Budget, published last spring, included a confession, topic by topic, of liberal remorse. According to the authors, no man alive can say whether compensatory education, racial integration, community control—or an appropriate mixture—represents an acceptable, let alone the optimum, way to help the children of the poor enough to survive. All that the housing experts currently claim with conviction is that urban renewal and public housing are complete or partial disasters. The health specialists have not yet designed a plausible scheme to combine such vital objectives as delivery of good medical and hospital care to everyone, protection of the victims of medical catastrophe from penury, and limitation of soaring hospital and physicians' charges. So it goes. Whether job-training programs actually help their clients get and keep better jobs is anybody's guess. And almost nobody, not even the social worker, appears to believe that social services have substantially benefited large numbers of welfare recipients.

This mood, I emphasize, is a major Vietnam cost. Great Society programs, barely launched before the war escalated, have been fiscally stunted. Far more seriously, they have been deprived of adequate congressional and public attention. Any rational observer would have expected a decade or more of modification, experiment, and improvement before Great Society innovations operated with something of the smoothness of the Internal Revenue Service or the Social Security Administration. But the politics of Vietnam dissolved that implicit social contract that allowed Lyndon Johnson to emulate Franklin Roosevelt—tax cuts for the prosperous and help for the poor. Once benefits for the vulnerable had to come from the incomes of the public at large, the general mood turned sour and became suspicious both of the conduct of the beneficiaries of social programs and of the politicians responsible for those programs.

Taking all of these costs into account—the strictly monetary, as well as the social and political—Vietnam has fair claim to being the most costly war in American history. □

The Effect on Social Programs

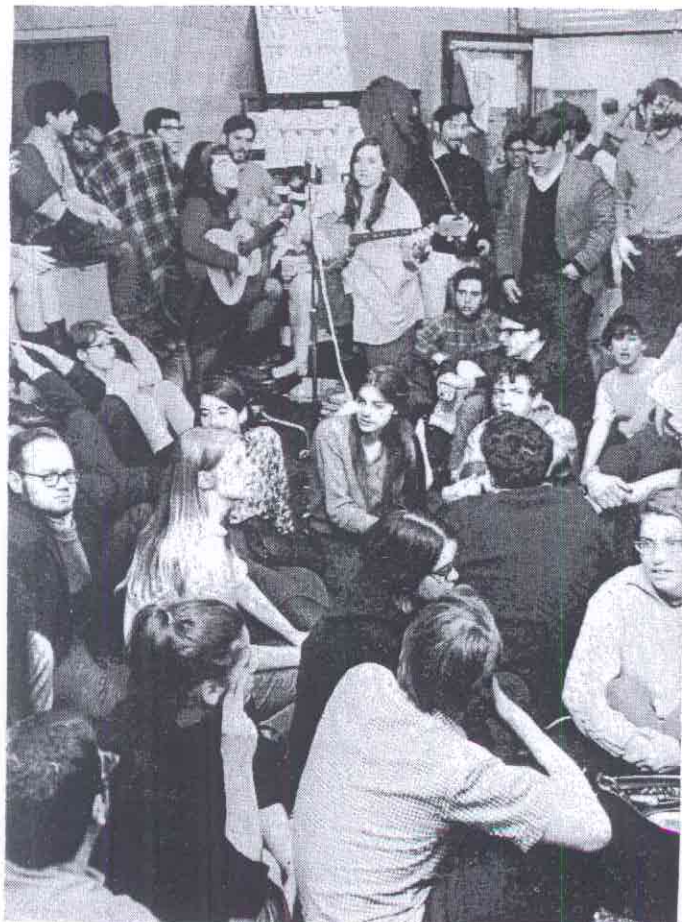
THE GREAT SOCIETY WAS NEVER A CASUALTY OF THE WAR

By Nathan Glazer

Conventional wisdom has it that the cost of the war necessitated a cutback in social programs. Not true, says the author, in contrast to the preceding essayist. The funding of most such programs has shot up right along with the increase in military spending. He explains how.

