

AMERICAN HEGEMONY UNDER REVISION

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AT the end of the Second World War the United States was ready—though the American people was very unready—to take on the hegemony of the non-socialist world. It had already during the war assumed the leadership of a large part of it, the saner sectors of capitalism against the wilder. War accelerated its rise by crippling all the rest; it was not however crippling capitalism, but rather liberating it from out-of-date moulds, cutting away its feudal links in Germany and Japan with military adventure, which for capitalism ought to be only an adjunct of the pursuit of profit, not its substitute. World capitalism was left a good deal more homogeneous, more purely bourgeois as in the United States it had always been. But world capitalism was for the time being badly shaken by its civil war, and in need of a shepherd; also of a shining example, a proof that "free enterprise" really could still work. America possessed moreover a dominance not only total in the economic sphere but, for the first time, in the military as well.

If it is true that a nation gets the government it deserves, we might say that the "free world" was getting the kind of leadership it deserved. But it must be allowed that this was by no means of a wholly bad kind, even if its better qualities were muffled by its Cold War rantings and ravings. It ruled out any more wars among the major countries of its flock. Brief conflicts between more juvenile members, like India and Pakistan, have occurred, but no such danger threatens as, in the rival camp, that of armed conflict between Russia and China over their senseless wranglings. From this point of view it has been an asset to the "free world" that it contains only one great power. Again, America favoured a transformation of direct imperial rule into looser, informal control, of the sort that has come to be known as "neo-colonial". This represented progress, albeit limited, and it was a misfortune that the obduracy of some behind-the-times Europeans, worst among them the French and Portuguese, was allowed to bedevil it. In colonial areas which did become self-governing, American hegemony had a further function to discharge, in ensuring that they should be firmly integrated into the anti-socialist family, and taught the behaviour appropriate to the station of each of them within it. In course of time the retreat of the Europeans became almost complete, leaving them, as Kissinger was to

remind them acidly in April 1973, with a political standing merely regional. They and the Japanese and other scattered addicts of free enterprise could have only a small and declining share of influence on what happened outside their own limits, while on the other hand their involvement in world trade was growing, under the American peace, by leaps and bounds. It was another duty of the hegemony to provide coordination, to fit them all into a common framework.

Responsible for the destinies of capitalism everywhere, the US could not simply or crudely dominate: it had to support and sustain as well. Cares of leadership made their demands, as they always must do, and imposed on the US a qualitative change of manners. In the early 1920s Trotsky was predicting that industrial competition from an expanding America would ruin Europe and drive it into communism.¹ He was too hopeful, even for that time, and after 1945 the communist spectre was all too obvious. The Europe of Attlee, de Gaulle, and Franco had to be reinvigorated, and Japanese capitalism ransomed, healed, restored, forgiven. Thus the biggest capitalist complex was in a sense being compelled to behave uncapitalistically.

In another way, the work of restoration helped to promote activity more in accord with Marxist expectation. War had enlarged American production so gigantically that an outpouring of capital investment was bound to take place, and form an integral part of the hegemony. And a good proportion at least of this capital has been constructive, rather than parasitic, in its operations. American capitalism has always been heavily infected with graft and corruption, might indeed be called inseparable from them, and in corners like Guatemala it is quite ready to sink to a merely colonial-parasitic level. Yet it has always remained to a surprising degree faithful to its original ethic of hard work, purposeful effort, the Carlylean injunction to *produce*. British capitalism by contrast has stood midway between it and the pre-war German-Japanese type: it has always suffered from a streak of illegitimacy, of the bar sinister, and from instincts which in recent years have displayed themselves in a morbid thirst for property deals, land-speculations and swindles, a senile relapse into old habits of usury-capital. Lately the head of Leyland Motors observed ruefully that the Stock Exchange valuation of his firm, a linchpin of the entire British economy and balance of payments, was about the same as that of one untenanted block of London offices.

In his Reith lectures at the end of 1973 Alastair Buchan pointed out that the trebled total of world trade since 1960 implied an unprecedented interdependence among "all the political units of the democratic world".² By this he meant of course the capitalist world: one of the units mentioned by way of example was Taiwan. It is not socialists alone who have had to resort to forms of "Aesopian" language.

Allowing for this, the lectures were often as realistic and penetrating as a non-socialist commentary on the world and its wife can be. Welcoming the expansion of trade, he sang the praises of the "multi-national" companies, as the vital new factor in economic growth and the flow of export capital. Multinational or transnational companies are not new. They made big advances after the First World War, when already it could be argued that "large-scale corporations with world-wide investments were superseding the national state". The rise of the totalitarian State hampered these "private empires", or "economic states", as the Nazis called them, but they did not go out of existence.³ Under American auspices they were free again to proliferate, and to revive the flow of capital that Marx, or Hobson, expected to carry industrialization to fresh quarters of the globe.

The shareholder was showing himself readier than the workingman to learn the lesson of "no fatherland". My country is the world, he might have paraphrased Tom Paine by saying, and my religion is to draw dividends. These corporations are, all the same, mostly American, in that their ramifying roots and suckers link them closest to the US. Emancipated though they may be from any humbug of patriotism, they must have some government or governments to call on for help, when the big stick is required, or the silken filaments of finance have to be hardened into iron fetters. It is the US that can wield the big stick most effectively, and this fact must be one of the main attractions that have been drawing capital from other countries into companies with their own discreet "hot lines" to the State Department. An investor is a venturesome yet timorous creature, perpetually racked by Antonio's anxieties about his galleons tossing on distant coasts, beset by water-thieves and land-thieves (the worst of these, the socialists, always panting to lay rude hands on the Lord's anointed, the merchant of Venice was blissfully ignorant of). His ear is vastly comforted, his willingness to risk more of his precious ducats fortified, by the rattle of chains far away, the clang of cell doors, the measured tread of the sentry; the sound of a firing-squad at work now and then, as of late in Chile, raises his spirits wonderfully, in joyful anticipation of a rise tomorrow in the Dow-Jones Average, that *line of life* across the palm of modern civilization.

For developed countries with surplus capital, to export some of it to one another is no novelty, but of late it seems to have been happening on a quite new scale. There was fear for long in Japan—as in France and elsewhere—that too much American capital was pouring in, and might oust the native breed. But now there is uneasiness in America itself about too much Japanese and other foreign capital coming in.⁴ All this may appear to betoken a tendency of all capital towards a universal amalgam, logical enough with the removal of any real

prospect of war among the major capitalist countries. Yet this merging and mingling are oddly contradicted by an opposite inclination to draw away, both economically and politically. There have been many symptoms of the well-regimented "free world" falling apart. European revolt against American oil and war policies at the time of the Middle East fighting in 1973 only intensified what had been visible considerably earlier. Threatened shortages of raw materials, oil most of all, brought in sight the danger of a scramble, a *sauve qui peut*. There are still contradictions between the "general will" of capitalism and local capitalist interests; in addition, each government has to think of maintaining the standard of living of its own voters.

Since 1945 a generation has grown up under the shadow, or in the warmth, of American domination, or protection, and with a world-picture much unlike its parents'. It has been a very blurred one, gradually in some ways coming into better focus. "The Americans help us, don't they?" a child in a shop at Appleby was heard to ask in August 1966. "There's some doubt about that", was its preoccupied mother's reply. The child might be called a faithful echo of government teaching—Tory or Labour—; the mother, of a public suffering from vague misgivings. Nothing can have done more than their docile submissiveness to Washington, not precisely to *discredit* Whitehall and Westminster, but to deprive them of meaning. Professor Buchan did not draw this moral, but he was very right in saying that nowadays "It is the mass media, rather than our political leaders, which tend to set the agenda of public debate."⁶

London has gone on kowtowing to Washington long after intelligent Americans were realizing that their emperor had no clothes on, or not nearly enough for decency, to say nothing of dignity. In vain did the emperor add Culture to his armoury of self-advertisement, and call in the arts to "counteract Soviet influence", and "correct and humanize the image of the American people held by other peoples, thus to develop a more rounded understanding of the United States, and greater confidence in its leadership in world affairs."⁶ The Vietnam war did more than any Muse could to give the world a "rounded understanding" of the hegemony. More completely than the Indian Mutiny for Britain, the mutiny of the Vietnamese people was a traumatic experience, a fundamental denial of both American virtue and American power. It cost uncounted sacrifices, not warranted by any cool logic of socialism, but earning a reward different from the one aimed at—the glory of a supremely heroic resistance to the barbarism of the West, like that of ancient Greece to the barbarism of the East, but a Thermopylae of a quarter-century.

