "true" inner self as opposed to the often false standards of the outer world. The nurse in *Persona* does not reject the actress's state



"because of any indisputable or superior standard of rationality but because of her own irrationality." She wishes, irrationally, to live within society's constructs, and she has no more justification for her choice than does the actress for choosing to live in silence. Kauffmann accuses *Bonnie and Clyde* of being "a superior example of an inferior breed: the film of make-believe meaning," that is, those films with a veneer of honesty and criticism:

They use close-ups that are meant to seem unconventionally truthful but that dare nothing and say nothing.

Lester's *How I Won The War* is hailed by Kauff-

mann as an example of the Age of the Put-on, "an age of pragmatism, cynical but adventurous." The film's most devastating comment is not that war is hell, but that what is hellish is that "fundamentally men love it."

Robert Coover's short story *The Wayfarer* is a terrifying allegorical journey through the soul of a Policeman and a police state. With crisp clear sentences reminiscent of Stephen Crane, Coover creates an incredible effect. As the cop interrogates an ancient vagrant who refuses to speak, the reader finds himself agreeing more and more with the cop until it seems inevitable and right that the old man be shot. There is in each of us an element of the Policeman that functions with pencil and reports, pomp and ceremony: and if the Policeman is very strong within us, we find it necessary to eliminate anything that refuses to conform to our concept of how things should be.


Out of the dozen or so poems, there are two very good ones. David Farrelly's *Border Incident* is a memorable poem about the effect of an enemy soldier's death on a "de-personalized" soldier:

That took A completely by surprise,
B's maggots out his mouth and in his eyes,
and if he goes home to his child and wife
B's death, perhaps, will last him most his life
or never even quit until he dies.

And Shirley Kaufman's *Room* should be read aloud ten or fifteen times. It is quietly lyric, and probes the love moment from the outside in as well as from the inside out. The imagery of trees used is particularly effective, as is the suggestiveness of the water images.

There is more in *New American Review*, all of it competent, but little that is exciting or new. The *Review* No. 2 is on the contemporary scene, but seems curiously removed from it: one gets the impression of America seen at second sight, once removed from the actuality. Most of the contributors know that they are good, and this, perhaps, is what detracts from the impact of the *Review*: its writers come across as uninvolved.

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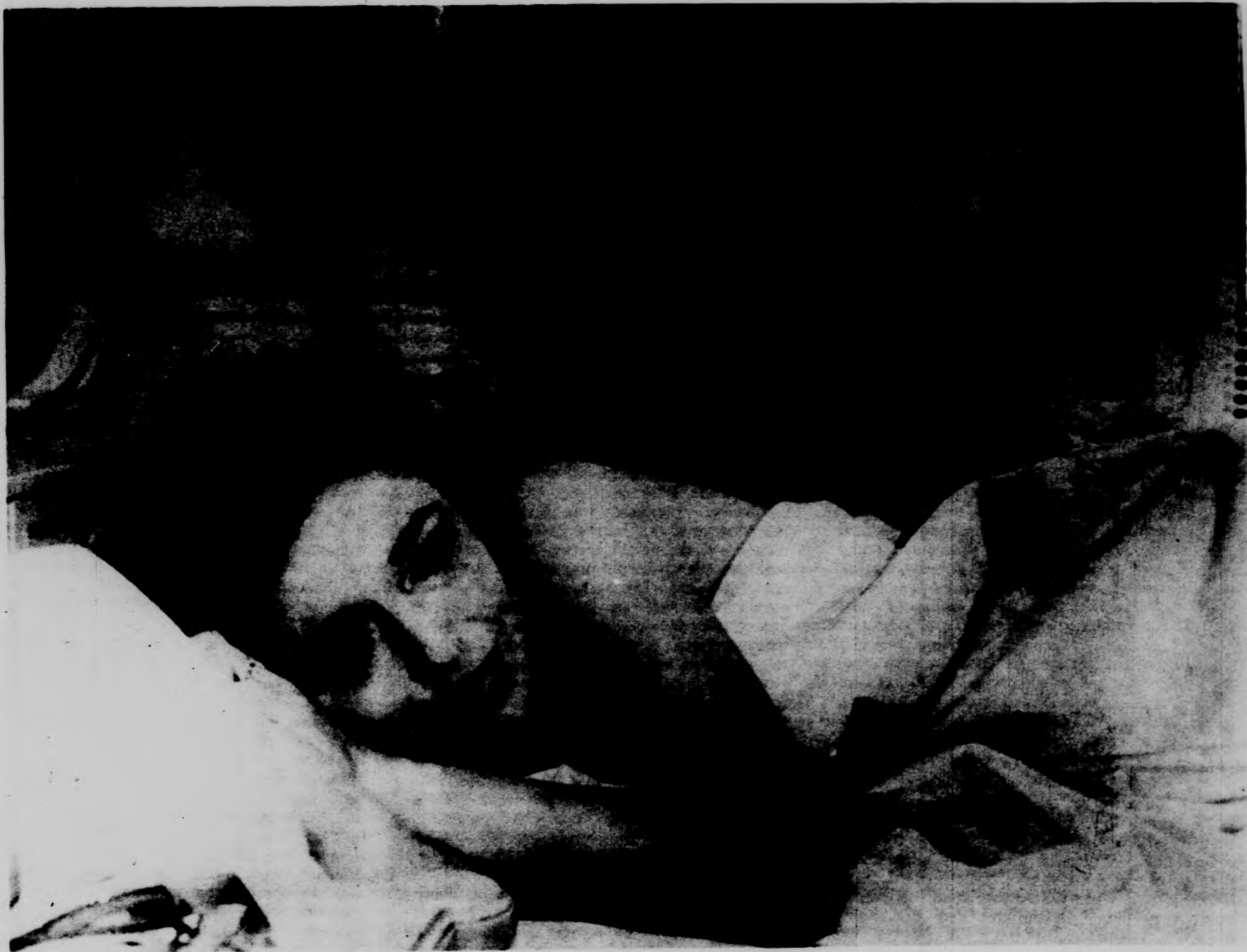
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MOVIES



Nichols—success as director

By FRED SHERWOOD

Aside from boosting two new young talents (Katherine Ross and Dustin Hoffman) into the realm of stardom, the motion picture hit *The Graduate* serves as further proof of the directoral gift of one-time comedian Mike Nichols. Previously having put his energies into comic skits which panned everything from mothers to morticians, Nichols in *The Graduate* has now employed another medium to attack that which is typical in the affluent American society. The comic effects bear his mark, and the overall tone of the movie has the ring of the Nichols humor.

Any analysis of that humor must inevitably include something about his female counterpart and partner for seven years, Elaine May. The two were the dynamic duo of the new sophisticated, urbane satire that sprung up in the late '50s. Their minds worked so similarly that they were able to build their comic routines by improvisation, trying out one thing while discarding another.

The first Nichols and May routine may have been witnessed by some unsuspecting bystander in a Chicago train station in 1954. Nichols encountered Miss May there and sat next to her, pretending to be a secret agent making a contact. This was not quite as insane as it may seem, for the pair had both appeared in theatrical productions at the University of Chicago.

Before Chicago, Nichols enrolled in New York University, but not finding it to his liking he tried his hand at being an assistant costume jeweler. His job was to glue stones into their settings. The stones usually fell out, and he moved on to the University of Chicago where he appeared in amateur productions in his spare time.

Following that, Nichols studied the Stanislavsky Method at Actors Studio in New York under Lee Strasberg. He led the life of the stereotyped "struggling, starving" ar-

tist. Once he ate a jar of mustard for his dinner. He did not seem well suited for conventional jobs such as the one he lost at a Howard Johnson restaurant by telling a customer the only flavor ice cream they had was "chicken."

Nichols began his career with Elaine May in 1955, earning \$55 a week at the Compass, an improvisational theater in Chicago that also spawned such talents as Shelley Berman and Barbara Harris.

When it folded, Nichols and May went on to appearances in New York at the Village Vanguard and Blue Angel night clubs, bits on television, and eventual national fame. In 1960 they opened on Broadway with *An Evening with Mike Nichols and Elaine May*, which won considerable acclaim. In a review of *Evening* a critic described the Nichols-May satirical style as "Horatian rather than Juvenalian."

"They take their revenge on society by reproducing it instead of whipping it with rods and scourges," he said. "They locate the clichés of conventional middle-class life and strip them down to their essential absurdity."

The Nichols-May satire was a different kind of commentary on modern life. Their comedy departed from the traditional one-liners about Eisenhower's golf game or Marilyn Monroe's bustline. They presented sketches painfully close to reality, with enough artful inflection and style to create satire by reproducing banality. They dealt with everyday subjects: a mother calling her missile scientist son at Cape Canaveral, the insensitive nurse at a hospital, the little man with only one dime at the mercy of a telephone operator.

"It's recognition that makes people laugh," said Nichols. "People don't laugh unless they have already recognized the

truth—that whatever you're doing on stage is true to life—and also funny or pretentious or just ridiculous."

The Nichols-May routines threw barbs at everyone and everything from phony intellectuals and name-droppers ("Bert Russell is not pushy . . . personally, I think a pushy philosophy is a drag.") to classics such as Sophocles' *Oedipus* ("Look Jocasta, sweetheart, you're my mother.")

One of the more famous Nichols-May sketches was the fumbblings of two young adolescents trying to both smoke and make out at once in the back seat of a parked car and receiving little more than cigarette burns and bruised egos.

For fun they did 10 second radio spots for a regional brewer that went something like this:

Elaine: I have something to tell you darling.

Mike: Fine, darling, can I have a glass of beer please?

Elaine: Of course, darling, here is a glass of cold, extra dry, sparkling Jax.

Mike: Thank you.

Elaine: You're welcome. Phyllis shaved the dog today.

"We weren't really a comedy team," said Nichols, looking back after they went their separate ways. "We did little scenes, that's all. We were actors, and we were writers, and directors all at once. We didn't tell jokes. We'd think up a situation and then play it just like it would be in real life. If either of us broke up laughing, we knew we'd hit something true, so we'd keep it."

After *Evening* finished its run in 1961, the two broke up to pursue individual careers. Nichols directed his first Broadway play.

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Record of U.S. intervention

By LAWRENCE H. BATTISTINI

By 1962 perhaps 60 to 70 per cent of the rural population sympathized with the National Liberation Front of South Vietnam (NLFSV) and a very substantial proportion gave direct assistance. The Front's effective control had in effect extended over so much of the countryside that President Kennedy, acting on the advice of his "experts," decided to step up military assistance by increasing the number of American military advisors to some 23,000, a step that accelerated the fatalistic plunge of the United States into the Vietnam morass. Actually this step had been pre-announced in December 1961, when the State Department issued a two-volume white paper which unconvincingly tried to establish that North Vietnam was threatening the peace by trying to "conquer South Vietnam."