There is reason enough to decry the war in Vietnam for itself—for the lives lost, both Vietnamese and American; for the damage done to Vietnamese property and land; for the costs to the American economy; and for the drastic and tragic transformation of America's image—as a basically good nation—in the world at large and among its own people. But *should* we also blame the war, as so many have lately urged, for the destruction of an epochal American commitment to attack the nation's social problems—including poverty, urban decay, ill-health, and racial inequality? Is it true that the Great Society was among the first casualties of Vietnam?

Certainly, this assumption has become the conventional



Nathan Glazer is a professor of education and social structure at Harvard. His latest book is Remembering the Answers: Essays on the American Student Revolt.

wisdom, recited by opponents of the war and by proponents of "reordering our priorities," by social scientists and congressmen, and by mayors from John Lindsay to Richard Daley. Yet the proposition that the war has taken a severe toll on America's social programs is, upon close examination, very much open to question.

At first glance, the most forceful case for the proposition appears to rest with the history of the two major social programs that were launched with great fervor in the mid-Sixties but were stunted in their infancy as the war expanded in Vietnam. These were the antipoverty and the Model Cities programs. But was the stunting of either program primarily attributable to the war? Probably not.

Let's look first at the poverty program, which was perhaps the best publicized of the many social programs launched in the 1960s and which best symbolized the new sweep of social policy, with its broad catalogue of innovative organizations and services—community action groups, Headstart, legal services for the poor, comprehensive health services for the poor, the Job Corps, the Neighborhood Youth Corps, Vista, and many other projects too numerous to mention or recall.

After much intensive planning the war on poverty was launched in 1964 under an umbrella agency called the Office of Economic Opportunity. The OEO started with a $1.5-billion-a-year budget and dispensed its funds with amazing speed and effectiveness in the first half of 1965 under the energetic direction of Sargent Shriver. (I speak of effectiveness, not as it was later to be evaluated, but as it was understood by government in those days: get it out, get it spent for the purposes for which Congress appropriated it, and get it spent without undue scandal. It was only later that people asked, Did it work?) But, though very sizable, the original $1.5-billion-budget level was to be only a nest egg. Robert Levine, who served for a time as the OEO's assistant director for research, plans, programs, and program evaluation, describes in his book *The Poor Ye Need Not Have With You* the boundless ambitions of the early poverty warriors—including President Johnson himself. The request for appropriations for the second year of the OEO, he relates, came to $3.5 billion. And a five-year prospectus was drawn up in which the OEO would concentrate on a three-pronged program—consisting of some kind of negative income tax and/or family allowance scheme for the poor, public employment (it was estimated the public sector could use 4.5 million jobs), and expanded community action. In the summer of 1965, Levine reports, President Johnson invited Shriver to a Cabinet meeting at which the President said to one member of the Cabinet after another, "You save money on your programs," and then, addressing all members, "You-all give it to *him* [Shriver]."

But in September 1965 the White House abruptly drew back from the poverty war. It did so, in part, Levine writes, "because of the rapidly increasing fiscal demands of the Vietnam War." There was, however, another major cause of this retreat—a political resistance to the war on poverty that was quite independent of the war in Vietnam and that Levine attributes to "administrative chaos and program excess . . . ." He goes on: "The mayors of the United States had descended upon Vice-President Humphrey, Mr. Johnson's envoy to the cities, and had given him the word as to what had been happening in their cities and what they thought of it . . . ." What was happening, to the great distress of the mayors, was that the OEO was threatening the city fathers' political bases by financing local projects and dispensing patronage through organizations answerable to Washington and not to City Hall.

In 1965, too, the war on poverty began to feel the voters' unease over what Senator-elect Charles Percy of Illinois then termed "the whole civil rights–civil disorder question." Watts exploded into riots that summer; its upheaval was repeated in a number of other ghettos across the country; and these explosions made many people deeply doubtful about programs to help the poor. "The recipients are ungrateful," people said or felt. "The poverty program employs agitators. Why rebuild the slums when they only burn them down?"