Apart from all this, Europe's economic recovery, and even the feeble approach to political unison represented by the Common

Market and Britain's entry, have been altering the scales between the two sides of the Atlantic. After doing its best for years to push and prod Europe into union, the US now resentfully sees its offspring growing up and questioning parental authority. Australia, which drifted away years ago from the British into the American orbit, has now been breaking away from this too, and looking for a commonsense policy of its own. Australians were conditioned to feel that their survival depended on American protection against China, as formerly against Japan; also that their high standard of living depended on at least token support to their patron in Vietnam, and if this required them to help in destroying a few villages, it was well worth the price. For some time now the idea has been dawning that America's outlays in protecting positions which it would want to protect in any case "are less and perhaps considerably less than Australia's usefulness to some of America's central purposes in the Indo-Pacific region".⁷

In Japan too ingratitude has been rearing its head, and the contradictions between America's role as Atlas upholding the capitalist heavens, and its own mundane interests, have been coming into the open. A group of Congressmen toured south-east Asia in 1970 and protested to the government that while America was spending blood and treasure there Japanese businessmen were quietly moving in to reap the harvest. They were behaving in fact exactly as private enterprise ought to act; between the ideology and the practical working of any system there is always a gap, and the more imperfect the system the wider this is. Professor Buchan was alarmed at the prospect of "a kind of Japanese Gaullism", pointing out that Japan's isolated history makes it harder for it to feel itself part of any combination. He noted that President Nixon during his first term of office treated Japan high-handedly, in a "colonial way", and has since been having to try to make amends.⁸ Like Hitler, one might say, he has to make the Japanese feel at home, as "honorary Aryans"; all the rest of the advanced capitalist realm forms an ethnic as well as economic family. Altogether, Buchan's primary preoccupation was that of a European—especially a British—conservatism which found the "Americo-centric world" a very passable one, and wonders uneasily what is going to take its place now that "we are again in the early stages of a new cycle of change", with a possible shift in the balance of power looming up, and for Britain "a new uncertainty".⁹

Before the Second World War capitalism may be said to have possessed no organ of thinking. Its special aptitude is technology, and in matters requiring broader views, comprehension of the science of society, it has been woefully deficient. Painfully and reluctantly it has been learning to think, and the hegemony endowed it with something resembling a central nervous system. What America had to supply, for

purposes of ratiocination, was all the same rudimentary. Its world-wide concerns were a good deal more multifarious even than those of the old British empire, which often had great difficulty in making up its mind about them; and they have frequently been contradictory. To evolve policies capable of reconciling them all must be a formidable task, so much so that the very concept of any logical system of American policy may be untenable. What is really happening, how questions are really being decided, has been nearly as hard to make out, even with the help of those spasmodic, irregular disclosures which from time to time offer glimpses into the witches' cauldron.

A capitalist government's policies cannot be in harmony with the long-term welfare of a nation; it may be doubtful whether, in American conditions, they can be in **harmony** with that of the national capitalism as a whole. America exhibits the reign of capital in purer form, with less admixture of earlier historical elements, than any other country. But capitalism itself suffers from various discrepancies, between its present appetites in one part of the world or another and its more permanent well-being. Businessmen individually are concerned with the profits their next balance-sheet will show, not with collective long-range calculations. Writers like Schumpeter have argued from this that they are not really interested in "politics", or in influencing their **governments**.¹⁰ The fact is rather that they are mostly content to get their governments to back them, or allow them to go ahead on their own, each in their own province. In return for this, each will let the rest have their way likewise, without asking whether their doings in Guatemala, or Chile, are going to be good in the end for their joint welfare.

Any ruling class must have its impulses translated into action by a governing class, an administrative apparatus, such as American public life is singularly ill-fitted to provide. Growing up far removed from all other big Powers, the country developed only a makeshift diplomatic service. Henry James's Englishman, commenting on the dearth of respectable professions in the United States, added: "American diplomacy—that's not for gentlemen **either**."¹¹ During this century it has been overhauled somewhat, but until after 1945 there was no systematized body of aims to give it regular employment. "The nation had no foreign policy to guide it during the historic half-century in which the United States waged three wars", Walter Lippmann once wrote.¹² The Cold War supplied a rough and ready one, under cover of which decision-making, or the appearance of it, could be left in the heyday of American hegemony to a floating mass of individuals, of both parties or no party. They were the lawyers, bankers, officials, academics, whose consensus—as Buchan says—led America into Vietnam, and foundered **there**.¹³ This united wisdom, with its impressive stiffening of pundits from the universities, can be seen now to

have been not initiating real policies, but rationalizing American actions. Its function was to bestow what could pass for a philosophy and a programme on a welter of financial pressures. Behind the facade the quantum of serious thought and debate was scanty, all the more so by contrast with the luxuriance of American technology. How many angels can stand on the point of a pin has never been settled, but it would be safe to guess that most of the wise men ever consulted by the White House could find room there. America's actions can be more easily explained in terms of behaviourism than of political theory. Its most successful chairman was Eisenhower, who played golf and read Wild West stories.

Things could go on in this semi-automatic fashion because the real decisions were taken, piecemeal, by powerful bodies able to dictate in particular spheres. America is the homeland of the Lobby, or pressure-group, which in its public life has had the significance of the political party in Europe. Capitalism there is highly concentrated, and can be supposed to function, in moments of crisis or on issues fundamental to it, as a single super-boardroom. More habitually it may be thought of as a congeries of distinct power-centres, many of them with a strongly regional character like those within the Common Market: a federation of blocs of capital, resembling—and to an increasing extent superseding in real significance—the country's federal political structure. American democracy consists in other words of an unlimited arena for wirepulling—which may on occasion make it possible for some good as well as many bad things to be done quicker than they could be in England; measures taken for instance against tobacco-poisoning, or pollution of air or lakes. In terms of American relations with the outside, the result is far likelier to be bad. For a long time after 1948 Far Eastern policy was laid down by the crew of cranks and crooks known as the China Lobby; for longer still Roman Catholic pressure was able to distort American foreign-aid programmes by vetoing aid to population-control: it was one of the pressures to which Eisenhower succumbed most spinelessly.

Big business lobbies work on similar lines. So does an institution like the Pentagon, far stronger and clearer of purpose than the State Department, and closely interlocked with formidable business groups. It has had its own policies in many quarters. "Indonesia", a journalist reported during 1970, "is one of the many countries where the American State Department and the Pentagon wage their silent battles against each other".¹⁴ To keep such rivals in step is as impossible for the White House as it was for the papacy in olden days to smooth out the rancorous discords of Jesuit and Dominican and Franciscan; they too were often intense in the Far East. Presidents are indeed, as we have been taught lately, nearly as free to wage private wars as to conduct secret diplomacy; Johnson's orders for the bombing of Laos which

began in 1967 were not really brought to light until the Senate investigated them in August 1973. Few human beings, even from Texas, have ever known less about world affairs than L. B. Johnson, and such presidential decisions must be seen as in effect dictated by the generals. They imply that Washington has been at times as much under the military thumb as the Kaiser's Berlin. If America is destined ever to come under army rule, such as it has helped to impose on so many other countries, it is likelier to be through a creeping extension of this ascendancy than through a coup d'état.

Within the Pentagon itself factionalism survives (we may be grateful for it), despite the post-war unification of the services into a single "Defence" apparatus, and its further tightening up by Macnamara. Another feud rages, in the still murkier depths where America's hosts of secret agents proliferate, between the Central Intelligence Agency and the more select and secretive Defence Intelligence Agency.¹⁵ Which of these two is entitled to more credit for the counter-revolution in Chile in 1973 may be debatable. But in the vast *demi-monde* where men of the corporations and the agencies rub shoulders, collaboration must often have been fruitful. They practise similar methods, the businessmen in their industrial espionage against one another, and think on the same lines. They confabulated about how to get rid of Allende, and not by way of a mere intellectual exercise. As for the State Department, it was left, when Allende perished, in the happy position of being free to applaud the event without assuming responsibility for it. So we read that in the entourage of Tchaka the Zulu men were executed at the tyrant's slightest nod.