Without a declaration of war from Congress, President Kennedy authorized those American military "advisers" to participate in combat operations. Actually, however, these "advisers" had been engaged in combat operations long before President Kennedy increased their number to 23,000. By 1963 Americans were operating more than 200 helicopters and scores of reconnaissance planes, and perhaps more than half of the bombing and strafing missions of the Saigon regime's air force were being carried out with Americans serving as pilots and co-pilots. Although American boys were being wounded and killed, Washington persisted in sustaining the fiction that American military men in South Vietnam were there only as "advisers." At the same time, the cost of the adventure in dollars was rising sharply for the American taxpayer. It was unofficially estimated that from mid-1960 to 1962 alone, the United States had poured into South Vietnam about \$2 billion in military and economic aid.

Washington now took the position that the "Vietcong" was a 100-per cent Communist organization, directed and controlled by North Vietnam. However, in 1962 Philippe Devillers, a highly respected specialist on contemporary Vietnam, wrote: "The insurrection existed before the Communists decided to take part . . . And even among the Communists, the initiative did not originate in Hanoi, but from the grass roots, where the people were literally driven by Diem to take up arms in self-defense." Almost a year earlier, one of the top reporters of The New York Times had astutely and prophetically observed: "The Vietcong movement is capable of developing into the same kind of broadly based popular uprising that the French were unable to defeat in nine years of bitter fighting." In many ways, he wrote, "the Vietcong rebellion appears to be a continuation of the colonial wars against the French."

As a result of the mass defections of peasants to the NLFSV and the assistance they gave to the guerrilla fighters, the so-called Staley-Taylor Plan was adopted with great fanfare for the "pacification of Vietnam in eighteen months." This was the notorious strategic hamlet program, given the ironical code name, "Operation Sunrise." In effect the program provided for the establishment of concentration camps to prevent peasants from defecting to the NLFSV and to make it impossible for them to make food, shelter, intelligence or any other form of assistance available to the NLFSV. It was generally represented in the American press as an operation designed to protect the peasants from the attacks of the guerrillas. Actually most of the peasants who did wind up in these camps were literally forced to do so. The program envisioned the uprooting of some 9,000,000 peasants and placing them in fortified camps under heavy military guard.

The Staley-Taylor Plan turned out to be a failure. It failed because although villagers could be rounded up at bayonet point and placed behind barbed wire, there was no way of changing what was really in the hearts of most of them—resentment against the alien white man and his native "ac-

complices," and sympathy for the insurgents, many of them their own relatives, who were regarded as the true patriots. More recent attempts to carry out the essentials of the Staley-Taylor Plan, under the more candid term of "pacification," have similarly proved to be ineffective. The NLFSV-North Vietnam offensive of January-February of this year has again demonstrated that Vietnamese may be placed behind the bayonets of American and Saigon troops but they cannot be counted on to have discarded their sympathies and loyalties.

Despite the steadily mounting American assistance to the Saigon regime and the concentration-camp programs, the fortunes of war did not improve for the U.S.-Diem alliance. There were many reasons for this, but two seem basic.

First, the Diem regime, which had never really enjoyed popular support, was becoming increasingly more unbearable to most South Vietnamese. Actually it was only supported by landlords, merchants profiting from the war and military officers, many of whom were "tainted" from having served with the French in the previous war against the Vietminh. This contrasted with the steadily mounting popularity of the NLFSV among the peasant masses and to some extent among certain sectors of the intelligentsia.

Secondly, the NLFSV was fighting a guerrilla war in a context of oppressive social conditions which strongly favored it. The expensive and sophisticated American military equipment and the large masses of troops utilized by the Saigon regime were more adapted to conventional warfare than to counter-guerrilla operations. In most instances also, the Saigon regime's soldiers had no idea of what they were fighting for or how the cause they were serving benefitted either their own or their families' interests. Most of them were actually fighting because they were forced into the army and were compelled to fight. The fighting men of the NLFSV, on the other hand, consisted of large numbers of volunteers, and believed they were fighting tyranny, social injustice and the return of the white man's domination in the form of "U.S. imperialism." In the spring of 1963 Diem tried the expedient of broadcasting an amnesty offer to those guerrillas who would lay down their arms. The maneuver was a complete failure, as practically none of the guerrillas came out of the jungles to surrender.

On October 2, 1963, the Kennedy Administration issued an optimistic statement to the effect that the war in South Vietnam could be won by the end of 1965 if the political crisis of the Diem regime did not significantly affect the military effort. The statement also expressed confidence that most of the American military personnel serving in South Vietnam could be withdrawn by the end of 1965. The statement was based on the judgments of Defense Secretary McNamara and General Taylor, who had just returned from a mission to Saigon, and Henry Cabot Lodge, who was then serving as ambassador to the Saigon regime. The overthrow of the Diem regime a month later seemed to resolve the "political crisis" to the satisfaction of

the Administration's political and military forecasters.

The assassination of President Kennedy in November 1963 did not alter the momentum of the United States toward committing its fuller power for a military solution of the Vietnam problem. For a while the new president, Lyndon B. Johnson, seemed to play the role of a Texan Isaiah who preferred reasoning to bullets. On March 23, 1964, for example, he declared with all the mellowness he was capable of exuding: "The people of the world, I think, prefer reasoned agreement to ready attack. And that is why we must follow the Prophet Isaiah many times before we send the Marines, and say, 'Come now and let us reason together.' And this is our objective—the quest for peace and not the quarrels of war. In every trouble spot in the world this hope for reasoned agreement instead of rash retaliation can bear fruit." Yet the same President Johnson had a few days previously declared that while the United States supported the Geneva agreements on Laos, in Vietnam the situation was different. "Let no one doubt," he fulminated, "that we are in this battle as long as South Vietnam wants our support and needs our assistance to protect its freedom."

By and large, however, President Johnson maintained an "Isaiah posture" several weeks after the presidential election of 1964 was over. During the presidential campaign of that year he took sharp issue with the position of his opponent, Barry Goldwater, who brandished the "big stick" and wanted military solutions to the problem that was besetting the United States in Vietnam. Goldwater's campaign suggestion that the United States should defoliate the forests and jungles of South Vietnam and bomb North Vietnam with air strikes was represented by Johnson as reckless and irresponsible ideas that might expand the Vietnam war into a nuclear holocaust.

President Johnson fully backed the Defense Department's actual position that the war in Vietnam was America's war and that it could be won only by the United States. For public consumption, however, the position of the Defense Department was that the war could be won simply by the United States assisting the Saigon regime in winning it itself. Winning the war was necessary, according to the Defense Department, because vital U.S. interests were at stake. As McNamara put it, the situation in South Vietnam "continues grave" but "the survival of an independent government in South Vietnam is so important to the security of Southeast Asia and the free world that I can conceive no alternative other than to take all necessary measures with our capability to prevent a Communist victory."

On Jan. 30, 1964, another military coup led by General Nguyen Khanh had overthrown the junta headed by General Minh. This junta was subsequently also overthrown by a coup, which in turn was followed by several other coups. Notwithstanding the phenomenon of "government by military coup" in Saigon, and the mock-

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Juggling lives, nations

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ery it made of allusions to "freedom" and "democracy." American policy hardened more and more in the direction of a purely military solution based on escalation of the war and a willingness to run the risks of significant armed intervention in the South by North Vietnamese forces and increased material assistance by the Soviet Union and China.

On March 26, 1964, McNamara crystallized the reasons for increasing the U.S. military involvement as follows. First, as he put it, South Vietnam was under attack from Communism, the United States had been asked to give assistance, and the United States was giving this assistance. Secondly, "Southeast Asia has great strategic significance in the forward defense of the United States." And thirdly, "South Vietnam is a test case for the new Communist strategy" for fighting wars of "national liberation." Hence, the war of "national liberation" being fought in South Vietnam was to be made a test case by the United States, that is to say, it would demonstrate that through the employment of all necessary military power such a war could not succeed.

Throughout the first half of 1964 the war in South Vietnam seemed to be going along in a routine way—continuing successful guerrilla attacks by the NLFV and the bombing of villages and forests with napalm in the hope of killing as many "Vietcong" as possible and inhibiting the villagers from assisting in any way the NLFV. On Aug. 2, however, the Tonkin Bay incident occurred, which the Johnson Administration was able to exploit in its larger plan envisioning military victory. On that day, according to the Administration, the American destroyer Maddox had been attacked by North Vietnamese torpedo boats 30 miles off the North Vietnamese coast. Two days later the Administration announced that the same Maddox and another destroyer, the Turner Joy, had again been attacked, this time 65 miles off the North Vietnamese coast. The Administration asked Congress and the American people to believe that these warships had been illegally attacked, without just provocation, while on "routine patrol." Both the Congress, with few exceptions, and the public as a whole implicitly believed the Administration. This was before the "credibility gap" had become a commonly recognized characteristic of the Administration's "officialdom."

The day after the second attack, President Johnson asked Congress for its support in taking "all necessary action to protect our Armed Forces and to assist nations covered by the SEATO Treaty." At the same time, he assured Congress that, "The United States intends no rashness, and seeks no wider war." An aroused Congress, which almost to a man accepted in its entirety the Administration's version of the incident, on Aug. 10 passed the now celebrated Tonkin resolution which supported the President in taking all necessary action to repel attacks against U.S. forces and to defend nations protected by the SEATO Treaty. President Johnson apparently interpreted the resolution to mean that he had been virtually given a blank

check to widen the war as he saw fit.

Ho Chi Minh claimed that the Johnson version of the Tonkin incident was a pure fabrication to cover up its own aggressive activities and intentions against North Vietnam. Even at the time, it appeared to many objective foreign observers that the action of the U.S. Seventh Fleet in the Gulf of Tonkin was "calculated" and "directly associated" with naval attacks made by vessels of the Saigon regime's navy within North Vietnamese territorial waters. The Senate Foreign Relations Committee has recently probed into the facts of the Tonkin incident and has come around to the cautious view that the Administration's original version was only part of the truth, and most of its members now have serious doubts about the "innocence" of the American destroyers' missions.

With the presidential election coming up, however, President Johnson was temporarily content to retaliate simply with a naval bombardment of the North Vietnamese coast. Nevertheless, the incident had served its purpose as far as the "warhawk" advisers of the President were concerned. Congress seemed to have given the President a free hand and the national temper was sufficiently inflamed and prepared for a dramatic escalation when the presidential election was over. So President Johnson and the warhawk advisers apparently believed. Actually for many weeks after the election, President Johnson seemed almost to have forgotten Vietnam as he talked tenderly about his "Great Society" and of the progress to make it a reality. Meanwhile, however, grim military preparations were being made.