A reckoning was made in the White House and in Congress, and, instead of reaching the $3.5-billion level projected for its second year, the OEO budget was barely increased at all, from $1.5 billion to $1.75 billion. Robert Levine concludes that "there is no way to separate out the fiscal/military causes of this setback from the political causes." And, indeed, there is not. Nor is there in the similar braking of the Model Cities program. Almost as ambitious in its early conception as the poverty war, and based on much the same philosophy, Model Cities was initially envisioned as replacing urban renewal projects that had aimed to rebuild cities in a physical sense. Model Cities was to be much more grand; it would harness the energies, imagination, and organizational capacities of the poor themselves in the revitalization of the decaying areas of the cities. Even this was only the beginning. But Model Cities went through so many transformations between its initiation and actual implementation that it is doubtful that anything much was expected

from the program by most of those involved in it by the time Model Cities began to function. Furthermore, in establishing separate local governmental bodies to devise and manage its projects, Model Cities ran into a concrete obstacle: there already *were* local governments, elected by the people, which quite properly insisted on their prerogatives. Another fundamental problem cropped up, too: a growing realization that no one really knew what kind of social programs would solve the problems that beset the cities. And thus, in the face of competition with established governmental organizations, coupled with uncertainty about how useful the Model Cities programs would actually be, political resistance to Model Cities grew faster than the programs themselves. Undoubtedly, this opposition helped to stunt the early ambitions associated with these programs fully as much as did any drain on federal revenues attributable to the Vietnam War.

So, although two of the best-known social programs of the Sixties did indeed suffer setbacks that coincided with escalation in Vietnam, it is by no means certain that they would not have come to grief in any case.

But the proposition that the Vietnam War undermined America's social programs is even more sternly challenged by the fact that other, and in some cases bigger, programs were clearly not undermined at all; some not only escaped the trimming that put a crimp in the anti-poverty and Model Cities budgets and ambitions, but they actually burgeoned even as the war budget itself expanded.

Where were these areas of heavy increase in domestic expenditure? They were the new programs of Medicare and Medicaid, which rose from nothing in the mid-1960s to an estimated $17.5 billion, together, for 1973. Housing subsidies, only a few hundred million in the mid-Sixties, are expected to leap to $1.8 billion for 1973. Food stamps and other nutrition programs have soared from a few hundred million to $2.5 billion. Student aid will cost $3.4 billion. Even though no new welfare program has been enacted by Congress, the old one has expanded at an enormous rate from a few billion in federal costs in the early Sixties to $16.1 billion for 1973.

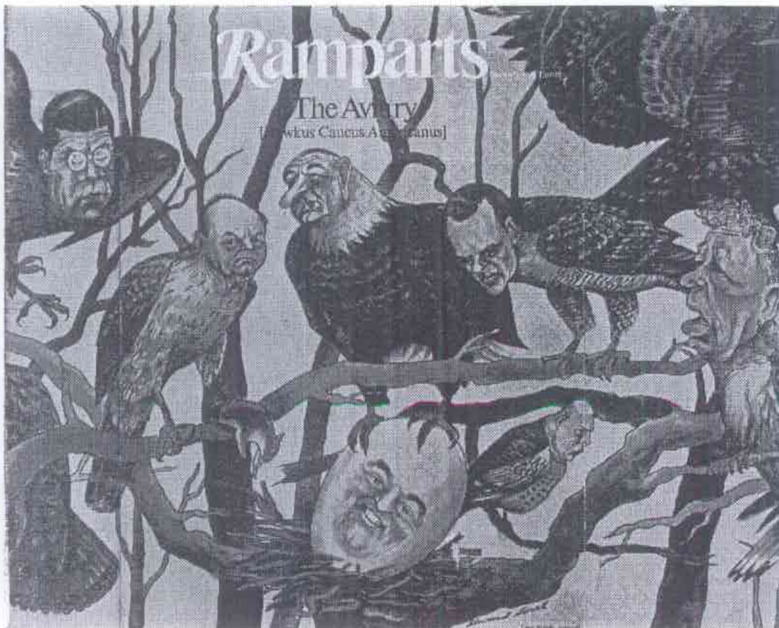
What is truly astonishing, after all, is that the commitment to the expansion of social programs, of aid to education, of support for health care and health costs, of job training, of income maintenance, of food stamps and other programs to increase the consumption of food by low-income groups, has, on the whole and on the presidential level, grown so steadily throughout the terrible war period.

