

## Editorial

# The Moratorium, the War and the Empire

**T**HE MASSIVE ERUPTION of national anti-war sentiment touched off by the Viet-Nam Moratorium is an historic event. It represents an unprecedented broadening of anti-war protest, as well as a vindication of the young militants who fought at the Oakland Induction Center, massed at the Pentagon, were bloodied in Chicago and over the years built a tenacious resistance to the war and its institutions. When the militants were a minority, their case against the war and their prescription for ending it ("Withdraw the Troops Now") were scorned and ignored by the establishment-controlled media and by all of the "respectable" politicians. The American people, confused and manipulated by official lies about the nature of the war and the chances of victory, suppressed their own nagging doubts.

But on the eve of the Moratorium, a new perspective on the war and its domestic opponents revealed itself among the guardians of the nation's truth. From the major magazines to the TV networks and newspapers, the mass media were unnaturally sympathetic in their advance coverage—and hence not a little responsible for the Moratorium's success. Time itself carried a highly sympathetic cover story on the coming event which displayed a "V" sign and asked: "Will today's Vietnams become tomorrow's majority?"

Nor were the media alone. Hitherto hawkish, silent or conspicuously cautious political figures such as the Republican governor of Massachusetts joined the protest so as not to be left off the Moratorium bandwagon. There was even the improbable spectacle of former Under-secretary of Defense and attorney for General Dynamics, Roswell Gilpatric, a major figure in the Pentagon during much of the escalation, reading the list of war dead in a Moratorium-sponsored activity.

To understand this noteworthy transformation of attitudes on the part of the establishment toward a war which they had promoted and defended from the outset, one has to go back to the early days of 1968—before the McCarthy crusade, before

Chicago—to a time when the sage of the Pedernales appeared to be a permanent fixture in the White House for the next five years. It was the National Liberation Front of South Viet-Nam which upset the Potomac oracles early in 1968 with the trauma of the Tet offensive. Tet shattered once and for all the myth of American invincibility, creating serious divisions within the Johnson Administration, and making it clear to the American public for the first time that Viet-Nam was a bloody and bottomless pit.

This military debacle, coupled with mounting domestic inflation and an international monetary crisis in which the diversion of resources and the flow of dollars to Viet-Nam were critical factors, caused many Viet-Nam hawks in the higher business circles to begin a reappraisal of the war. Their new thinking was reflected in a Wall Street Journal editorial at the time which warned that by continued escalation in the face of these crises, President Johnson was endangering the stability of the entire "free enterprise" system for the sake of one outpost in Asia (and one job in Washington).

This is not to say that the old hawks should now somehow be refused permission to call for troop withdrawals, or the press to help build anti-war demonstrations—indeed these shifts and their consequences are genuine victories. But the men and their motives should be clearly understood so that the nature and scope—and the dangers—of such victories may be perceived.

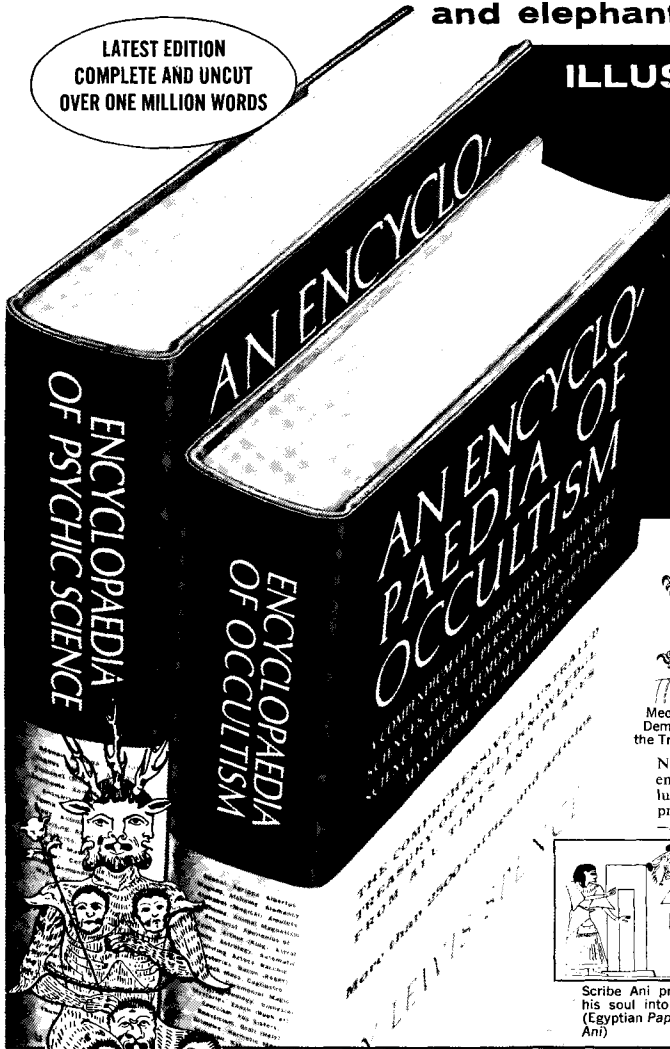
The primary change in establishment policy from which all else naturally flows was the shift that led Lyndon Johnson to forsake the presidency and move from escalation to disengagement from the war. The immediate cause of Johnson's action was the fact that a group of the most powerful men in America changed their minds about the war. Johnson bowed to them, and since then men and events seem to have fallen gradually but inexorably into line. The basic story of that critical juncture in March 1969 has emerged from various