At the same time, the shooting war in South Vietnam was still going on, and the military position of the Saigon forces continued to deteriorate. In the closing months of 1964 the NLFV forces won a series of smashing and demoralizing victories over the Saigon military forces. Actually they were on the verge of winning on the field of battle the long and bitter struggle against the Saigon regime's U.S.-supported military establishment. The war might very well have ended within a few more months but for the major escalation of the U.S. military role beginning in early February 1965. In January 1965 talk of the war being virtually lost became increasingly prevalent among knowledgeable American journal-

ists. Even the conservatively oriented Wall Street Journal raised strong editorial doubts about the possibility of a military victory and recognized that the "Saigon governments, that is what they should be called," had been unable to win the support of the people or even govern. "To say that we might lose in Vietnam is not defeatism but political realism," it declared.

However, the Johnson warhawks, while willing to admit that the war was not going well, were unwilling to concede that it could not be won. Their faith in the superiority of weapons and massive incinerating power over man was boundless. They recognized, of course, that if the war was to be won, it would have to be won by U.S. military forces taking on the major, if not entire, burden. They also believed it was necessary to carry the war to North Vietnam, which they erroneously but stubbornly believed to be responsible for the civil war and the successes of the NLFV. By applying massive U.S. air power against the North Vietnamese, who practically had no airforce, they were convinced, the war could be speedily ended. President Johnson confidently accepted this assessment.

In February 1965, the Johnson Administration made what it thought would be the decisive move that would break the will of the North Vietnamese. On Feb. 7, 8, and 11, American warplanes bombed selected targets in North Vietnam slightly above the seventeenth parallel. Such an action needed a pretext. The pretext was that NLFV guerrillas had made a "surprise attack" on U.S. military installations in Pleiku, located in the northern part of South Vietnam, which had resulted in the death of eight Americans and the wounding of 109 others.

McNamara, in commenting on the guerrilla attacks against U.S. military installations, described them as a "test of the will, a clear challenge of the political purpose of both the U.S. and South Vietnamese Governments." The air raids on North Vietnam, however, were not really simply retaliatory measures for the attack on Pleiku. Senator Wayne Morse, who at the time was one of the few senators critical of the entire Vietnam adventure, had as a matter of fact alerted the American people nearly a year previously, on May 18, 1964, when he declared: "I wish to warn the

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Laurence H. Battistini, professor of social science at MSU, was educated at Brown University and Trinity College. He received his Ph.D. at Yale. Specializing in U.S.-Asian affairs, he is the author of six books in this area. His experience includes four years as professor of history at Sophia University in Tokyo; extensive travel in Europe and Asia; and service as an intelligence officer during World War II.

In the past four issues, *Collage* has presented articles by Battistini dealing with the history and psychology of the Vietnamese people. Beginning as far back as 400 B.C., he has traced the historical roots that have flowered in the current war. In this, the last of the five installments, Battistini gives his evaluation of the United States presence in Vietnam.

THE WAR

Into the Vietnam morass

By MITCH MILLER

In the increasing polarization of opinion about the U.S. involvement in the war in Vietnam, one position has been almost ignored out of existence.

This is the belief that, in principle, American involvement is good, but that the effort has been conducted so badly as to have ruined any chance of accomplishing the purpose for which the intervention occurred.

This view, held almost universally by experts in foreign policy and Asian affairs, has been ignored in surveys, referendums and panel discussions. And this neglect of a reasonable point of view has forced an artificial division of such experts into those who think a possibility of saving the situation still exists and those who think the time for such a possibility has passed.

In spite of the necessity for lining up for or against the Administration, critics are almost unanimously agreed that the U.S. has botched the job incredibly. Most would like to see it start all over again if possible.

They see the wrong war being fought in the wrong way by the wrong people. They see a long series of faulty decisions made with a lack or disregard of information. They see certain decisions that were never made for the lack of someone willing to take the responsibility to make them.

The decision of the U.S. to support the Diem regime without expecting concessions in return is an example.

Similar instances of stupidity are being repeated on major and minor scales in Vietnam today, and it is to this stupidity that much of American's plight can be traced.

There is, on the part of people in charge of the conduct of the war, no real perception of the nature of this war, or of the consequences of its handling. Very few policy decisions or announcements have been made with an eye towards international views of the United States' side or toward the effect of such policies on the attitudes of Americans about the war.

The bombing of North Vietnam is a perfect illustration of an ill-thought out politico-military move. Supplies and men have not slowed down in their movement from North to South Vietnam. On the contrary, they have increased. Whether this can be traced to a unifying effect of the bombing or not, bombing the North certainly has been counter-productive and should at least be reviewed in the light of the advantages a cessation would bring.

First, a bomb halt would dry up the grist for the propaganda mills and end the basis for the continuing foreign and domestic charge against the U.S. that it is "the murderer of Innocent Villagers."

Second, it would place the burden of appearing at peace negotiations on the North Vietnamese, who have stated that they would attend if such a halt occurred.

Third, it would serve to show, once and for all, if North Vietnamese infiltration does increase during bombing pauses. There are many other advantages to a cessation, so many that one may occur as soon as President Johnson feels he is not under pressure to order it. But it already may be past the time when the President can claim the initiative.

South Vietnam itself is the site of much political activity which never materialized. Much of the complaint of the South Vietnamese against their government is due to the government's unwillingness or inability to take steps to remedy some of the country's basic social problems, such as land distribution, the resettlement of refugees and squatters and clearing up the vast amount of graft and corruption in the government. Some of the government's policies, such as the intervention in village affairs, are bitterly resented by the people and contribute to the support for the Viet Cong.

The situation demands that the United States abandon its policy of not dictating to a government which it aids what that government can do with the money received. In this case the United States pays for the operation of the South Vietnamese government almost entirely--salaries, materials, and projects in every area. Surely the U.S., having paid for

it, should have some influence on the tune the piper plays.

The lack of such control has been in large part the cause of permeation of graft into every sector of Vietnam's life. From peasants who sell their daughters, to province chiefs who sell their allegiance, to commanders who sell their units the vast amounts of unsupervised U.S. money is mainly responsible for the destruction of the social system and the economy. It can also account for the sapping of the national will, and the contempt the people feel for the government. This loathing makes itself felt as aid for the Viet Cong, either as acceptance, active participation, or through the direct transfer of U.S. money and supplies to the Viet Cong--surely the most humiliating reaction of all. For it is a fact that much (no one can say for sure exactly how much) of the Viet Cong's resources are stolen from USAID or other funds. Without the huge U.S. presence, the ability of the Viet Cong to act would be limited by the money they could tax from the people or obtain from North Vietnam. It is the United States which provides most of the physical material for its enemies, just as it does the psychological and political material for them.

Despite official statements from Washington and Saigon, it is the Communists who are winning the war. Their ability to conduct the massive assaults in the cities without anyone informing against them is a most dramatic example of this success. But their control over the populace and ability to move at will is shown every day by the ease and freedom with which they shell large installations and fire heavy anti-aircraft weapons at planes leaving Tan Son Nhut Airport, near Saigon itself.

The fact must be faced that the war is going badly because it is being conducted badly. The same mistakes the French made are being made, all over again, by the Americans--only on a much larger scale.

There is no overall strategy in the war. The only large-scale goal is "Kill Cong" and that is not being done very well. No one has yet explained how the Viet Cong are going to be defeated because no one knows how.

Nothing is known about the VC economy and nothing has been done to disrupt it. The guerilla says, "A grain of rice is a drop of blood" but no steps have been taken to seize control of the rice producing areas. Instead, troops are sent to defend the new Dien Bien Phu at Khe Sanh, where every military principle is being violated to back a foolish commitment to a position in a virtually valueless area which is ridiculously expensive, if not impossible, to defend.

An intelligence drought exists on the allied side, while a flood exists for the Viet Cong. Part of this is due to the causes mentioned above, part to the absurd one year tour of

The Christmas Truce

His entrails strangling,
this soldier can't appreciate the truce.
Lying in their tents, his buddies
talk of getting drunk and making love.

But this soldier's death
engenders the hate of the twisted bayonet
in the enemy's breast,
in the rec room
where a plastic-cased radio relays
the Pope's plea for peace.

By JEFF JUSTIN

duty--especially as it affects advisers, intelligence personnel and officers in whose case it prohibits effective development of information and familiarity with the country and the enemy.

The vaunted U.S. mobility is in large part an illusion: helicopters require huge support facilities and cannot go everywhere. They are also extremely vulnerable in take-off or landing. Allied forces are road and maintenance bound. They are increasingly tied up in fixed logistical installations, as were the French during their occupation of the country.

The war is just too big. There is too much of everything--except combat troops with leaders competent in the special problems of revolutionary war. Out of the 525,000 American military personnel in Vietnam, perhaps 60,000 are there to fight. The rest are there in support roles, which means they provide the soft and poorly prepared Americans with all the comforts of home, make them less willing to fight and provide easy targets for the Viet Cong.

That is why the Koreans and Australians, without all the equipment and the huge support "tail," are far more effective than the Americans. Most Americans in Vietnam are simply along for the ride--"They are overfed, oversexed and over here." The lean and hungry Tigers and Royal Australians are there to fight.

The prevailing philosophy in Vietnam dictates shelling or bombing rather than undertaking the arduous business of infantry action. But if a man on the ground cannot tell who is his friend and who is his foe, how can a bomb or a shell? To expect to win over the people by destroying their homes in order to save them is the ultimate result of this thinking.

To be effective, the American effort in Vietnam would have to be reduced to a small scale with advisers and a few combat troops only. The emphasis should be placed on separating the enemy from his base of support and supply, on developing the nation rather than destroying it and on restoring the national life rather than degrading it.

Operations should involve small and constant harassment of guerillas, ambushes and raids and patrols rather than infrequent massive "search and destroy" missions which seldom yield results because everybody knows exactly where and when they are coming off. Once allied forces enter a village or area and declare they are there to stay they should never leave without making sure the people will be defended. If necessary, the forces should take the people along. And the same applies to resettlement areas for ordinary peasants and Communist defectors.

There is nothing new in any of these concepts. They are taught as standard counter-insurgency doctrine by service schools of "special warfare." The problem is that they are taught to people, most of whom will promptly forget them, by the people who should be implementing them. Kicked upstairs and safely out of the way into non-command posts, the knowledgeable watch--as did Liddle-Hart, Mitchell and countless others--as those in command try to fight the last war all over again in a situation where most of its lessons no longer apply.

If the cause of the Vietnam problem is a lack of strategy and some very poor tactics, what is its cure?

Circumstances with strong parallels arose during the American Civil War when President Lincoln was also faced with a commander (Gen. McClellan) who was an excellent administrator but not a good combat leader. Lincoln cast about among his generals until he found, in Gen. Grant, the man who could get the job done.