It is typical of our epoch that both the super-powers rely heavily on secret practices. Any regime that is growing away from the mass of its subjects, coming to be alien to them, is afflicted by a sensation of blindness and deafness, and resorts to these antennae for substitutes, pseudo-organs of sense. Moreover the publicity surrounding everything American that is not carefully concealed makes it incumbent on the government to conduct many of its doings through secret channels—

**"Masking the business from the common eye
For sundry weighty reasons,"**

as Macbeth explained to his trio of murderers. But with their prodigious growth and extraordinary ramifications, free from any coherent supervision, the CIA and its congeners must have acquired a corporate momentum and authority of their own. The CIA, above all, has come to represent the authentic, characteristic contribution of capitalist America to the management of international relations. It has many features of a state within the State, as armies had in aristocratic

Europe and Japan. It is often reminiscent of the Jesuit Order of old days, weaving its web of conspiracy everywhere. A Jesuit who left the Order a century ago alleged that some of his brethren were prepared to talk of killing a bad (i.e. an anti-Jesuit) pope;¹⁷ it may be assumed that at least as many CIA functionaries would be ready to eliminate a bad president.

Intermittent revelations of their sinister schemings astonish newspaper-readers, and must not seldom astonish the State Department, or the White House. CIA agents in India appear to have induced reactionaries in Tibet to provoke risings against China, so that China could be branded as an imperialist, and India turned against it.¹⁸ The Sino-Indian war of 1962 was the logical sequel. In Greece their complicity in the overthrow of parliamentary rule by the army has been widely suspected. In Thailand in 1973 after the fall of the US-sponsored military régime there was indignation over a discovery that the CIA had been forging reports to deceive the government, and the organization which had been set up in imitation of it was disbanded. South Korea has a CIA of its own, an apt pupil in the occult sciences. Democratic countries too are not always inhospitable to it. A former member of it is reported as saying that "the British Government has been quite content to allow the CIA to construct a headquarters in central London for no other purpose than the steady subversion of the African Commonwealth countries".¹⁹ Such a charge unfortunately cannot be dismissed as incredible.

How many of these plottings and plannings hold out any real gains to America, that is to American capitalism as a present and future whole, would be very hard to calculate, even if there were any responsible organ to undertake the task. Expenditure must be, even for the US, gigantic, an appreciable addition to the overhead costs of the hegemony. Some schemes that have been heard of, academic projects for instance financed by front-organizations, look perfectly childish, money thrown away. It is the instinct of a technological culture to think that anything and everything can be achieved by manipulation. We know too little about what types of individual are recruited into the secret services, but not many of them can be supposed capable of much mental exertion above the level of cunning.

Consensus politics meant agreement on the part of all concerned to pocket their shares of the proceeds without raising awkward questions. It could only last while American destinies seemed transparently manifest, and trade union boss and college dignitary and financier a single happy family, a *Volks-gemeinschaft* of the New World, fond like Hitler's of calling itself a "classless society". Since then American scholars have been doing something towards revising their vision of things, and laboriously arriving at more or less realistic views, familiar

to the Left a quarter-century ago, about such topics as the Chinese revolution. This revaluation may lead on towards national self-criticism, but only slowly and fitfully. American attitudes to the world cannot change radically until there is a real desire for a change in the structure of society at home. W. A. Williams was putting the cart before the horse when he wrote a dozen years ago that "Once free from its myopic concentration on the cold war, the United States government could come to grips with the central problem of reordering its own society."²⁰ Liberal criticism has remained too often anaemic, because it has politely reproached American foreign policies only with blunders or miscalculations, not with wickedness. This is the outlook that pervades Galbraith's record of his time as ambassador to India in the early 1960s;²¹ it was equally that of Eugene Black, a former president of the World Bank sent by Johnson to tour south-east Asia and talk about reconstruction. Writing in 1969, he was expecting disengagement and peace, to be followed by wonderful economic projects, without any regard to social or political **change**.²²

At the height of the protest against the Vietnam war it appeared as if the country really was turning over a new leaf at last, and labour breaking away from its old pro-war **leaders**.²³ But protest died down abruptly when the war was put on a more long-range basis, with no further call for American conscripts; so abruptly as to throw doubt on the possibility of any big modern country ever having a true change of heart, any more than a sensible foreign policy. Years of campaigning for emancipation left the bulk of Americans still very lukewarm about abolition of slavery when the Civil War started. When Lieutenant Calley was convicted at the end of 1971 for the massacre at My Lai, he was not presented by admirers with a sword of honour, as General Dyer was after his much bigger massacre at Amritsar in 1919, but he met with a great deal of public sympathy. There lurked in it a racialist refusal to believe that killing natives could be a serious misdemeanour, as well as a feeling that **Calley** was being made a scapegoat for a whole army which had been acting in pretty much the same way for years. The culprit's punishment has turned out to be not much more than nominal; in April 1974 the army discovered or invented "extenuating circumstances", and cut his dwindling prison sentence by half.

This lack of a moral awakening America shares by and large with the rest of the "free" world, its more conservative spokesmen at any rate. There was nothing in Professor **Buchan's** third lecture, on "The Troubled Giant", to suggest that the American conscience had anything to trouble itself over. Instead he seemed to find it natural, though regrettable, that the US should be labouring under "a sense of living in a thoroughly ungrateful world", where its well-meant efforts to be helpful have gone awry, and like other countries should be turning

towards "nationalism", or putting its own interests first.²⁴ The more paternal of its duties of hegemony no longer appear so urgent: capitalism has its aches and pains, but it looks by no means so frail as it did in 1945, and a return to more normal, i.e. more unfriendly, relations may well seem permissible.

It was inevitable that readjustment of American policies in any more benign form, especially towards the "colonial" world, would be limited and grudging. By the later 1960s readjustment of some sort was becoming a necessity: the question was how it could be carried out, and by whom. Critics who wanted change were apt to want far too much. Bureaucrats wanted too little. Capitalists were least of all qualified to see and do what was necessary, to trim the sails to shifting winds. Businessmen who enter politics with a real sense of vocation can be expected to be those fullest of the inbred dogmas of their class, and to be incapable of the detachment that was now needed. Forrestal was copying out a tragic speech from Sophocles, by a hero rejected and disregarded like himself, just before he committed suicide under stress of anxiety about the red veril. Dulles and Goldwater exhibited a kindred monomania.

Thoroughbred professional politicians, those to the manner born, do not read Sophocles or jump out of windows, and they will be more supple and adaptable, though they may be equally ruthless. Of this species President Nixon has shown himself an excellent specimen, and his landslide re-election in 1972, after four years of experiment and trial and error, was a well-earned tribute to his skill. He may have tarnished his performance by pursuing private gain with the same resolve and the same opportunism that he has brought to the service of American capitalism, and by reckoning himself too much above the law, as his country has so often put itself above international law. We all have our faults, and capitalist society must not expect all its virtues, the solid and the ornamental, combined in one man. An American head of state can hardly afford to be squeamish, or he would get no sleep for thinking of the things perpetrated every twenty-four hours to keep the flag flying. He needs a hide like that of Trollope's politician, proof against fire or steel. This presidential qualification the self-admiring, self-sufficient Nixon can claim in abundance; and if his mentality sometimes appears inexplicable, it may be understood as a compendium of the abnormal or pathological features of his America. He must often have resented his country's ingratitude, as it has resented the world's, and felt that he like Lt. Calley was being made scapegoat for sins as common as daylight. *Così fan tutti*. Within the limits of his mandate, and to the extent of his talents, somewhat of the vulpine order no doubt, he has deserved well of a people content to measure its greatness by the latest figures from Wall Street.

