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A Dire View of the United States From Abroad

How does the United States look to the rest of the world these days? The Times put the question last week to the eminent British historian, Arnold J. Toynbee. The following is his reply.

LONDON — To most Europeans, I guess, America now looks like the most dangerous country in the world. Since America is unquestionably the most powerful country, the transformation of America's image within the last 30 years is very frightening for Europeans. It is probably still more frightening for the great majority of the human race who are neither Europeans nor North Americans, but are Latin Americans, Asians and Africans. They, I imagine, feel even more insecure than we feel. They feel that, at any moment, America may intervene in their internal affairs with the same appalling consequences as have followed from American intervention in Southeast Asia.

For the world as a whole, the C.I.A. has now become the bogey that Communism has been for America. Wherever there is trouble, violence, suffering, tragedy, the rest of us are now

quick to suspect the C.I.A. has a hand in it. Our phobia about the C.I.A. is, no doubt, as fantastically excessive as America's phobia about world Communism; but, in this case, too, there is just enough convincing evidence to make the phobia genuine. In fact, the roles of America and Russia have been reversed in the world's eyes. Today America has become the world's nightmare.

Like Communist Russia, America has committed atrocities in the cause of truth and justice, as she sees them. We believe that American fanaticism, too, is sincere. This makes it all the more alarming.

In terms of the number of lives taken and of lands laid waste, America's score is, unhappily, far higher than any other country's since the end of World War II. Would I rather be a Vietnamese who was being "saved" by the American Army, or be a Czech who was being "saved" by the Russian Army? Of course I would rather be the Czech. The number of lives taken and the amount of devastation caused by the 1968 Russian military intervention in Czechoslovakia were small,

measured by the standard of America's record in Vietnam.

How is America dealing with her problems? As we see it, she is failing to deal with them, and this is the most terrifying feature of American life today. The American people seem to us to be moving rapidly toward civil war: middle-aged noncombatants against young men subject to the draft; the affluent against the poor; white against black; students against the National Guard (the most immediately perilous of all these multiple confrontations).

The American home front is more crucial than the ports in Vietnam and Cambodia and Taiwan and Korea and the Middle East. The decision on America's home front is going to decide the fate of the world, and the rest of us can do nothing about it. We have no say, but we, too, are going to be victims of America's domestic agony.

With growing anxiety, we watch a spectacle that we never expected to see. Who would have foreseen that America would repudiate George Washington's warning against entangling alliances? Or that America would cease

to be a land of hope? And who would have expected to find himself wishing that America would box the campus for a second time within one lifetime —wishing, I mean, that America would retreat again into the isolation from which we were once so eager to see her emerge?

Is there, then, no hope of reconciliation on America's home front? I catch a gleam of hope when I recall some words that I heard an American officer let fall two years ago in a discussion on the international situation. "There are going to be many more Vietnams," this officer said, "though the mothers of America won't like it."

The mothers of America: This representative of the Pentagon had detected the great power that was going to be the Pentagon's most formidable adversary. The Pentagon versus the mothers of America. In Cambodia we now already have a second Vietnam.

The mothers of America have still to go into action, and I believe this is a battle that the Pentagon cannot win. In the mothers of America I do still see some hope for the world.

—ARNOLD J. TOYNBEE