President Johnson, too, should cast about among his generals until he finds the man who knows what is required and makes sure it is done.

And if the President does not realize that new military leadership is required if the United States is to successfully conclude the war, his leadership remains in question.

THE WAR

'Our boys' in never-never land of war

By LEE ELBINGER
Saigon, Dec. 12, 1967

The key word in Saigon is corruption but, fellow citizens, do not be alarmed. It is not the outrageous, wild-eyed corruption that at first comes to mind where sneaky, unscrupulous devils steal rice from the bowls of starving children. Oh no. It is unconscious corruption—a of softness of the frontal lobes, if you know what I mean—where waste and inefficiency are tolerated because, hell, man, everybody is doing it and why shouldn't I? It is war profiteering in small ways, petty luxuries, minor discrepancies which contribute greatly, when added up, to the fact that 1) we are losing the war and 2) our civilization is collapsing in much the same way that (you should excuse the expression) ancient Rome did.

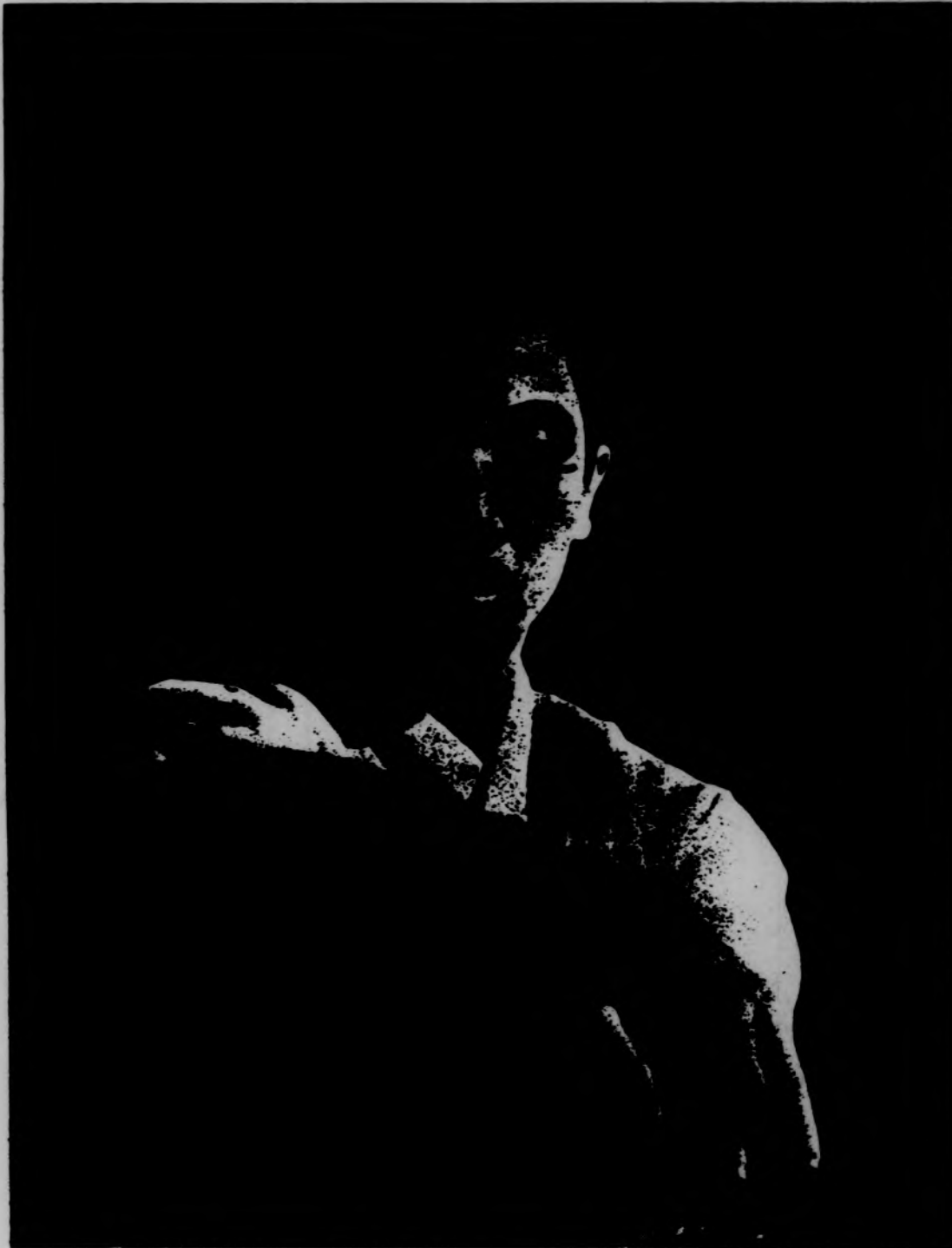
Now don't get me wrong. I'm not an alarmist. But the simple fact is that the average American soldier in Vietnam does not give the proverbial tinker's damn whether the Vietnamese people live or die. He does, however, worry about 1) the availability of cigarettes, 2) the availability of R and R (Rest and Relaxation—the Army's way of saying a drunken spree in Hong Kong, Taipei, or Sydney) and 3) letters from home. The average American soldier has not changed, one might say, and one might be correct. But the average American war has changed, and so much the worse for those who are unfortunate enough to get caught in its path (or its draft). The idealism with which wars are generally fought inspires no great acts of heroism in Vietnam: dollar signs dangle before the eyes of professional soldiers here. As one man told me in Nha-Trang (he was drinking beer in the Press Club—fighting Charlie in his own small way): "You can have the Far East. All the girls here have slanted eyes and no hair on their you-know-whats." (Before you get shocked, remember this is War, and War brings out what is elemental in Man.)

There are a few more things to get shocked about if you consider the war in Vietnam. One thing is the length of this war, the frustrating lack of progress, the staggering cost, and the loss of American lives. Another thing is the increasing bitterness of the Vietnamese people, the terror and brutality on both sides (please consider for a moment what it means to be strung up by the thumbs and methodically beaten to death: this is the sort of activity that goes on here). But one of the most surprising activities in Vietnam (and one of the most potentially dangerous) is the establishment and entrenchment of a vast military welfare state. Such a condition means nothing to Vietnam: Vietnam is remarkable for its ability to remain the same no matter what happens. But the "police action" in Vietnam can mean a great deal to America, which stands a good and frightening chance of going the way of Nazi Germany.

The observer in Saigon sees the American presence in Vietnam divided into two categories, military and civilian, and these two categories can be further broken down into "good" and "bad." It is possible to wander through the never-neverland of Saigon—from the press centers (where history is being rewritten daily) to Tu Do Street (where bars and bar-girls flourish) to the outdoor cafes (where intellectual Vietnamese students daringly and secretly discuss politics)—and find the ubiquitous American influence working in one of four ways, always at cross-purposes, always confused and reaching for contradictory goals, always snarled, tangled, like the many-headed hydra that traditionally symbolizes the country of Vietnam.

The military

First and foremost, there is the military. The good old American khaki-green give-'em-hell bang-bang-you're-dead military. The military



can be found in one of two places: out in the field fighting desperately to stay alive or on top of the Rex Hotel in Saigon, drinking whisky, playing the slot machines, and swimming in an outdoor pool. If the military is found in the field, chances are it is a kid, between 18 and 24, from some place like Indiana or South Dakota who got drafted because he didn't get around to filling out his college application or he is incredibly unlucky. These kids are green, likable, scared, unsure of themselves, but fast becoming worldly. Most of them have never been so far away from home before and are well prepared to kill Vietnamese people but poorly equipped to deal with them. So the kids stick to themselves, count the number of days they have left in the service, and seek to do as little as possible. They rarely discuss (or even think about) the war and politics: the only subject that really interests them is girls. The discussions of our troops in Vietnam must be like discussions among troops at all times and in all places: they are coarse, rude, brusque, lacking in information or depth, but necessary to establish camaraderie and a semblance of normality. (We must ask ourselves if discussions in college dormitories are significantly different.) The soldier is treated by the Army as a number, and it does not take long before he begins to adopt the same attitude toward himself. Friendships seem to be forced here: barracks are filled with all sorts of men from different backgrounds and places and they are compelled by circumstances to mingle and live together. The experience is a valuable one in terms of introducing Americans to one another, but the effect it has on the Vietnamese is not particularly positive. Americans have a tendency to remain Americans when they travel in foreign countries, so rather than adapt to Vietnamese customs and culture, South Vietnam is being transformed into a little American State. Needless to say, the Vietnamese are not happy about this development.

Life in Saigon is significantly different from life in the countryside. Saigon has traditionally been a country within a country ("The Paris of the Orient" as the French liked to say) and this separatism has not diminished today. The life of the Vietnamese peasant is centered around the hamlet, not the city,

so one sees a more realistic picture of Vietnam from the countryside rather than from the Continental Cafe in Saigon. This fact is borne out by soldiers who work in the countryside (and, incidentally, a more realistic view of the average soldier can be found in the "boonies" also).

The soldiers/kids (the phrase "our boys in Vietnam" is quite descriptive of the situation) have evolved an entire lingo, manner, and (non-)way of looking at life to cope with the situation in which they find themselves. Liquor and marijuana play an important part in numbing the minds of "our boys" to the brutality, violence, and injustice of duty in Vietnam. Marijuana is a new development for the army, and officials are baffled as to how to handle it. Soldiers are reluctant to talk about it (understandably so, because the penalty for getting caught is a maximum 25 years in the brig), but it is no secret that pot is cheap, available, good, and in use. Consequently, records like "Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band" are banned in Vietnam.

Some of the soldiers talk bravely about "getting Charlie" and "zapping the Cong," but most are scared and quite willing to admit it. A television programmer in Nha-Trang said that the favorite TV program in Vietnam is "Combat" (called "the other war" by the soldiers) because "Combat" is about a war where idealism is the motivating force and the good guys never get killed. This programmer described a surrealistic scene (surrealistic scenes are common in Vietnam): he recalls watching the VC mortar a Special Forces camp in Nha-Trang while "Combat" blared away on the television set. The men at his station watched both performances with rapt attention. Another favorite of the soldiers (and, I fear, soon to be revived in the U.S.) are the old Blondie and Dagmar movies (don't feel bad: I've never heard of them either) from the 30's. These movies are ultra-camp and represent an unreal return to reality. One supposes that the popularity of Blondie and Dagmar is due to the fact that they offer yet another chance to avoid thinking about the dangers and fears of the "real" world.

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America: an imperial power

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American people from the floor of the Senate this afternoon, that I am satisfied the plan is on the way to eventually escalate this war into North Vietnam."