Nixon was the man of the situation, as Spaniards say. In Kissinger he found an assistant equally suited to the work in hand, whom he could make use of to run a *cabinet noir* diplomacy of his own, and circumvent the ponderous State Department, and then to take it over. Individuals of foreign origin have not seldom been employed by régimes facing unfamiliar, baffling problems, as Necker was by the Bourbon monarchy at its last gasp, or Stein by the Prussian monarchy after Jena. Nixon and Kissinger were both, as Professor Buchan said, "by temperament secretive and suspicious".²⁵ Only such a couple, unimpeded by any hard and fast principles, could have taken charge at such a time, and their twistings and turnings and divings were a necessary response to uncharted currents. They had to give up some things, while giving up as little as possible, but appearing abroad, though not at home, to be giving up more than they really were. The quickness of the tongue deceived the ear; America, which had been hoodwinked and bamboozled into the Cold War, now had to have the wool pulled over its eyes again as it was led out of the Cold War; it had to be led backwards, as it had been led by Roosevelt out of isolation into world power, or as Britain was led backwards out of Africa in the 1960s by flag-waving Tories, or France out of Algeria by de Gaulle. This art of turning horse-shoes back to front, to make a false trail, deserves a high place among the crafts of leadership.

There were many reasons for Nixon to make a *détente* with Russia and China his grand objective. In its pursuit alone he has risen at moments to something like true statesmanship. Deepening disrepute at home sharpened his eagerness for success. He could only make this his aim, however, because there was a prevalent feeling that the time was ripe for it. There was belated recognition that the country is not invincible, and its purse not bottomless. There was also the lure of fresh and boundless markets. Half a century ago the newly-founded Third International pronounced that "The United States sees in China and in Russia (especially Siberia) the markets to satisfy its gigantic need for expansion, and the fields to be won for American capital investment."²⁶ That need is far more overwhelming today; but there is room for thinking that post-1945 bans on trade with communist China and eastern Europe were disliked by many businessmen from the first.²⁷ They could not say so in public, for that would have told against the noisy hubbub of anti-communism which from other points of view suited them so well. They left it to the politicians to find a way out of the dilemma, and the politicians lacked the required finesse. They live by their tongues, and are often liable to commit their employers to more intransigent courses than they really desire. Nixon is "no orator", but as the shopkeeper said of his parrot when the customer complained of it not talking much, "he's a devil for thinking".

The Sino-Soviet quarrel helped him to make—or reciprocate—friendly overtures without loss of face. For years every good Maoist had been shouting *Collusion!* if a Russian and an American happened to sneeze at the same time. Mutual suspicions would be fanned by Nixon being on amiable terms with both sides; and while basking in this knowledge he could look forward to posing as leader or umpire of both halves of the world, by playing honest broker between Moscow and Peking, and inviting them to settle their differences out of court. At the same time he would be hoping to induce them both to cut off or cut down their aid and comfort to insurgents in the "free world". Each had shown itself quite willing to be friendly, for reasons of state, with the most repressive régimes, like those of Iraq or Pakistan; perilously willing, from the point of view of socialist principle. This flexibility may well have struck Nixon, as an example to be followed: diplomatic and commercial intercourse with the West might help to soften any doctrinaire antipathy to free enterprise still further.

By other "free" countries the halting movement towards *de'tente* has been watched with misgivings. The more brutally reactionary their governments, the more undisguisedly hostile these have been, because they owe their existence very largely to the Cold War, and a thaw might melt them. They will obstruct any accommodation with ingenuity and pertinacity, and with the help of the labyrinth of US secret and military agencies, with which they have innumerable links, and for which also *détente* bodes ill. In the novel written by Spiro Agnew after his sad fall from the vice-presidential pulpit whence he was wont to trumpet American righteousness, a band of Iranians intrigue to embroil America with Russia; as a novel it won little acclaim, but this at least was a highly realistic theme. A very convenient weapon of obstruction has been the Zionist campaign of vilification against the USSR. In more reputable quarters too, reservations about *de'tente* have been expressed. Professor Buchan was notably unenthusiastic. He trusted that Washington would not promote it at the cost of alienating allies who were "open and free societies as the United States herself is"—usual, without enumerating them, or indicating whether Greece, Turkey, Guatemala, and so on are among these Utopias. He shared the touching concern which the West has been showing for the welfare of Soviet intellectuals, though not for that of intellectuals in Guatemala, Turkey, Greece, and so on. Nixon, to do him justice, has always been able to rise above any sentimental concern with ill-used intellectuals anywhere.

Professor Buchan left Latin America out of his tour of the horizon, as of only peripheral concern. Any admirer of the hegemony does well to leave out Latin America; the cloven hoof has left too many imprints there. Because progressive public opinion has only fitfully made

itself felt on the Nixonian handling of external affairs, and because Latin America unlike Asia is remote from any chance of large-scale aid from either Russia or China, no real concessions or new deals have had to be contemplated. There have been some uneasinesses in recent years, with Vietnam undermining respect for the US everywhere, and communism burrowing in Cuba. Firm measures were required, and they have not been lacking. Today a bevy of right-wing dictatorships dominates the scene.

Rule by caudillo has old native roots, but the proximity of the US has been a potent factor in keeping it going, and making it more murderously effective, and spreading it from more primitive to more civilized areas, such as Uruguay used to be. It is all the more indispensable because it enables the continent to be kept in order without the US having to interfere too openly or blatantly. What may be called the Nixon amendment to the Monroe Doctrine, as extended since 1945 to cover every part of the globe inhabitable by capitalists, is that a degree of disengagement is required, and more must be left to local régimes able with American aid, material and moral, to hold the fort. This means that such régimes must be lavishly supplied with machine-guns, military advisers, secret police instructors, and the rest of the modern paraphernalia of government, and encouraged to use them "without mitigation or remorse".

As a consequence, government in Latin America has been increasingly militarized. Armies may it is true get out of hand sometimes, and march the wrong way. The Peruvian has for several years been showing a nationalist spirit and a taste for social reform highly unpalatable to Washington, and in April 1974 the Portuguese forces so far forgot their duty as to overthrow one of the most respectably right-wing dictatorships, equipped with the latest and most scientific torture-chambers, whose head had lately lain in Abraham's bosom, or made a state visit to England. As a rule, nevertheless, and particularly in the conditions of South America, armies as upholders of the status quo have furnished an equivalent to the fascist mass movements of interwar Europe. Under the hegemony, South American generals have been brought under regular political indoctrination. Most of those in the saddle in Brazil had a spell of training, clearly not wasted, in the US. Similar instruction has been imparted to receptive police forces; US agents have been convicted of giving lessons in electric torture. Formerly the great inquisitor and pillar of order was the Church; today there is far less need of it, as electricity replaces holy water, the machine-gun the crucifix. Colonial chickens often come home to roost, and Watergate revelations have shown that many of the illegalities familiar in police spying on natives have become part of official practice inside the US. Others can be expected to follow. An

ingenious American device for tapping five thousand telephone lines simultaneously has been rumoured; lasers and spy-rays and sky-cameras multiply; there may be a time coming when the myrmidons of the hegemony will listen to and record all the earth's heartbeats. For the experimentation now in train, Latin America provides the best laboratory.

Allende represented a special challenge, because with him Marxism had come into office legally, and it is an essential item of the American creed that this can never happen. It had to be demonstrated that it would not be allowed to happen; but Allende had to be got rid of by, or through, other Chileans. On 16 September 1970, after the election, Kissinger in his "now famous 'off-the-record' press briefing . . . almost openly invited the Chilean armed forces to prevent his accession".³⁰ They needed more time to prepare; in the meantime economic screws were tightened, and when the generals were ready to act it was with the certainty of US approval, and of financial assistance to follow.³¹ Their atrocities have disgusted some of the middle-class sympathizers who welcomed their advent, but not, apparently, any considerable number of Americans; one more symptom of a lagging moral consciousness, and the freedom from ethical restraints enjoyed by Nixon and his factotum. Their whole programme of readjustment rested its appeal exclusively on American self-interest; any awakening of progressive feeling would be an irrelevance or worse, a nuisance to be firmly brushed aside. Any expression of American displeasure at the mass murders in Chile would have halted them; but unlike Sir Richard Burton on his mission to Dahomey, with instructions to protest to King Gelele against human sacrifices, US representatives at Santiago have been silent. It has been too good an opportunity to be wasted for all subjects of the US protectorate over Latin America to be given a terrible warning.

The Chilean junta received constructive help from its Brazilian fellow-usurpers, with a decade's experience behind them of how to deal with opponents; one form it took was a platoon of experts in torture. Brazil has been elevated to the rank of America's trusted foreman, with responsibilities extending outside its own territory. Until shortly before Caetano's fall it was giving firm support to Portugal in Africa, and was enthusiastic for an anti-communist league of southern-hemisphere States, South Africa of course among them.³² (South Africa is another obvious candidate for a junior partnership: it has been straining every nerve to solicit one, and the Nixon administration has given signs of gravitating towards assent.) An impression has been spreading that in case of Chile, or any other reactionary country in South America, requiring armed aid against subversion, this would be forthcoming from Brazil, which has common frontiers with nearly all

of them, with Washington at its back with guns, dollars, and diplomatic umbrella.