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inside accounts in Newsweek and elsewhere.

On March 25 and 26 an extraordinary assembly, called the Vietnam Senior Advisory Group, convened in Washington, D.C. The participants might best be described as trustees for the American Corporate Empire; aside from the generals (some of whom, like Maxwell Taylor, had retired into corporate gray flannels), they were Wall Street lawyers, financiers and industrialists with a primary concern in the international sphere: Dean Acheson of Covington and Burling; Douglas Dillon of Dillon, Read & Co., investment bankers for Standard Oil's Asian division; George Ball, chairman of the international division of Lehman Brothers, one of the giants of the investment banking field; Robert Murphy of the Morgan bank; Arthur Dean, successor to John Foster Dulles at Sullivan and Cromwell, Wall Street's premier law firm; and John J. McCloy, the dean of the Wall Street establishment, a former chairman of the Rockefellers' Chase Manhattan Bank, and former chairman of the board of the Ford Foundation.

After two days of briefings, a majority of the participants concluded that a strict cost accounting of U.S. interests dictated a reversal in the nation's Viet-Nam policy. In the words of Defense Department official Townsend Hoopes, Dean Acheson (who was sitting next to the President at lunch) summarized the consensus by saying that "military victory in Viet-Nam was impossible under conditions consistent with U.S. interests and that the fundamental U.S. purpose should be to get out rather than further in."

Until this meeting was held, Johnson had been planning to present a hawkish major policy speech to the American people. One week afterward, however, a reluctant LBJ went before the TV cameras to announce the first unilateral American de-escalation—and his intention not to run for a second presidential term.

What must be recognized about this de-escalation movement is that the concessions of the elite have been wrrenched from them by people committed to making the war too costly for them to pursue. This has meant unparalleled determination and sacrifice on the part of the Vietnamese, for it is they who defeated the U.S. attempt to subjugate their country.

Arch-hawk McGeorge Bundy, who left the Johnson Administration to head the Ford Foundation, summed up the costs of the war last year when he came around to calling for substantial troop withdrawals. "It is plainly unacceptable," he said, "that we should continue with an annual cost of \$30 billion and an annual rate of sacrifice of more than 10,000 American lives. It is equally wrong to accept the increasing bitterness and polarization of our people. There is a special pain in the growing alienation of a generation which is the best we have had."

The Americans to whom a debt of gratitude is owed for forcing a reversal of Viet-Nam policy—the true American heroes of the Viet-Nam war—are precisely those who pain McGeorge Bundy most. They are the young militants who forced the issue, "polarized our people" and would not allow the crimes of Viet-Nam to leave America placid and undisturbed. To speak of a debt of gratitude, however, is not merely to demand a courteous sentiment. In the most concrete terms it means defending those who are still paying the price of having been out in front—in particular the Conspiracy Eight now being prosecuted in Chicago under the "anti-riot" provision of the 1968 Civil Rights Act for their part in the demonstra-

tions that occurred during the 1968 Democratic Convention.