The decision to carry the war to North Vietnam was allegedly "based on a soul-searching decision by President Johnson and his advisers." These advisers apparently assured President Johnson that the North Vietnamese could not withstand sustained air attacks and that they would "chicken out" and make an "honest effort" to disengage themselves from operations in the South. Military and diplomatic intelligence reaching Washington is supposed to have convinced President Johnson, Secretary of State Rusk, and Defense Secretary McNamara that the fear of China dominated the thinking of the North Vietnamese and that they would not permit Chinese troops to come to their aid. In view of the subsequent escalations that have followed the initial bombings of North Vietnam, what Edwin A. Lahey of the Knight newspapers wrote at the time seems starkly prophetic: "If the gamble we launched with an air strike in North Vietnam proves wrong, thousands of young men now planning their lives may be in military graves in a couple of years. And their parents will have neat little citations saying that their boy died in the defense of freedom." By March of 1968, nearly 15,000 American "young men" had in fact died in Vietnam and perhaps more than 100,000 had received some kind of a wound.

At the time of the Tonkin resolution, the White House solemnly used the phrase, "We seek no wider war." It was repeated with monotonous regularity in subsequent months, while the Administration at the same time step by step further escalated the war by increasing the range and intensity of its bombings of North Vietnam, expanding the list of targets there, bringing in more and more ground troops to participate in the fighting going on in South Vietnam, and expanding its use of napalm and chemicals. The response of the North Vietnamese was to step up its assistance to the NLF and also to infiltrate a sizable number of its own regular army troops into the South. At the same time, the Soviet Union and China responded by markedly increasing their material aid to both the NLF and North Vietnam. As for the NLF, its military power instead of weakening, as the Administration would have the American public believe, actually continued to increase.

By the end of 1965, the United States had increased its military forces in Vietnam to 185,000. By 1968 these forces had swollen to more than half a million men, a very substantial part of the U.S. airforce was in action bombing both South and North Vietnam, and a considerable portion of the U.S. navy was employed in supporting a war effort which with each passing month remained as distant as ever from "victory." The successful NLF-North Vietnamese attacks of January and February of this year on the cities and towns of South Vietnam which were believed to be "secure" rudely shattered many illusory premises of the President's warhawk advisers. An increasing number of them for the first time became dubious of the possibility of victory through the strategy of a "limited war." For many of them the January-February developments seemed to indicate that a vastly expanded U.S. war effort was required, perhaps necessitating as many as a million men and the possible use of tactical nuclear weapons, no matter the risks. Yet the Soviet Union and China, notwithstanding their bitter ideological quarrel, had both repeatedly stated that they "recognized" their obligation to assist North Vietnam, "a fraternal socialist state," and that they would not permit her to be defeated by "U.S. imperialist aggression."

CONCLUSION

The conflict raging in South Vietnam up to 1968 was essentially a civil war. Whether it is thought of as South Vietnamese NLF forces fighting over South Vietnamese loyal to the American-sponsored Saigon regime, or whether it is thought of as North Vietnamese assisting the South Vietnamese NLF against the



Saigon regime supported by the United States—it is still a civil war, for the Vietnamese are one nation. From the standpoint of the NLF and the government of North Vietnam, and also from the viewpoint of a substantial part of world opinion, it is also a kind of colonial war—a war also being fought to expel a foreign invader, the United States, from the soil of an Asian country with a long history of national identity and independence. And this is so notwithstanding the Johnson-Rusk sophistries about North Vietnam not leaving its neighbor alone, the shadow of China and a host of other worn-out clichés. If "aggression" has been committed from the outside, it has not been "aggression from the North" but aggression from the West—represented by the U.S. unilateral projection of its political, financial and military power in the internal affairs of the Vietnamese people, its role as an accomplice in preventing the crucial parts of the Geneva accords from being carried out, and its self-given right to exclude Communism as an option for the people of South Vietnam. Not a single regime which has existed in Saigon since 1954 could have been established or could have maintained itself in power without U.S. approval and support. No Saigon regime since 1954 has been representative of, or supported by, as much as a fourth of the total population of South Vietnam.

As the distinguished authority on international law, Quincy Wright, has made it quite clear: "Neither the Charter (of the United Nations) nor customary international law recognize any right to intervene in civil strife at the request of either the recognized government or the insurgents. The right of 'self-determination' and independence gives states the privilege of changing their system of government or economy, even by violent revolution, without outside interference, as we asserted in 1776 and 1823."

Moreover, the rebellion in South Vietnam had actually been underway for several years before North Vietnam committed itself to assistance. The so-called Vietcong insurgency is still, despite the increased military assistance of the North Vietnamese, essentially a South Vietnamese coalition against the Saigon regime and the U.S. presence. South Vietnamese Communists now perhaps play a decisive role in leadership, strategy and tactics, and in liaison with North Vietnam. But this was not so before the United States substantially escalated its military involvement. But even if South Vietnamese Communists did play a decisive role from the beginning, the argument that the rebellion in South Vietnam was indigenous remains valid, for South Vietnamese Communists are, after all, South Vietnamese.

President Johnson has in the past spoken about South Vietnamese "participating in attacks on their own Government," as though this were criminal behavior. A government which is alienated from the people it governs deserves to be attacked, and even overthrown by force if there is no other way. This is the sacred right of people to revolution, enshrined in our own Declaration of Independence.

Since 1965 the civil-war nature of the conflict in Vietnam has been almost completely eclipsed by its international characteristics—brought on by the richest and most powerful nation in the world, made up of more than 200 million people, combatting a little Asian people. It is doubtful if the North Vietnamese,

without an air force, without a navy, without armor, without sophisticated offensive weapons, could go on resisting without the support received from the Soviet Union, China, and a few other countries. However, this assistance does not include fighting men, but only food and materiel—to the extent of about \$1 billion worth in a year. This contrasts with the more than \$25 billion which the United States is now spending in one year to prosecute the war against the Vietnamese, plus more than half a million of the best armed men in the world, together with the support of the armies of the Saigon regime, dispirited and ineffective as they may be, also equipped with superior U.S. weapons. Most of the world sees this as an unequal contest between a mighty colossus and a pigmy, and frankly marvels at the courage and dedication of the pigmy.

3 We were mistaken in the first place and seriously damaged our national image in Asia and elsewhere when we assisted the imperialist French in their military effort to retain Vietnam. We were mistaken again when we decided to fill the power vacuum created by France's withdrawal and to attempt the imposition of our will on the people of South Vietnam. Despite years of ingenious camouflage and platitudes about "freedom," "democracy" and other honorific abstractions, our primary objective has been clear for some time. We did not become militarily involved because a "brave people" had asked for our assistance. It was we ourselves who created and made possible the first regime in Saigon, the Diem regime, even though it turned out to be a kind of Frankenstein and had to be destroyed. Every regime since then, to be perfectly candid about it, has been a client regime, entirely dependent upon U.S. power and money for survival.

Although the clichés and slogans of the past are still being parroted by some spokesmen and apologists of the Johnson Administration, they were long ago discarded by the franker spokesmen. Our primary aim, unmistakably disclosed in Santo Domingo in 1965, but clearly disclosed also eleven years previously in Guatemala, is to prevent the establishment or survival of regimes "too far to the left" wherever we think we can succeed and by using whatever means we regard as necessary. As Walt Rostow, a leading adviser of the Johnson Administration, has in effect expostulated, the crucial role of the United States to play is the part of a great counter-revolutionary power which is prepared to preserve the status quo and in interdict change by revolution, especially by leftist elements. This is substantially the role that the United States has in fact been playing for nearly two decades. This has meant that the United States has allied itself with the privileged and oligarchic elements of troubled countries, usually underdeveloped, and in effect made itself the enemy of the poor, the disadvantaged and the oppressed. It is a strange role for a nation to be playing which itself owes its birth to a revolution which at the time the "respectable" social classes of Europe considered to be "too far to the left." It is a role that would bewilder and dismay Thomas Jefferson, Thomas Paine and the other patriots of the American revolution.

In Vietnam we have in effect been trying to impose our will on the Vietnamese people, and at the same time to make an example for other countries to note. The Administration seeks to demonstrate in Vietnam that the awesome power of the United States, sustained by an annual gross national product of more than \$800 billion, can and will be used to defeat decisively any revolutionary movement not to our liking, and especially one we believe to be linked with "communism."

Today it is Vietnam that is feeling the shock of American military intervention. But the truth is that since 1947 the United States has maintained an enormous military power beyond purely defensive needs and has utilized some of it time and again to intervene with force or the threat of force in the internal affairs of other nations. What are the sources of this kind of international behavior which is something quite new in the American experience, excluding the period of the armed interventions in the Caribbean area during

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JMC project: contact learning

By JAMES SPANIOLA
and
LARRY WERNER

A visitor enters one of the huge executive office buildings in Washington D.C. enroute to Vice President Hubert Humphrey's office.

The visitor is checked by a security guard. "Mr. Hoffman, please," the visitor requests.

Finally, in the vice president's office. Max Hoffman greets his guest.

Meanwhile, in the Lebanese embassy, Marilyn Bombrys addresses a package to Secretary of State Dean Rusk's daughter. In the package is a wedding present. Later in the day, Miss Bombrys is at the Capitol, where she meets President Johnson.

Max and Marilyn are juniors in Justin Morrill College.

They are two of 14 JMC students who are earning 12 credits while working in various positions or simply doing independent research in the nation's capital, fulfilling their field study requirements for MSU's first residential college.

Justin Morrill, which admitted its first freshman class in the fall of 1965, emphasizes a liberal education, with a greater amount of freedom given to the students in course selection, while at the same time providing for personal contact between students and faculty supervisors. Consistent with this philosophy is the current Washington field study program.

Students are for the most part left on their own to find apartments and to secure non-paying jobs or positions which will help them utilize the resources of Washington to prepare a written report due at the term's end.

So that the students receive some direction in their projects, each is assigned a faculty supervisor who remains in contact to give help, when needed, and who evaluates the research project.

Hoffman chose to study the party structure and operation as it prepares for a major campaign, with special attention given to the methods of campaign strategy. He is working under one of Humphrey's assistants, Eiler Ravenholt. Hoffman's duties and hours are flexible to allow ample time for utilizing the resources and contacts made available to him.

"In my position, I have access to many people and many offices," Hoffman said. "I am working directly under Mr. Ravenholt, who is a political liaison with the people in Minnesota for the vice president."

Hoffman said that he is in a position to observe the development of issues and how the issues are related to grass roots support.

"I make anything I find available to the vice president's office," he said.

Hoffman has just completed a study on the possibility of the presidential race being thrown into the House of Representatives, if no candidate receives a majority of the electoral vote.

A political science major from Haslett, he has also observed the involvement of the executive branch with its constituency.