From this point of view the supply to favoured armies if such items as submarines or the latest aircraft takes on a more logical aspect. They are useless for internal repression, and have often been sought merely as status-symbols, to tickle the rather childish vanity of the military mind. From early in 1974 it was rumoured that action was being planned in Washington against a now isolated Peru, which was coming under menaces from Brazil and Chile. Britain's Labour government was well aware of this when it decided to sell warships to Chile. One of its arguments, meant to be a clincher, was that jobs had to be made for Clydeside workers. Capitalism offers larger and larger numbers of workers a choice between making armaments, to be sold to any scoundrel with money to buy them, or unemployment. In much the same way society has always offered large numbers of women a free choice between prostitution and starvation. On 17 April the Scottish Trade Union Congress replied by unanimously condemning the sale.

Devolution of authority by the hegemony to a state like Brazil goes with a parallel process on the economic level, a building up of local industry. Brazil is a storehouse of raw materials now in demand, as well as of cheap labour, and European and Japanese capital has been flooding in, in the wake of American. Army rule, besides keeping the workers in their place, has provided a solid framework, or institutional core, round which all propertied or would-be propertied groups can gather and coalesce into an authentic bourgeoisie. By themselves these groups would be too inchoate, too heterogeneous, to sustain an industrial revolution, permeated as they are at one end of the scale with feudal anachronisms, at the other with left-wing intellectualism.

Whether Brazil and a few other chosen lands are destined to emulate Japan and enter the front rank of capitalism, cannot yet be foreseen. At any rate, while most of Latin America continues very backward, there are now quite big industrial pockets here and there, as in southern Brazil and Chile, Mexico and Argentina. Russia before 1914, with its tsarist police and foreign investors, was at a similar stage. To this extent, one socialist thesis is being weakened, namely that only socialist revolution is capable of leading retarded peoples into industrialism and progress. And if the process, on capitalist terms, is a painful one for the majority, socialist construction out of local resources must also be arduous. Industry helps to buttress conservatism in more practical ways too. Whereas over much of the continent, as of Asia, the only clients of the hegemony have been feudal landowners or traders of much the same kidney, industry generates its own more modern-minded affiliates. It creates a working class, a potential base for socialism, but at the same time a new-style middle class, virulently

anti-socialist. Classical Marxism greatly underrated both the size of the industrial middle classes, and their significance alike for progress or reaction; the new capitalism is everywhere grasping the importance of humouring them, and enlisting them among its auxiliaries. Thus the more industry a country acquires, the more vulnerable it becomes to US influence, the readier to attach itself to the hegemony.

Contradictions within capitalism, never purely economic, do not vanish when it extends itself into fresh fields and pastures new. When US capital breeds subsidiary industries in its "colonies", its object is to turn out cheaper goods there than it can produce at home, for the local market and others near by. But these markets quickly become inadequate, larger ones are needed, economic requirements may come in conflict with ideology. Brazil has been offering sugar to Russia and China; American-financed firms in Argentina have been clamouring for trade to be allowed with Cuba, so that they can sell cars there. In June 1974 Argentina made a big trade agreement with the Soviet Union. Since America itself is moving in the same direction, it cannot well forbid its satellites to do so. Its reluctant drift towards a lifting of bans on Cuba, not from any change of heart but under this roundabout influence of American capital abroad, is very typical of the country today. It is also testimony that Victorian faith in trade as the great peacemaker, the bringer-together of nations, was not always and altogether mistaken, grotesquely wrong though it has often been.

In 1971 the revolt of East Bengal against the domination of West Pakistan, which had exploited it as a colony ever since the country emerged in 1947, furnished a test of Nixonian prescriptions for Asia. It revealed deplorably little change in the philosophy of repression, but a highly curious dovetailing of it with the new tactic of an understanding with Peking. Erratic and heavy-handed, the new diplomacy imperilled thereby its aim of an understanding with Moscow.

Pakistan had quickly settled down to "stable" rule by army and bureaucracy, of the kind so welcome to America with its Metternichian worship of Order; all the more by contrast with an India disgracefully democratic and tolerant of socialists and non-aligned. Washington took Pakistan under its patronage, liberally bestowed guns and tanks on it, invested in its economy. The alliance never worked well, for reasons that some American commentators have lately explored,²² and Pakistan made a second, morgantic marriage with China—when such a thing was still anathema. Yet the flow of arms went on, as if by force of inertia, or as if Washington could not find it in its heart to deprive any right-wing dictatorship, however erring, of bullets—it would be like denying holy communion to a fellow-Christian. In 1971 the crisis took it by surprise. Why the myriad-faceted insect-eyes of its innumerable scouts and spies should leave it so much in the dark about what anyone

conversant with Pakistan could have told it, must seem strange. But insect eyes do not see clearly, and Americans in Pakistan lived in self-isolating seclusion, with food flown daily from Karachi to Lahore for fear of germs. American dread of germs in Asiatic water, and of political germs in the Asiatic air, must have some common psychological roots.

When East Bengal, led by Mujibur Rahman, finally demanded autonomy, General Yahya Khan—not only by name reminiscent of Swift's Yahoos—turned the army loose in a campaign of frightfulness which may have destroyed half a million lives and driven nine million refugees over the border into India. Ironically enough, Mujib and his followers had thought themselves sure of American sympathy. They were respectably middle-class, with a popularity free from taint of socialism that elsewhere in the "third world" has been so painfully hard to find. It could even be conjectured at the time that the Chinese were egging on Yahya Khan and his butchers because they feared an American design to detach Bangla Desh and turn it into an anti-Chinese base. Nixon was, on the contrary, already meditating an arrangement with China; but in the policies of a country such as America, in the hands of such men as him and Kissinger, the better things are bound to be mixed up with the sordid and brutal. As vice-president, Nixon had been a strenuous partisan of the policy of arming Pakistan to the teeth—or fangs. Possibly in the night-watches he indulged in fancies about Yahya Khan as another Abraham Lincoln, defying secessionist rebels and their foreign abettors. More practically, he was acting in the spirit of his doctrine of devolution. Any strong-arm régime prepared to help itself against subversion would be helped by America; and Pakistan like Brazil was a good specimen of the kind of country he looked to as buttress of order in its own region. Its bosses could easily play on fears that an East Bengal rid of their control would be a vacuum for communism to flow into.²⁴

Nixon had to brazen out a swelling chorus of condemnation, in Europe and in America itself where Senator Kennedy made himself the mouthpiece of protest. If Nixon and Kissinger privately thought it hypocritical of Americans, with so many My Lai's of their own behind them, to be making a fuss about massacres in Bangla Desh, they may have had some warrant. All the same, it was a welcome token of American opinion becoming more alive to the realities of power-politics and army rule. It is always easier to recognize sin in others than in ourselves. But a nation cannot find its way to virtue solely by condemning foreign vice. Nixon's crimes of 1971 did not hinder his electoral victory of 1972. And indignation about Bengal had few echoes about Chile in 1973. Meanwhile the doublings and twistings of Nixon and Kissinger in their efforts to evade the pressure on them

gave a good view of that pair of **artful** dodgers in action. The same talents and tricks required to manoeuvre America into some newer and better courses could be utilized to keep it tied up in old bad ones. They contended, with puzzling logic, that if they stopped equipping Yahya Khan with the means of killing Bengalis, they would lose the influence over him which they pretended to be using, or intending to use at some future time, in favour of moderation. It might equally be maintained that by making guns freely available to all criminals at home in the US the government is able to exercise a restraining influence over them, and keep the annual number of murders in Detroit to no more than five times the total in Ulster. On 14 October the Senate Foreign Affairs Committee voted to halt supplies to **Pakistan**. Nixon had already evaded a resolution of the House of Representatives, and doubtless counted on doing the same with this. The science of democratic government is, after all, knowing how to throw dust in the public's eyes for its own good.