The decision on the part of the Justice Department to stage this trial is a warning that repression will not cease with the ending of the war. On the contrary, the repression is likely to grow more serious as the war ends and the government attempts to go after radicals, presuming them to be vulnerable because they will no longer be protected by anti-war sentiment. The masses of people who now support the anti-war movement are expected to sink back into complacency, leaving the radical leaders standing out in front once again, isolated and easily picked off. This, along with various soothing concessions, for example on the draft, is expected to prevent the lessons of Viet-Nam from being transformed into more broad-based radical action. Our defense of the Chicago Eight must be made not merely on a civil liberties basis; it must be a defense of their vision of a militant movement willing to take to the streets to fight the system of imperialism that makes Viet-Nam possible.

**T**HE DISILLUSIONMENT OF THE establishment policymakers over Viet-Nam goes no deeper and no further than the cost disadvantages they see in the war. "To say that the burden of this war must now be lifted," says Bundy, "is not at all to say that it should never have been fought." What this means is that in the coming months there will be an important but often subtle and hidden struggle for the minds of the new found mass constituency of the Moratorium. There are those among the Moratorium's leadership who would like to mobilize that constituency for electoral politics-as-usual, without making any fundamental challenge to the powers and interests that led us into Viet-Nam in the first place.

What the crises of the last decade have taught us, however, is that what is needed is not another changing of the guard but a changing of the system. The job of the radicals in the Moratorium is to convince the new protesters that Viet-Nam is no simple aberration, but rather the natural outgrowth of a system that seeks to lock the third world into a permanent state of indentured servitude.

"Changing the system" must first of all mean a liquidation of the global empire that has grown to such mammoth proportions in the post World War II era. If that empire is not broken up, then withdrawal from Viet-Nam will merely mean cutting losses in one war to save energy for the next. The Korean War, it will be remembered, was ended with great fanfare 13 years ago. But the U.S. remained an imperial presence in Korea and the only foreign power with troops there —and Viet-Nam was not long following. A similar attempt will now be made to cool off the Viet-Nam war without leaving Viet-Nam. Or Thailand. Or Laos.

No major political figure of either party, from McCarthy to Kennedy, McGovern to Lindsay, has yet called for a withdrawal from the American Empire. Yet that is the real key to peace. Everything else can only be illusory. If the resources of the underdeveloped world are not left to those nations to control and develop, and if the U.S. military arm is not withdrawn—not only from Southeast Asia, but from all of Asia, Africa and Latin America—then we are destined to walk down the already visible path of national suicide, and even perhaps global annihilation.

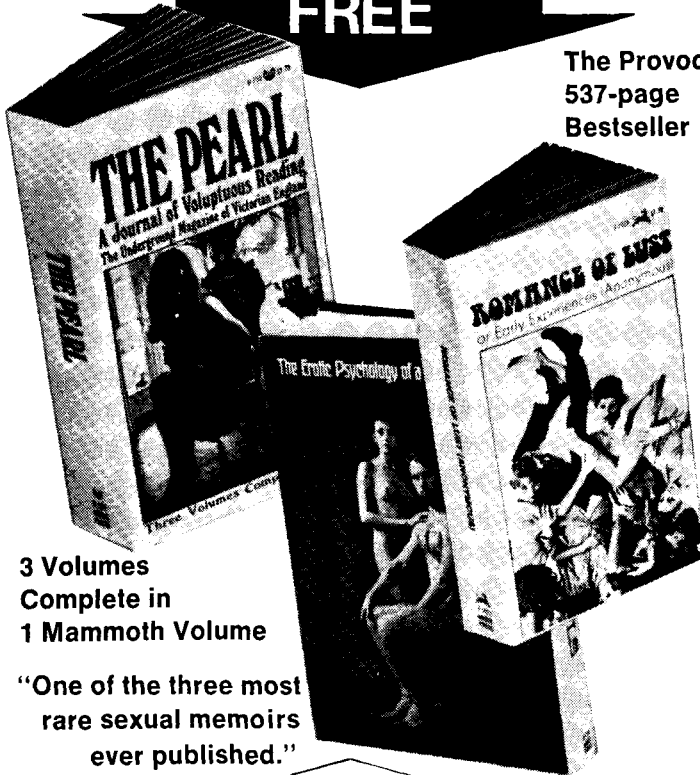
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