"There is a vital concern with feedback and polls," Hoffman said. "The executive branch is responsive to its constituents and it goes deeper than just political expediency."

About the Washington field study program, Hoffman said, "This is one of the things that makes JMC so worthwhile—the practical experience."

Miss Bombrys, an anthropology major from Petoskey, is assisting the social secretary at the Lebanese Embassy.

She plans to write her paper on the Lebanese American. Miss Bombrys is learning about Lebanese culture while working at the embassy and had planned to spend time living with a Lebanese family.

Fauzi M. Najjar, associate professor in social science, has studied Middle East affairs and is supervising Miss Bombrys.

"I have learned so much about the operation of the diplomatic service that I want to switch my major to foreign relations," she said. "This experience has given me great personal satisfaction."

Miss Bombrys cited learning the diplomatic language and protocol as the major challenges of her job and meeting the President as her greatest thrill.

"I was so awed that I couldn't speak," she said after meeting the President at the Presidential Prayer Breakfast.

Recently, Miss Bombrys agreed to serve



Max Hoffman (center) discusses his project in Washington D. C. with Harold Johnson (left) his supervising professor, and Eiler Ravenholt, an assistant to Vice President Hubert Humphery.

as social secretary on Fridays, when her superior has the day off. In this capacity, she controls the ambassador's calendar on that day and sees that protocol is correct if the ambassador should have an appointment.

Five students are working with Harry T. McKinney, director of the JMC field study program and associate professor in Economics.

Ed Barnes, a Grand Rapids junior in economics, is working in Minority Leader Gerald Ford's office and doing research for a paper on the gold drain and the balance of payments.

Through Ford, Barnes is allowed to sit in on hearings of the House Ways and Means Committee and obtained a ticket from Ford to attend the Republican State of the Union appraisal meeting.

Four students under McKinney's supervision are attending the hearings of the Joint Economic Committee.

"We call them each night after the hearings and record the conversation on tape," McKinney said. "This forces them to get together after the meeting to discuss what went on."

"The general idea was to send them to the committee meetings to acquire reports which will be used in the classroom."

These students are equipped with a 35mm camera and a tape recorder.

Besides attending committee hearings, Barnes has been answering letters which reach Ford's office "concerning events of the day."

"JMC feels that the experience you gain has much to do with the educational process," Barnes said. "This gives you a completely different experience than you can get at the University."

Barnes suggested that JMC structure the program slightly more in order to improve the field study.

"They could give us suggestions before we come down here," he said. "We were kind of dropped on the town."

However, McKinney countered, this assumption of responsibility by the student is desirable.

"My inclination would be not to do very much in this regard," McKinney said. "Going into a strange city to find an apartment is a pretty meaningful experience. We want to give these students a chance to accept the responsibility. I would be reluctant to structure these programs more."

Eight students are supervised by Harold S. Johnson, assistant professor of political science. Included in this group are Hoffman and two others who were contacted by the State News.

Cindy Neal is a sophomore Spanish major from Port Huron. She is studying the Organization of American States (OAS) while working in the Pan American Union. Jeff Miller, an Independence, Mo., junior, is in political science and working on an independent research paper concerning pressure groups and the Supreme Court.

Miss Neal is interviewing representatives from Latin American countries and will compile a written paper. She is studying the workings of the Pan-American Development Foundation, which was created to assist private investment in Latin America in conjunction with the Alliance for Progress.

"The most important part of my stay in Washington is not what I've done but the contacts I've made," Miss Neal said.

She has attended a number of OAS meetings and has recognized some weaknesses in what appears otherwise to be "ideally a good organization."

"There are many complications and political implications in everything which is done," she said. "The organization is not too efficient, and there is political favoritism. The real problem is that many of the questions come down to interests of the larger nations opposing those of the smaller ones."

About the field study program, Miss Neal said:

"I have gotten at least as much out of this program as I have from attending all my classes at MSU to date."

About Washington: "You can learn so much by just trying to figure out what's going on here."

Another Spanish major, Cathy Owen, a junior from Wayzata, Minn., is also working in the Pan-American Union. She is doing research in Spanish and is writing the Social Affairs Dept. report on Peru for the annual Alliance for Progress Report.

Miller is conducting a series of interviews relating to the Amicus Curiae Brief (Friend of the Court). He became interested in the topic while taking Political Science 320 from James Levine, who advised Miller in planning the project and who will criticize the final report.

Through his congressman, Miller acquired a spot in the Congressional Reading Room. When not doing research reading, he interviews pressure groups—such as the NAACP—who have had cause to utilize the Amicus Curiae Brief.

Unlike most of the other JMC students in Washington, Miller is not tied down to a particular position.

"I didn't particularly want to be in my congressman's office all of the time," he said. "I have more free time."

Miller reiterated statements of his fellow students in Washington concerning the opportunities this program offers.

"In a 15-minute conversation with someone here, I can learn more than in a whole term of a poli sci course," Miller said. "These people have to be responsible for what they say; a poli sci prof doesn't."

Miller said that he is particularly impressed by how hard congressmen and other government figures work. He said that both radical and conservative groups complain about the lack of work being done in Washington.

"It isn't just fun on the Hill," Miller said.

Miller feels that the JMC program is worthwhile, but says that the individual student must assert himself to reap the benefits available.

"Simply because you are here, you are learning about your government and about the world," Miller said. "But we are on our own. We could drink beer all day if we wanted to. JMC must be careful of the kind of people they send."

Both McKinney and Johnson are pleased with the Washington project. They hope that the field study experience will aid the individ-

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Alienation at home, abroad

(continued from page 8)

the earlier part of this century? The National Council of Churches may have substantially identified the sources of this behavior. As reported in *The New York Times* of Feb. 22 of this year, they are:

1. A oversimplified view of the world divided into two camps, one "free" and the other Communist.

2. A false and even "arrogant" concept that the United States has a special mission to repel aggression throughout the world, thus fostering false moralism and self-righteousness.

3. Reliance on military power as the chief means of keeping the "peace," thus submerging social and economic development at home and abroad.

4. The making of unilateral decisions concerning the use of power, although collective action is really needed.

5. The employment of U.S. power to preserve the status quo, with the frequent result of discouraging the social change needed in Asia, Africa and Latin America.

The Administration, in its frantic search for an elusive military victory, has more than merely escalated the "size" of the war by dispatching hundreds of thousands of American boys to kill and maim and to be killed and be maimed in a distant land which in no way actually threatens the security or welfare of the American people. It has also escalated the "techniques" of warfare, causing death and mutilation to tens of thousands of helpless civilians, which deserve to be candidly recognized as being even more ruthless and inhumane than any employed by Hitler in his military campaigns to bring recalcitrant nations to the "conference table" on his terms. The techniques of warfare being employed in Vietnam, such as the wholesale napalming of villages and the spraying of forests and fields with toxic chemicals, have already alienated America from a very substantial part of the "decent opinion of mankind." The ruthless and pitiless use of military power is no less ruthless or pitiless because it is American power.

The tragic war in Vietnam has much more than merely alienated a large part of mankind from us. It has also torn and split the American people as they never have been since the years preceding the American civil war. One of the cruel paradoxes of the present war is that we are allegedly in Vietnam, killing and destroying, to make "freedom" possible in that land, while in our own country there are millions, whites as well as colored peoples, who have never really known the meaning of freedom, human dignity or opportunity. Instead of utilizing our resources and talents, which are by no means limitless, to fulfill the so-called American dream for our own millions of disadvantaged and alienated people, we are in effect squandering them and sacrificing the lives of our youth in an ill-advised venture ten thousand miles away which in reality has no bearing whatsoever on "the common defense" and "the general welfare" of the American people.

The "dirty war" in Vietnam, as it is called by many of our friends in Europe and Asia, is unmistakably brutalizing an increasing number of Americans. It is not irrelevant to note that the recently increased dissatisfaction of the public with President Johnson's Vietnam policies seems to stem not from a rising revulsion against the injustice and inhumanity of the war and the sufferings of the Vietnamese people, but from his failure to apply more punishing military power. When the "friendly" city of Ben Tre was recently occupied by NLF forces with relatively little loss of life and damage to property, American airpower was called upon to napalm it. An American officer justified this action with the notoriously ironic words, "It became necessary to destroy the town to save it." Ben Tre is not an isolated instance. We have over the past few years been napalming and putting to the torch scores of villages. Ben Tre only made the headlines. What happened there seems to be a consequence of our general military policy in Vietnam-- in order to "save" the country we may virtually have to destroy it and kill most of its people.

It is saddening to contemplate that in many ways our behavior in Vietnam, our veneration

of military power and contempt for the opinions of mankind, seem to be part and parcel of the general decay of the moral fabric of American society. Affluence for the many has by no means produced a more moral or more humane society. On the contrary, it seems to have nourished a widespread arrogance, cynical pragmatism, self-seeking, and moral corruption, extending from top to bottom. As Kenneth Boulding has put it, "The problem of America is pollution--material and moral." It is not without relevance to note that among those most blood thirstily calling for the most ruthless use of military power are those who have most consistently demonstrated the most intense feelings of racial superiority and bigotry in its various forms.

It is historically incorrect to blame President Johnson entirely for the military involvement of the United States in Vietnam. Three other presidents must also bear some share of responsibility. President Truman in reality set the stage by making available to the French the material aid which helped them to reestablish themselves colonially in Vietnam. This was done in the name of anti-Communism. President Eisenhower must bear responsibility for permitting the Geneva accords to be flagrantly violated and to have obstructed, also in the name of anti-Communism, what might have been the relatively peaceful settlement of the Vietnam problem by the Vietnamese themselves. Speaking of the Eisenhower Administration's decision to support the Diem regime, for example, General Gavin recently declared, "The fact that this was contrary to the Geneva accords seemed irrelevant." President Kennedy must also bear responsibility, notwithstanding his platitudes about the necessity of the South Vietnamese "doing it themselves," for having ordered the first major escalation by increasing the number of American military "advisers" from a few hundred to 23,000 and enlarging their combat role. However, the greatest responsibility of all undeniably rests on President Johnson, who solemnly promised the American people peace but gave them a bloody war. It was he who transformed a relatively restrained U.S. military involvement into a full-scale, major war against a majority of the Vietnamese people.

In a recent letter of resignation to the president of Wesleyan University, the German scholar Hans Enzensberger declared: "I believe the class which rules the United States of America, and the government which implements its policies, to be the most dangerous body of men on earth. In one way or another, and to a different degree, this class is a threat to anybody who is not part of it. It is waging an undeclared war against more than a billion people: its weapons range from saturation bombing to the most delicate techniques of persuasion: its aim is to establish its political, economic, and military predominance over every other power in the world. Its mortal enemy is revolutionary change."

