

WASHINGTON

POLITICAL HORRORS

BY KENNETH CRAWFORD



Not the least of the horrors of the Vietnamese war is what it is doing to American politics. Both critics and defenders of the war are hypocritical. Both talk about negotiation knowing that there is no basis for negotiation now and probably won't be in the immediate future. This is because the U.S. and its allies are unwilling to cede South Vietnam to the Communists and the Communists are unwilling to settle for less.

What the higher flying doves really want is withdrawal, regardless of consequences, but they don't dare say so. What the more ferocious hawks want is true victory, regardless of the risks incurred, but few of them dare say so, either. The result is debate conducted in a kind of double-talk.

The doves pretend that Johnson and Rusk could make an acceptable peace if they only wanted to, knowing that this isn't so. Administration officials, for their part, keep talking about their persistent efforts to negotiate, implying that they still hug some hope of early success, knowing that they don't. The doves take out their frustrations on the President. The more genteel question his courage to make peace. The less genteel call him "murderer." When he rises in his own defense he is accused of suppressing free dissent.

LOGIC A CASUALTY

Since the war is central to the politics of 1967—and threatens to remain so through 1968—serious political dialogue makes only slightly more sense than the demonstrations of student mobs. Decent regard for fact, logic and the amenities of argument are already war casualties. Examples turn up almost everywhere.

Item: An American woman writer, in an article for the Manchester Guardian Weekly, says: "The same Americans who detest and protest the war in Vietnam are staunch partisans of the war on poverty. A true hawk sees no need to waste money on the poor, to pamper the lazy thieving lot..." Senator Fulbright, the leading dove, is a zealous champion of the poor? The lady engages in comic-strip demonology, like Little Orphan Annie.

Item: A book-promoting novelist, appearing on a Boston TV program, deploras Sen. Robert Kennedy and all who, like Kennedy, merely advo-

cate a cessation of the bombing of North Vietnam. The novelist's own solution? Withdraw into urban redoubts. This is a thoroughly discredited proposal, even though recently revived by Senator McGovern. As strategists clearly see, the redoubts would soon be invested, brought under fire by the long-range mortars the Communists now have, and the whole countryside would be left at the mercy of the Viet Cong.

Item: A distinguished commentator on foreign affairs feels that the trouble with foreign relations generally is that policies are made by politicians. They should be made, instead, by "wise and disinterested" citizens of the world. Commentators? Foreign policy associations? Foreign affairs are too arcane to be devised as well as executed by elected officials?

ZHUKOV'S THREAT

Item: A respected columnist reports that a prominent Russian, apparently Yuri Zhukov, the political commentator for Pravda, reiterated on a recent U.S. visit that the Russians would arrange for peace negotiations if the bombing of North Vietnam were stopped. In Washington, Zhukov made no such promise. Indeed, he was so threatening in his talk about Vietnam that he came close to restoring the kind of chill in Soviet-U.S. relations that followed the 1961 Kennedy-Khrushchev talks in Vienna.

Item: The staff of the Senate GOP Policy Committee manages to publish a "working paper" questioning whether the U.S. has a valid self-interest in Vietnam, thus atomizing the considered party position of bipartisan responsibility in support of the President's war policies, the posture best calculated to be profitable in 1968. If the war by that time were won, the GOP could share the credit. If the war were stalemated, the party could say: "They have failed through no fault of ours; now let us try."

Item: Senator Aiken, the venerable Vermonter, says the Johnson Administration can't "see the interest of the nation except in terms of its own survival" and so can never make peace in Vietnam. This is so cheap an assumption that it can be made about almost anyone, including Aiken, who doubtless wants to be re-elected.

NATIONAL AFFAIRS

... That's his patriotic duty ... He's placing his family, you know, at the mercy of the D.A.'s office because he must clear his conscience ... and as an upstanding citizen."

'Check Back': Beaubouef told Loisel that he really knew nothing about any plot concerning Ferrie or the assassination. But he offered to take the "truth serum," hypnotism, polygraph tests, anything. He had one question. Would they still give him the job if he turned out to be of no help to them? Loisel said: "I'll have to check back with the boss."

When the D.A.'s men learned that the meeting in the attorney's office had been recorded on tape, Loisel and a colleague returned to threaten Beaubouef. He was told if he got in the way he would be shot. Then they hauled him down to the courthouse and made him sign a statement that said, in effect, that he didn't consider the offer of \$3,000 and a job as a bribe. They told him bluntly that they had "enough on him" to ruin him. Today, with a wife, an 11-month-old son and a job, Beaubouef is as worried about the existence of some pictures the D.A. holds over his head as he is about physical harm.

So it goes in New Orleans, where several sit on the hot seat while Garrison thrashes around for "evidence" to implicate them and keep himself in the headlines. In the latest wrinkle last week the district attorney brought into his investigation two men named Oswald (Julius J. and William S.) whose only connection with the assassination seemed to be that they worked at a New Orleans coffee company that once employed Lee Harvey Oswald.

Composite Conspirator: In the beginning, Garrison theorized that Lee Harvey was an anti-Castro agent whose original mission was to kill the Cuban dictator. When Oswald could not get to Cuba, the D.A. charged, the plot "turned around" and the plotters (angered over the Bay of Pigs fiasco) set up Oswald in the Kennedy killing. But Garrison's theory has undergone so many permutations that his composite conspirator now would probably be equal parts Oswald, homosexual, right-wing extremist, FBI agent, Cosa Nostra hood, CIA operative and Russian double agent.

There is still some feeling in New Orleans that Big Jim must have something. But now that the facts of the real "conspiracy" are beginning to emerge there, Garrison seems to be losing his confidence. He is having trouble sleeping, and he says that a hired "torpedo" from Havana is stalking him.

The real question in New Orleans is no longer whether Garrison has "solved" the assassination. The question is how long the people of the city and the nation's press will allow this travesty of justice to continue.