Democratic America was joining hands with communist China to prop up Yahya Khan: elasticity, on both sides, could scarcely go further. Very typical of **Kissinger's** *modus operandi* was his visit to Yahya Khan at Islamabad, and his furtive trip from there by air to Peking. He like Dulles is always flying about the planet, but whereas Dulles clove the air like a knight of old on snorting warhorse, Kissinger flits to and fro like a witch on broomstick. The announcement of **Nixon's** forthcoming visit to Peking followed, as if of Birnam Wood coming to Dunsinane. It was designed to make both India and Russia turn pale; it had the opposite effect of pushing them together, despite many reservations on each side. On 9 August they signed a treaty which gave India the guarantee against isolation that allowed it to carry out its intervention in East Bengal in December, and end the reign of terror.

As if they had not done enough to jeopardise *détente* with Russia, **Nixon** and **Kissinger** at the last moment made a **clumsy** move of their own towards intervention, by moving a squadron of the Seventh Fleet into the Bay of Bengal, with an oblique threat of action at Chittagong "to protect US interests". They may well have had in mind the fraudulent **Tonking Bay** incident which gave President Johnson his pretext for bombing North Vietnam. India ignored the threat, and it fell flat. It threw a forbidding light none the less on the new diplomacy, and on the perils there must be when a **super-power's** policies are left to be conducted in such hide-and-peek, or hole-and-corner, fashion, because—as happened with the Kaiser's Germany—the country has been able to find no better way of managing them. Clearly the **Nixon** line of disengagement could turn into its opposite, deeper American involvement. The episode underlined also the undesirability of American

naval power being intruded into the Indian Ocean. India and most of its neighbours have continued to dislike this, as calculated to turn one more sea into a cockpit. Just as predictably, Britain has been offering facilities for a US naval base at **Diego** Garcia island.

Divers Indian princes bore the hereditary title of *Farzand-i-khas-i-daulat-i-Inglisiya*, or Favoured Son of the English Empire. Among Asian rulers who might aspire to a similar American title nowadays the Shah of Iran is prominent, and the rapid growth of his wealth and ambition must **help** to console Washington for the deflating of Pakistan. He is a despot of the contemporary type congenial to American tastes, no sleepy feudalist but a wide-awake businessman; he is understood to spend large sums on influencing opinion and politicians in the West, particularly in the US. A strong impression has been spreading in Iran and the Middle East that it is the Shah who is being armed and coached as guardian of order in his part of the world, with strong forces ready to quell subversion beyond his borders as uncompromisingly as he has quelled all protest inside them. At Teheran in the summer of **1973** a gathering of vultures took place, a conference of high-ranking CIA men.

Here again Nixonian calculations may be in for some rude surprises. Professor Buchan noted the risks the West is running by its game of flooding the Middle East with weaponry: it might usher in a generation of army officers impatient of antediluvian modes of government, **and** it might well end in war between Iran and the **Arabs**.³⁵ While the advanced states have more or less agreed that fighting among themselves is no longer worth the candle, new aspirants like Iran are ready to take it up. To the Shah and his clique their Arab neighbours, beginning with Iraq, offer more tempting targets than any Soviet windmills; just as Pakistan was always wanting to make a dash at India and Kashmir, instead of keeping its American powder dry for the Russians. There are oil rivalries among Arab rulers too. During 1973, before the war with Israel turned things another way, it looked as though the potentates of the Gulf were getting ready for a fight over undersea oil reserves. This irresponsibility of adolescent feudal-capitalist régimes is compounded by the irresponsibility of their elders and betters in loading them down with masses of what they jocularly call "military hardware". Unable to refrain from this lucrative trade, the US cannot very well try to restrain the others. This is one **prime way** in which the looseness and laxness of its policy-making stands in the way of the American mission to keep the world safe for capitalism.

It is in south-east Asia that the American hegemony has always met with the most determined resistance, beyond its own strength to subdue. In Dulles' day it tried to mobilize Europe for the crusade, and in the Korean war it did manage to scrape up some small auxiliary

contingents. In Vietnam it was left to fight virtually single-handed. Johnson gave the army a free hand, but the resort to unrestricted violence only discredited America, while its failure disheartened Americans. When Nixon took office the war had already gone sour; but he and the Pentagon were still hoping to win it, by widening the battlefield and finding back doors into North Vietnam.

For this the CIA—from whose ranks one could fancy Nixon to have graduated—had long been preparing the ground. Prince Sihanouk's overthrow came at the end of years of restless intrigue against him: in the eyes of the CIA, as of Dulles, the existence of a peaceful neutral Cambodia, owing nothing to their "protection", was something unnatural and indecent. In May 1970 Cambodia was invaded by South Vietnamese forces. Nixon was evidently in hopes that South Vietnam could not only be kept going, but could be made to help in policing Indochina as a whole. This move if successful could have linked up with the secret operations in Laos, the bombings and the enrolment of a mercenary force of hillmen by the CIA. The attempt misfired, however: the attack on Cambodia provoked not only sharp political protests but also, what Nixon would be far more sensitive to, a steep decline on Wall Street. War expenditure was beginning to be felt by the economy no longer as a pleasant stimulus, but as a poison, like arsenic prescribed in excess. Militarily too things went wrong.

There were still diehards in America like Senator Goldwater, who was bloodthirstily bent on war to the end and professed entire indifference to world opinion. He cared nothing about whether America was loved, he declared, so long as it was respected—by which he obviously meant *feared*.¹⁶ But American hegemony could not afford to present itself quite so naked and unashamed. Moreover in 1972 Nixon had to think of getting himself re-elected, and this meant finding a way to extricate himself, or appear to be extricating the country, from a war which some Americans were ashamed of and most were tired of, without admitting defeat. He was obliged to work towards withdrawal of US troops, and reliance on massive air bombardment. This proved unexpectedly successful in preventing the North Vietnam army from overrunning the South. Bombing techniques must have improved very greatly since the Korean war, where also the Americans had complete mastery of the air. They could not suppress guerrillas, but guerrillas could not capture towns. If, therefore, President Thieu were supplied with enough bombs, and could be taught how to use them, Washington might hope to keep him in power indefinitely. It would be a simpler matter to train him to keep the home front under control. In the recesses, as Burke said of Haider Ali, of a mind capacious of such things, Thieu had been devising his own ghoulish modes of dealing with enemies. His "tiger-cages", one of the horrors of our nightmarish

century, are said to have been put in shape for him by an American firm of designers, and aptly symbolize the programme of leaving it to native jailors to keep the flag of free enterprise flying.

The limited-liability policy followed the precedent set by Eisenhower, who took office under a necessity of ending the Korean war; he managed to make a draw of it, and then to consolidate South Korea as an American dependency, with a US garrison. Nixon's strategy of "Vietnamization" had to carry Eisenhower's maxim, "Set Asians to fight Asians", further. It went with the decision to abandon conscription in America, as a burden which the affluent society was unwilling to bear, and which was bringing grist to the anti-imperialist mill. No longer would the US send large armies of its own into "colonial" wars. Instead it would conscript more natives, through its local dictators. There has been an echo of the "Vietnamizing" idea in the Rev. Paisley's proposal to "Ulsterise" the war in Ireland, on the ground that "It will take Ulstermen to defeat the IRA."¹⁷

America was delighted to be left to forget all about Vietnam. In February 1974 a journalist recalled that five years earlier there were 700,000 Americans in south-east Asia, spending six thousand million pounds a year, yet now Vietnam had been "transformed, almost overnight, from a national obsession into a forgotten irrelevance".¹⁸ Nixon and Thieu were equally happy to be left to go on fighting their war. Kissinger had given one of his negotiating displays, and signed something that looked like a peace treaty, which Thieu scarcely pretended to take seriously. It was a fine exhibition of the tactics of making a great show of spring-cleaning, while leaving most of the dust to settle where it was before.

The tacticians could reckon comfortably on the shortness of public memory, but how far their bogus settlement will last is more doubtful. Vested interests have of course grown up round the Thieu government, battenning on corruption and the endless golden tide of dollars. But as compared with those accumulated by industrial growth, in a country like Brazil, or even South Korea, they are merely noxious weeds, like those Chiang Kai-shek depended on with such dismal success in the Chinese civil war. Here and in the neighbouring lands, those Balkans of eastern Asia, America cannot, even if it wished to, impose any liberalizing measures on men like Thieu and Park, who can keep themselves in power only by terror. Thailand has made a start at liberalizing itself, with the dismissal lately of the reigning military clique after student demonstrations. In South Korea too there is a militant student movement, largely Christian, whose members face chronic danger; if their country happened to be the Soviet Union, their names would ring round the world. In Laos, by the early months of 1974, America had reluctantly to call off its CIA bulldogs and leave the war to reach an

inglorious end; in Cambodia it was having to shore up a puppet regime very much on the defensive.