While most Americans might take exception to these sweeping generalizations, they do seem to have a certain qualified validity for many people, and probably help to explain why President de Gaulle of France and certain other leaders of non-Communist countries have in recent years taken positions and made statements which cannot contemptuously be brushed aside simply as "roguish anti-Americanism." Boulding may have a point when he says that our government essentially serves a powerful military-industrial-research-labor complex which has corrupted American society. We may have entered a tragic period in

our history, comparable in many ways to the period the German people entered in the 1930's. In this Germany the new leadership launched its great crusade against "Communism" and placed its faith not in God or humanity but in Power. We launched our crusade against "Communism" even before World War II had ended. We might well ask ourselves, Where will the idolatrous worship of Power by our leaders take us?

Whether many Americans realize it or not, the United States has become the greatest imperial power of all time. We have millions of armed men overseas, more than 3000 military bases and installations scattered around the world, and hold in the palm of our hands as clients scores of nations, many of whose governments we could topple overnight by the simple expedient of withdrawing our economic aid. Many of these client states are governed by corrupt and oppressive oligarchies, whose major attraction for us is their militant "anti-Communism." This is not the kind of future the founders of this Republic, created by the flames of revolutionary war, envisioned for their descendants. Imperialism ultimately completes the corruption of the moral fiber of a people and begets its own destruction. The real future of America lies not in exercising imperial dominion over alien peoples but in making the American dream a reality for the millions of poor people we have abandoned in our own country, and in contributing of our resources and talents, to the limits possible, for the elevation of the condition of mankind in general. We can take a giant step in this direction by giving reality to the slogan of the anti-imperialists of the turn of the century--"the flag of a Republic forever, the flag of an empire never."

We might well hearken to the voice of Senator Hoar of Massachusetts when he spoke out against the acquisition of empire after the victorious war with Spain. That voice cried out that the fathers of the Republic had never dreamed that their descendants "would be beguiled from these sacred and awful verities (of the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution) that they might strut about in the cast-off clothing of pinchbeck emperors and pewter kings; that their descendants would be excited by the smell of gunpowder and the sound of the guns of a single victory as a small boy by a firecracker on some Fourth of July morning."

Washington project

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ual student, who is integrating practical work in Washington with the theory in formalized course work, and the students and faculty of Justin Morrill, with whom the experiences in the nation's capital will be shared.

"I think the project is working extremely well," McKinney said. "We're giving them an extraordinary amount of independence, and they are demonstrating what undergraduates can do when they are left on their own."

Said Johnson: "They are learning things--things they cannot learn at the University. And they are motivated. Generally, they have taken advantage of every opportunity."

For the 14 students in Washington this term, the experience has been totally different from any the academic community could offer.

There have been no classes, no textbooks or formal requirements. And the setting has not been a university campus but rather the nation's capital city, where the students worked directly with the primary sources of their study.

Structure has been minimal, mainly limited to suggestions and advice by sponsoring professors. Grading will be on a pass-fail basis, yet students are earning 12 credits. And success of the total experience is completely dependent on the initiative and effort given by the student.

Admittedly, it is impossible for 38,000 MSU students to spend a term in Washington, D.C. or in other equally stimulating environments. But the program would seem to offer a strong recommendation to curriculum planners concerning the traditional scope and limits of a "liberal education."

COLLAGE

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Nichols' success

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Barefoot in the Park written by Neil Simon. When it was a hit, he received over 400 scripts from Broadway, television, and movie writers seeking his directing talents. He directed three more plays, *Knack, Luv*, and *The Odd Couple* all hits, and all later made into movies. The movie version of *Luv*, starred, of all people, Elaine May.

"A Nichols play is a busy gymnastic comedy of the absurd," said one critic. "Characters grunt and wheeze, climb stairs, ride motor scooters, lose their pants, leap off bridges, and throw knives."

The apex of Nichols' exposure probably occurred, when he directed the Burtons in the movie version of Edward Albee's *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* Some of the power and venom of Albee's play may have been lost in the transition from stage to screen. The only comment from Nichols during its filming was: "We're making it from a play into a movie."

Arthur Schlesinger Jr., perhaps spreading himself a little thin when he moved from historian and biographer of presidents to film critic, said, "No one can be afraid of this Virginia Woolf."

Nonetheless, Nichols was congratulated for the "sizable victory" of the performance he wrung from Miss Taylor. His direction stressed considerable attention to detail and realism. He had his actors stay up all night shooting some of the late night scenes in "Virginia Woolf" to see what would happen.

He had his production and costume designers visit college campuses supposedly similar to the setting of the play to gain first-hand realism.

"I want the audience drawn into the lives of these people and the event," Nichols said during the filming. "I don't want them to be aware of any camera or cutting."

In *The Graduate*, with the aid of photography-director Robert Surtees, Nichols used the camera and photographic techniques to tell a considerable part of the story. Faces crowded together in closeup shots convey the tight, close feeling of a roomful of obnoxious people. A condensed telescopic shot makes the hero appear to be running without getting anywhere as he is racing desperately against time to rescue his girl from the jaws of matrimony. At a highly emotional point in the story, the scene blurs as though viewed through a veil of tears.

This use of the camera as a subjective viewing device rather than an impartial observer heightens the audience's involvement. The viewer is drawn into the story by its visual effects.

Nichols also does this in a montage of shots which cuts rapidly between scenes of his main character Ben Braddock listlessly passing time at home and conducting an equally listless affair with Mrs. Robinson, the wife of his father's business partner. A shot of Ben lounging in his room about to drink from a can of beer cuts to a shot of him drinking from another can in a hotel room. The related subject matter of the alternating shots draws an analogy to the similarity of mood between the two situations. The listless mood is furthered by setting the shots to the plaintive music of Simon and Garfunkel.

Nichols' presence in *The Graduate* is best felt, however, in the comic characterizations. Some of the scenes might have been taken right out of a Nichols-May routine. There is absurdity, but there are no "jokes" or trite situations. Nobody falls down stairs or hides under a bed from an irate husband. The characterizations Nichols draws from his cast are humorous because they are ridiculously true to life, not merely ridiculous.

The Graduate is another manifestation of the original Nichols humor. There are the same satirical thrusts at the elements of Americana from boisterous parents to bouncy fraternity boys. It is comedy as Nichols does it, a series of "little scenes" that builds a big comic picture.

The work has won him an Academy Award nomination, no small accomplishment for a director on his second picture, but Nichols views it in his usual candid angle.

"If I won it (an Oscar) I would say I had done it all by myself and probably be stoned to death," he said.

Realizing

Everything is dying.
Below my bedroom
Where I have tossed my desire out,
An old deaf woman rents from us.
Her bowlegged walk is skillful work
When friends take her for a drive.
As strangers pass, as I pass
She sits reading newspapers and sentimental verse
With a magnifying glass.

She sits in a cobweb of hung white
Curtain and curtain and her white head,
But at dark when her light shines silver,
She is death's spider web.

Every moment now
Has sorrow at its center,
At the thirty second point.
And so I want to have joy
At the beginning of the moment and at the end.
When life is prized, this is how.

By JEFF JUSTIN

Never-never land

(continued from page 7)

For the troops in the field of Vietnam, it is difficult to feel anything but high regard and compassion. Their confusion, their awkwardness, their doubts are an indelible part of the history of our time and cannot be summed up in (bogus) body counts and eulogistic speeches. These kids are young and trapped: they did not choose to come here, they did not choose to kill, most would leave tomorrow if they could. As one soldier said to me, "Sure I kill. Sure I pull the trigger. But I don't understand why. None of us do." Others speak vaguely about "stopping communism" and, when asked about the possibility of a war with China, say, "The whole world is going to be blown up anyway, so it doesn't matter what we do." A striking aspect of these soldiers is their concern with masculinity: what does it mean to be a man? Are you a man when you've killed enough VC and screwed enough bar-girls to boast about it in the nearby bar? Each conscripted soldier seems to be carving his individual answers out of the poor material provided by the army, and some of them are doing a fine job of it.

Not so the enlisted soldiers, the professionals, the officers and career soldiers. These men seem to be a different breed: the losers, the men who could not make it in civilian life, men who thrive on force, authority, and dominance, men with twisted concepts of themselves, unloved and unloving men who kill and destroy because they are afraid (whether it is of "communism," "foreigners," or just "people"). These are the men who lounge around Saigon, who see no combat but lovingly perpetuate the war because it strengthens their egos and makes them rich. These are the men who hide behind words like "duty," "honor," and "country" because they cannot stand alone on their individual merits: they need to belong to a group because they themselves are nothing. These men love the taking and giving of orders because only there, in the performance of minute, petty, bureaucratic tasks, is the security that they crave. Strict conformity and obedience are regarded not only as an expedient in a wartime situation, but as an answer to all problems in life. The military establishment is dominated with men like this and our country is in grave danger if we can be so frightened and so cowardly as to turn to these men for our deliverance.

It is this aspect of the war, the increasing power and prestige of the military establishment, that makes me (and others in Saigon) wonder aloud about the possibilities of a military welfare state and the parallels between modern America and Nazi Germany.

The professionals are not young, are not well educated (except, perhaps, in a technical capacity), and are not qualified to lead either

our country or the country of Vietnam. And yet the civilian operations in Vietnam are subordinate to military command and, with the exit of Robert McNamara from the President's cabinet, the generals have captured the ear of Washington. These men are not evil (at least, not consciously) and many of them are not stupid. But for some reason the revolutionary idealism and the boldness of vision that is necessary to win this war in Vietnam is concentrated with the doves: the military is concerned with killing communists, not with winning the war. For this reason, we are failing spectacularly to capture the H and M of the P (hearts and minds of the people) as well as performing poorly the job of pacifying the countryside. The officers, marines, and others who share the militaristic mentality strut around Saigon like they own the place (which they most emphatically do not: the Viet Cong extract taxes from almost every merchant in the city as protection against bombing). To stand with a group of career soldiers is like standing amidst the hell's Angels; everything smells of liquor, gun powder, grease, and crude language. The militaristic mentality is sometimes passed on to the younger soldiers and one is sickened to see acne-covered soldiers sitting on duffle bags in the Ton Son Nhut airport struggling to read comic books, moving their lips with each word, strapped with guns and hand grenades. These men are the dead-ends of our country, and to experience them in mass is sufficient to radically shake one's faith in democracy. The only experience that is infinitely more sickening is to hear our politicians hail these limited, narrow people as the wave of the future. The army, which could educate men to achieve more than the destruction of lives and property, only reinforces banality, conformity, and loneliness.