In the Middle East the **Nixon-Kissinger** system was to be put to its other grand test. There American hegemony was hampered from the first by one of those haphazard oddities that have often helped to shape imperial history: the presence in Palestine of an intrusive settler-population, an anomaly like the white colony in Rhodesia. Accidents of history determined that Israel should be built up into a warlike State by American arms and money. American prestige came to be tied to its success; and to many Americans, as well as to all Arabs and Russians, it represented a bridge-head of US power in the Middle East. It had many claims to be Washington's first choice as local partner or under-strapper. It showed a penchant for some of America's own methods of self-assertion. In January 1973, just after a massive bombing of Hanoi, Israeli planes were bombing villages in Syria. Before the October 1973 fighting some Israelis were proclaiming the right of the civilized world to take oil by force from Arabs who attempted to withhold it; and it cannot be doubted that the same thought was occurring to the Pentagon, and that there were "contingency plans"^H—as burglars nowadays call them—with a spirited part reserved in them for the Israeli army.

Unluckily there was the fatal objection that any employment of Israeli troops by the US would unite every tribe and sect of Arabs against them both. A policeman must have at least part of the public he is patrolling on his side. A Brazilian army helping to put down a left-wing revolt in Uruguay would have the wealthier Uruguayans on its side, in spite of some linguistic and temperamental disparity. Between the Vietnamese and their neighbours to the west the gulf is far deeper, a fact overlooked by **Nixon** when he launched his invasion of Cambodia; but it is trifling compared with that between Israelis and Arabs. By **backing** Israel through thick and thin, America goaded the whole region into those dangerous thoughts that the mission of its hegemony everywhere was to stifle. Without this, Soviet influence could scarcely have got a footing—a footing that has always been slippery, and not worth having except as a bar to America covering the Middle East with war-bases.

When it came to the point of **Nixon** seeking a *modus vivendi* with Moscow, American interests suffered afresh, because Zionism like a **barking** Cerberus stood in the way. In the second half of 1970 Washington was reported to be more and more annoyed at Israeli outcries about alleged Egyptian violations of the last cease-fire agreement, because these outcries were taken as an attempt to frustrate any compromise between America and the USSR. If the world wants peace, Mrs **Meir** once declared, Israel does not intend to be the paschal lamb. The alternative, that the rest of the human race should risk being

made the sacrifice for Israel's survival, was evidently quite acceptable to her, and to Zionism. Small tough peoples afire with *sacro egoismo* always try to set one big Power against another, as Serbia did in 1914.

Altogether, America's wholesale, uncritical, and hugely expensive backing of the wrong horse—from the point of view of its own fortunes in the Middle East—has been the supreme example of how a lobby, a sectional interest, can acquire a **stranglehold** over US foreign policies in its chosen field. The Algerian *colons* had zealous allies in France, the Rhodesian settlers had and have in Britain, but since the days of **Sinbad** and the Old Man of the Sea there has never been anything equal to the loyal American devotion ensured to Israel by Zionism in America. Its propaganda and influence, through a thousand capillary ducts, have been marshalled with the same redoubtable skill as the Israeli army. As a result, American policy in the Middle East has for many years been Zionist policy, just as in the Far East for years it was China Lobby policy, or in Guatemala United Fruit Company policy. After the 1973 fighting Israel accused Europe, with remarkable effrontery, of letting itself be "blackmailed" by the oil-rich Arabs. In reality it is Israel that has all along, through Zionism, blackmailed the West. In reality also, no policy could have been more unfavourable to Israel, on a broad view of its future.

The latest Middle Eastern war showed America's position blowing up in its face. **Nixon** and Kissinger went on backing Israel, as in 1971 they went on backing Pakistan: these indiarubber men have been astonishingly rigid and conventional until hard facts have jolted them out of their grooves and forced them to manoeuvre. Again, in all this they faithfully epitomize their country. Threats emanated from Washington, aircraft-carriers and marines were deployed. Finally, on **25 October**, all US forces were put on alert, as a menace to Russia. It was a repetition on a more dangerous scale of the crudely theatrical gesture two years before in the Bay of Bengal. World peace was being gambled with in an effort to cover up failure—and, more freakish still, to distract attention from the latest Watergate scandal. Meanwhile America had been making Europe its accomplice in its private war by using NATO bases as **supply-dumps** for Israel; true, Europe had invited such treatment by letting Portugal use NATO equipment for years for bombing African villages. When European governments jibbed at this flagrant misuse of the hegemony for a totally irrational purpose, they were reprimanded for not standing loyally by their leader. Whatever **Nixon** and **Kissinger** have brought into American

the most cheerful alacrity in falling in with the Zionist outcry, and orders from Washington. Its leaders (and the Liberal party's) perorated as fatuously as if Israel were the brightest jewel in the British crown, instead of one of a good many blots on the imperial record, and loudly demanded arms for it. Fortunately (for once in a way) the Tories were in power, and the Foreign Office (to give the devil his due) seems to have a wholesome mistrust of Zionism. But there was an unedifying spectacle of Labour and Liberal spokesmen, and Tory MPs with insecure seats, competing for Zionist votes; it threw into relief one of the weak spots of parliamentary democracy. Campaigning by minority groups has been indispensable for bringing about all kinds of reforms. But Britain is now faced, as the US has long been, with electioneering by multiple national groups, which differ from political or social movements in being concerned, not with principles of right and wrong, but with pushing the claims of some foreign people or State, wrong or right. In 1971 West Pakistanis in Britain were mobilised to demonstrate in favour of the villainous Pakistan government and its terroristic rule in East Bengal. None of our national minorities, from the earliest, the Irish, to the latest, can or should be silenced. But their political interventions ought to be seen clearly for what they are, and none of them should be allowed to speak in the name of British national parties, as was happening last year.

Nixon and Kissinger were left with the task of rigging up some sort of settlement for the Middle East which, like the one in Vietnam, would look like a genuine compromise, while giving away as little as possible. For this school of statesmanship short-term effects, the *trompe-l'oeil* arts of the showman, are the chief stock in trade. Their great asset was the undignified haste of Sadat to find an excuse for breaking with Egypt's old protector Russia, and enroll himself as a campfollower of America; one more reminder that America could have had a very easy time all along in the Middle East, but for its Israeli encumbrance. Kissinger gave a spectacular display of darting to and fro between Tel Aviv and Damascus, a diplomat on a flying trapeze, to rig up a second cease-fire, and Nixon gratefully took a holiday from domestic unpleasantnesses to make a triumphal tour of the Middle East. At Cairo it was a true Roman holiday, with the multitude making the welkin ring with its applause. *If Caesar had stabbed their mothers, they would have done no less* . . . sad proof of how little political education Nasserite rule and Soviet patronage have given the Egyptians in all these years.

The evident aim has been to make it appear, as in Vietnam, that the trouble is over, banished by Richard Nixon the exorcist, and the public can go back to sleep, as it is always so desirous of doing. A lasting settlement of Palestine issues is impossible without considerable with-

drawals by Israel; Israel cannot be made to budge so long as the Zionist phalanx in Washington refuses to do so; a president under the shadow of impeachment is very ill qualified to tackle the incubus. Zionism continues to work unchecked against *détente*, as a kind of "revisionism" fatal to its more extravagant demands, by a wild, whirling campaign of anti-Soviet propaganda, and by obstructing the trade agreement due to be made with the Soviet Union. To be sure, the Soviet government's conduct lays it open to some of these attacks; but the "free world" has lamentably little moral right to make them.