Dwight McDonald, in the November issue of *Esquire*, announces in his Politics column that the world is going to hell (not a shocking conclusion if you have lived in Saigon for a while) and he backs up his statement by citing examples of recent events. In the course of his discussion he asks a very pertinent question that should interest all Americans concerned about the war in Vietnam: "What is the ratio of career professionals to conscripted amateurs a) in combat units, and b) in non-combat units?" The answer to this question can only be found in the Pentagon, and you may be sure that the figures will not be released (or tabulated) if they do not portray the army in a favorable light. But of the figures, that are available, we know that the 250,000 troops that the army has stationed in Vietnam consist of 125,000 draftees. In addition, it is unofficially estimated that 85 per cent of the casualties are between the ages of 18 and 20 (this percent-

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Never-never land corrupted

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age is arrived at by tabulating death, wounded, and missing announcements in home newspapers. From this little bit of data, we can guess the answer to Mr. McDonald's question: the young, inexperienced conscripted men carry the burden of this war while the older, professional men sit behind the desks, consume PX commodities, lead the good life of officer's clubs and R and R, pay no taxes, and profit greatly from the waste and tragedy of this war.

To suggest that all officers operate in this manner would be grossly dishonest, but it is accurate to report that this is the philosophy that dominates the Saigon scene and this is the corruption referred to earlier. The Vietnamese people and the American cause in Vietnam is lost somewhere between the officers' clubs and the government contracts that are awarded on the basis of friendship and "connections." There is no way of extricating the American people and the American dollar from this mess, because the highjinks and freeloading is built into the bureaucratic system that has been allowed to proliferate in and strangle this country. A mere switch in personnel would be useless: what is needed is idealism and a sense of mission—and these qualities are sorely lacking. Only once in my two weeks here did I encounter anything like dedication and understanding of what our presence in Vietnam is supposed to mean, and that incident occurred among the Special Forces (popularly known as "The Green Berets"). The Green Berets differ from the average professional soldiers in that they are noticeably more intelligent, more informed, and (one suspects) more deadly. I was in a jeep driven by a member of the Special Forces and we were treated to one of Vietnam's sudden and violent climatic changes—a fierce downpour of rain swept over us. The driver turned to me and said, "I hope you don't mind the fact that I am driving so slowly, but I don't want to splash the people who are walking on the side of the road." I was at once impressed with the concern this man showed for the Vietnamese and remarked upon the scarceness of this concern among American troops. This man sadly agreed with me that the average soldier thinks little (if not nothing) of the Vietnamese people and would not hesitate to splash them, beat them, or shoot them if such activities were warranted.

The Civilians

As the military melts into a continuum of "good" to "bad", so do the American civilians. The associations of the military and the civilians are parallel: the old, crass militaristic personnel seem to associate with the old, profiteering bureaucrats while the young, scared soldiers are comparable to the idealistic, dedicated pacification volunteers. Two things must be kept in mind when considering American civilians in Vietnam: 1) there is a job to be done here and 2) it is possible to make a lot of money here. Civilians apply themselves to either the first or the second truth, but rarely to both. The civilians stumble over themselves more than the military, for (although their task is more difficult) they should know better and their lack of progress is more evident.

If the civilian is a government employe he is bureaucratic, harassed, confused, brain-washed, and obsequious. One is tempted to attribute overriding ambition to them, for it must be a tremendous effort to harness one's intelligence and parrot a government line that is not always sane (let alone logical or successful). I cringe when jolly, good-humored, father-figure officials (upon learning that I am a journalist) throw their arms around me and urge me to "write something nice" about the U.S. effort in Vietnam. More than one member of J.U.S.P.A.O. (Joint U.S. Public Affairs Office) has hinted that I wouldn't be "popular" (Heavens! Not that!) if I was "snotty and negative" in my reports. (Incidentally, if Saigon is Disneyland, JUSPAO is Fantasyland. The U.S. government stages a daily press conference that can only be described as "situation comedy.") The government workers are dedicated (but I do not know to what), frustrated, and even slightly nervous. We must sympathize with them, but we also wonder what (if anything) goes on inside their heads. I ate dinner with an official one night and he spent a great deal of time trying to probe for my reaction to the idea (or maybe prepare

me for the inevitability) of South Vietnam invading the North. I dismissed the entire notion by saying that aggression was precisely what we were trying to halt, so we would never seek to be guilty of it ourselves. Dinner ended on a discordant note when this official rose and said with a nervous laugh, "Well, as the saying goes, all's fair in love and war." As mentioned before, surrealistic scenes are common in Vietnam.

There are also non-governmental civilians here and these people are nice, educated (usually engineers and experts of various sorts), and soon to be very rich. Profiteering occurs on large and small scales all over Saigon and it is nearly impossible not to participate in it. Although prices in Saigon are exorbitant (example: one apple costs 60c), American employees and administrators receive "hazardous duty compensation" and are able to turn the practice of their professions to a tidy profit. We may not legitimately criticize those who perform a job and are justly compensated for their efforts, but the system which allows the accumulation of great wealth in a short time is deplorable because those who benefit are reluctant to see the war end and the source of goodies stop. These are the fears of the military-industrial complex that Eisenhower warned us about when he left office in 1960. It seems grossly unfair that some people should profit greatly from this war while others are killed and wounded and we wonder, if these people have consciences, how they can sleep at night. The answer is apparent: between silk sheets.

The "pacification program," largely under the jurisdiction of U.S.A.I.D. (but really under the thumb of "Westy"—General Westmoreland), is the American hope in Vietnam. I am sorry to say that it is, at best, bleak. That is not to say that many intelligent people are not spending many hours daily collecting data and filing reports and just generally keeping busy. But the undeniable fact remains that the people of Vietnam resent (hate?) us, tolerate us, and (I fear) are bored by us. This problem (as with most international problems) is one of communications—and I see precious little evidence of a solution being offered. We do not ask the Vietnamese what they want; we tell them what they need (all officials here would howl in protest at this last statement, but I would calmly remind them of the relocation of the village of Ben Suc and the many other villages that are being uprooted. This is not the way to make friends and influence people.) No matter what we do here (even if it is, as occasionally happens, the right thing) we overdo it, we allow the Vietnamese to feel no pride, we are patronizing, we are impatient, we search for (superficial) projects that provide glowing political advantages, we fail to learn from our "enemy" (except the bad things, such as torture, which are readily adopted), we fail to learn even from the French (who are more experienced in dealing with these people than we are). Consequently, the people are glum, unhappy, supremely uninterested in politics, and cooperative with whomever is pointing a gun at them at the moment. I asked a very educated, pro-American villager in Nha-Trang (which is 200 miles north of Saigon) what he would do if he were an American in Vietnam and I was flooded with solid, concrete, positive suggestions that would surely strengthen American popularity. I further asked him if people such as himself were consulted by officials of any sort (American or Vietnamese) to take part in decision making. He said no.

If U.S.A.I.D. is a joke (as it seems to be), it is because it is dominated by the same old, rigid, ambitious people that infect the military (except these are do-gooders and the military are do-badders). If U.S.A.I.D. is a joke, it is because the wrong people are consulted in decision making. It is because the VC know what they are doing and we do not. It is because idealism is smothered in paperwork and bureaucracy. It is because ideologies rather than humanism motivate our actions. It is because 100,000 motorcycles are added to the dangerous, cluttered, smelly streets of Saigon each year rather than instituting a public transportation system. (Why? Because someone makes a fortune selling motorcycles.) It is because the Officers' Open Mess on top of the Rex Hotel imports its lettuce from America rather than using the lettuce grown in Vietnam.

(Why? Because someone makes a fortune selling lettuce.) It is because the black market flourishes with few restrictions. (Why? Because someone makes a fortune.) It is because Vice-President Ky (who lives at the airport in case he has to make a quick get-away) established his own government (including a cabinet appointed by himself) parallel to that of President Thieu's. It is because a striptease artist I know makes \$250 an hour working in officers' clubs while I have watched men cook rats in the streets of Saigon. It is because prostitution flourishes, drunken Americans abuse Vietnamese, cultural understanding is minimal with no attempt to educate either side. It is because the money is extremely unstable. If U.S.A.I.D. is a joke (as it seems to be), it is because someone makes a fortune. The key word in Saigon is corruption, not outrageous, wild-eyed corruption, but a sort of softness where waste and inefficiency is tolerated because, hell, man, everybody is doing it and why shouldn't I?

One other civilian exists in Vietnam: the dedicated volunteer who learns Vietnamese, works in the field, makes little money, sees the whole sordid mess more clearly than you or I ever will and still decides to stay, in spite of the corruption, in spite of the threat of the VC takeover, in spite of the bungling and inefficiency of the U.S. government. What can be said about these people? They are human, they make mistakes, they get mad, get nervous, get discouraged. Their motives might even be less than pure (the few I have met have a holier-than-thou attitude which may or may not be unconscious). But they, like the Green Beret who drove slowly in order to avoid splashing the people, represent an intelligent, enlightened approach to the problem in which we find ourselves. One wishes that the army would forget about the VC for a while, forget about baseball and apple pie and (yes) even Mother, and really work with the people in this unfortunate little country who want a revolution. The American people are (or, at least, were) a revolutionary people and we have much to offer the Vietnamese if we are willing to stop, listen, learn the language, understand, and acknowledge that maybe, just maybe, we could learn something from the Vietnamese—learn about patience, about peace, about perseverance, and about pride.

The future

The supreme irony of this war, the supreme tragedy and the supreme joke, is that both sides are striving for exactly the same goal. Everyone wants to see a united, peaceful Vietnam. Nobody (except those who benefit financially) likes to see the death and corruption that now exists. The poor villager is hounded, threatened, bombed and shot by both sides who frantically shout, "Join my revolution! My side is better! We'll give you your own land! We won't tax you as much. We'll let you determine your own life!" Why would anybody in their right mind care about either side? And the poor villager does not care: life flows on in its cyclical, violent pattern as the fatalistic Buddhism that commands the allegiance of the peasantry decrees it must.

There is only one relevant question that the alert American can ask concerning the war in Vietnam, and that is: "What should I, as an individual, do about it?" The answer to that question is strictly personal. My only admonition is do not be misled. Recognize, as Camus said, that "there are truths, but there is no Truth." Remember that of the 500 accredited correspondents in Vietnam, only 200 are American, and of those 200, most are technicians and free-lancers (like myself). That means that a nation of 200 million people is kept informed by a handful of men. Remember also that the government will censor the news when it can get away with it and will not release all the news if it is damaging to the government. It is up to the individual to keep informed, to separate facts from opinions, to act when he is so motivated, to keep silent when the situation warrants, to read and listen as much as possible concerning this (and any other) issue where reality is bent, twisted, distorted, multifaceted, and just plain difficult to ascertain. The view from Vietnam is bleak, and the future of our country may very well depend on our ability to face that view, to see it, and to change it.

Lee Elbinger
Saigon, December 12, 1967