Recriminations went on between Europe and America, each resentful of the other acting without consulting it. There were threats to remove American troops from Europe, leaving it to be gulped down by the Russian shark. On 14 March Kissinger made some sort of apology for the vivacity of his diatribes, but left no doubt of his severe displeasure; on 19 March Nixon deplored some indiscreet talk by Congressmen, but added that "there is growing in America a new sense of isolation after Korea, after Vietnam". All this suggested the advent of a "polycentric" management of the "free world", such as the communist camp has been fumbling towards. It would fit the mood of ordinary people, for whom in both camps the idea of any "leading nation" has ceased to carry conviction, in the same way that political leadership inside most countries—socialist as well as capitalist—has lost its gloss.

All the same, the progress of communist governments (as distinct from parties) towards equality of status has so far been unpromising. Western Europe has learned some things from the US, and ought to have some things to teach in return, but it has first to strike out some common outlook, or working hypothesis, of its own,—and not a sterile anti-Soviet one, such as the Chinese showed their hopes of when they welcomed Mr Heath in Peking in June as rapturously as Mr Nixon was welcomed in Cairo, and about as rationally. Europe's united front after the 1973 war fizzled out quickly under Washington's frown. France for a moment emerged as genuine defender of European self-respect; unluckily it has done far too little in other ways to earn European confidence, having been far too egotistic, too petulant, too unscrupulous in its sales of arms. Britain and Germany scuttled, leaving the French in the lurch; and soon Labour was back in Downing Street, in its familiar posture of the yokel pulling his forelock to the Yankee squire. Its flight from Europe may have stirred some memories in Washington of how in 1814, when the US was at war with Britain, there was talk in New England of seceding from the Union and rejoining the Tory motherland.

We are left with an erratic, unreformed America, which has made only a beginning at breaking away from its recent past. In most respects Nixon and Kissinger have done no more than try to plug a leaky hull,

by methods as hasty and unsavoury as those of the celebrated *plumbers* set to work in Washington by Nixon to stop leakages of unsavoury information. On the whole the balance-sheet of their stewardship has been a disastrous one, so far as any prospects of a better future are concerned. Capitalism still holds sway over most of its empire, but the cost in repression, violence, bloodshed, grows more enormous year by year. Only an extraordinary blindness allows its apologists to go on talking as if all the tyranny on earth belonged to the Soviet Union.

Against any more radical revision of American policies, the blockages are many. There is some formidable body to bar the way to any and every reform, at home and abroad. All American citizens' lives are at risk because any of them can buy any guns they like: everyone knows it, but it goes on because a strong lobby defends it, and other strong forces do not challenge this because they do not want to be challenged in their own citadels. So long as this "Live and let live"—or *die*—philosophy prevails, the great corporations will exercise something like the power of a feudal baronage over the economy and the national life. We can only take refuge in the thought that American history has not come to an end; and although any prospect of a socialist United States is as remote as ever, there is room within the confines of free enterprise for more sensible and far-sighted choices, as well as less.

If Europe has found itself, to its surprise, better off without its colonies, it may not be out of the question for the US to conclude that it could do better without its present "empire". It *might* decide to help the backlands to grow and prosper, instead of keeping them stagnant. It has in fact begun doing this, here and there, though in a haphazard and politically reactionary style. It was in some such style that better living standards first reached the masses in the US itself, higher wages and police clubbings mixed up together. America did after all pioneer the capitalism of high wages and buoyant home markets, or what might be called "prosperity capitalism" by comparison with the "welfare capitalism" that has been the line of development of a more paternalistic Europe. Capitalism has shown itself capable of variation and evolution much wider than either conservatives or Marxists have been **willing** to admit. For America to take the lead in raising the living standards and purchasing power of the backlands would be a repetition of that "big leap" on a broader stage; though it could and should be undertaken a great deal more deliberately, and more humanely.

Any such better tendency may be reinforced by expanded commercial intercourse with the communist countries, and—more remarkable, and calling for much new thinking on both sides—large-scale investment of Western capital in the USSR. If this happens, capitalism will be taking on another novel role. It will be learning, willy-nilly, that the communist countries now represent far more worth-while customers

than if they were still languishing in their pre-communist stagnation; and possibly coming to admit that socialism may, in some contexts at least, be better qualified than free enterprise to guide backward countries into modernity. Hitherto America has been deafened by its own blood-and-thunder denunciation of communism, unable to recognize its strength as an ideal holding out to many lands the hope of a new life. Marxism, it must be added, was for long equally unable to perceive the continuing productive energy of capitalism, especially in the US where the public esteem that free enterprise enjoys is not wholly the result of indoctrination. Russia is now realizing its want of some of the achievements of Western technology; its government is still reluctant to admit the moral force of liberalism—less surprisingly, seeing how often this is overlaid by Western hypocrisy.

Any speculations about America renouncing imperialism may seem to be ruled out of court by recollection that Earl Browder, then secretary of the CP, indulged in them so hopefully about the end of the Second World War, and was soon proved disastrously mistaken. Even so, the US has gone through a good many chastening experiences since then, and civilization is thirty years older. When it is argued, as by many Marxists it is, that capitalist America is subject to a categorical imperative driving it towards imperialism and war, the more necessitarian element in Marx's thinking is visible, not to say something of Darwin's also. If it was not too bold an effort of human will to set out to transform feudal China into a socialist society, it cannot be beyond the bounds of reason to hope that America may be turned into a peaceful society.

But any effort to foretell, any indulgence in the American pseudo-science of Futurology-or astrology, as it used to be called—grows steadily more hazardous. In our day variables like new technical discoveries may at any time transform situations, as human accidents of birth and death have always done. All that can be attempted is a realistic weighing up of alternative possibilities and their consequences; this, if it can grow into a habit of nations, may make the difference between human survival and extinction.

NOTES

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3. G. Reimann, *Patents for Hitler* (London ed., 1945), pp. 16-17.
4. See e.g. *The Guardian* (London, 14 November 1973).
5. *The Listener*, 15 November 1973, p. 656.

6. C. A. Thomson and W. H. C. Laves, *Cultural Relations and U.S. Foreign Policy* (Indiana University, 1963), p. 125.
7. H. G. Gelber, *The Australian-American Alliance. Costs and Benefits* (London, 1968), p. 130. Cf. the critique of the alliance in J. G. Gregory, *The West and China, an historical perspective* (Melbourne, 1971), pp. 15ff.
8. *The Listener*, 6 December 1973, pp. 776, 778.
9. *The Listener*, 15 November 1973, p. 654.
10. See J. A. Schumpeter, *Capitalism, Socialism, and Democracy* (3rd English ed., 1950), p. 55.
11. Henry James, *The Portrait of a Lady* (1881), Ch. 20.
12. W. Lippmann, *U.S. Foreign Policy* (London, 1943), p. 24.
13. *The Listener*, 29 November 1973, pp. 742-3.
14. *The Guardian*, 21 May 1970.
15. My colleague Mr O. D. Edwards, who knows America well, pointed this out to me. I am grateful to him for reading my draft and giving me many comments and suggestions.
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19. Victor Marchetti, summarized by S. Winchester in *The Guardian*, 14 January 1974.
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21. J. K. Galbraith, *Ambassador's Journal. A Personal Account of the Kennedy Years* (London, 1969).
22. E. R. Black, *Alternative in Southeast Asia* (London, 1969).
23. See P. S. Foner, *American Labor and the Indochina War* (New York, 1971).
24. *The Listener*, 29 November 1973, p. 740.
25. *Ibid.*, p. 742.
26. Theses of the Executive Committee, 15 August 1921.
27. This is another point that I owe to Mr O. D. Edwards.
28. *The Listener*, 29 November 1973, p. 742.
29. *The Listener*, 13 December 1973, p. 816.
30. C. Roper, in *The Guardian*, 20 March 1974.
31. Cf. R. Miliband, "The Coup in Chile", in *Socialist Register*, 1973, p. 459.
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33. See e.g. W. J. Barns, *India, Pakistan, and the Great Powers* (London, 1972); W. Wilcox, *The Emergence of Bangladesh* (Washington, D.C., 1973).
34. A Pakistani apologist, S. M. Burke, makes use of this argument, in *Pakistan's Foreign Policy. An Historical Analysis* (London, 1973), p. 396.
35. *The Listener*, 13 December 1973, p. 817.
36. Television, 8 January 1973.
37. *The Guardian*, 25 April 1974. On Nixon's idea of disengagement, cf. R. Butwell, *Southeast Asia Today and Tomorrow* (2nd ed., London, 1969), pp. 198ff. T. D. Allman, in *The Guardian*, 6 February 1974.