Both Presidents Johnson and Nixon clearly were unwilling to cut into most social programs, or severely inhibit their growth, in order to pay for the war. President Johnson once declared that he was not even under significant pressure to do so. In his economic report of 1966 he wrote: "We face the challenges of prosperity while some 200,000 of our fellow citizens and billions of dollars of our resources are engaged in a bitter defense of freedom in Vietnam. The true costs of this conflict are death, pain, and grief . . . . But the *economic* cost of Vietnam imposes no unbearable burden on our resources . . . . Production for Vietnam accounts for less than 1½ percent of our GNP."

President Nixon has taken very much the same stance. It is as if in this war the Presidents were embarrassed to call upon the people for sacrifices. Charles L. Schultze, a former Bureau of the Budget director under Johnson, and his colleagues analyzed the course of domestic spending in their Brookings Institution study of domestic programs *Setting National Priorities: The 1973 Budget*, which was published last spring. Not only did domestic spending climb as the war progressed, the Brookings report noted, but the increments from year to year have grown larger and larger. Thus, for the years 1960 to 1965, the annual rate of increase was 5.8 per cent per year; for 1965 to 1970, it was 9.1 per cent; and for 1970 to 1973, the average annual expansion in the domestic budget will be about 10.3 per cent.

In other words, throughout the war the United States has hardly stinted on butter to pay for guns; in fact, we have spent ever increasing amounts to cover both.

How have we been able to afford the guns without



cutting into the butter, inasmuch as neither Johnson nor Nixon has seen it politically fit to raise taxes? We have paid for the war, not through cuts in social programs, but through huge budget deficits and, ultimately, inflation—a whopping $25-billion deficit in 1968, $23-billion in 1971, $39-billion in 1972. Thus have the guns—and, it is clear, a good part of the butter, too—been financed. Nixon's deficits, in fact, have been due more to butter than to guns; in 1971 and 1972, after all, the cost of the war dropped to progressively smaller fractions of the deficit—about $11 billion and $6.8 billion for these two years, according to the Schultze study.

Still, if social programs have clearly not been cut back to pay for the war, can it not at least be said that they would have grown larger and faster if so many billions of dollars had not been siphoned off to Vietnam, or that our imagination would even have found new forms of social expenditure?

Certainly, this is a strong possibility. Perhaps we would have started a large program for urban mass transportation (but Congress has up to now refused to accept such a program even when it involves no new sources of funds). Perhaps we would have started earlier and on a larger scale great works to deal with water pollution. Undoubtedly, the $110 billion or more in direct costs that has gone into the pointless destruction of Vietnam and its people could better have been spent at home. But whether it *would* have been spent publicly or returned to private citizens in the form of tax cuts is another question.

The American people, in their wisdom or lack of it, have, in fact, chosen to reduce their taxes a number of times during the course of the war—and that may be the ultimate contradiction to the proposition that the country's social programs have suffered because of the war, or at least would be further along except for the war. The distinct possibility is that Americans would have put the war money into their own pockets instead of into social programs, if there had been no Vietnam. But, of course, we will never know that for sure. □

The Consequences for South Vietnam

EACH DAY IS A SEPARATE ORDEAL

By Gloria Emerson

"The effects of the war on Vietnam have been so deep and so disruptive," writes a veteran foreign correspondent, "that it is hard for me to imagine, even with peace, how a healing process could take place in my lifetime."

"The people of Vietnam do not like the past," a Chinese scholar wrote centuries ago. These words were written for me in Vietnamese by a fifty-eight-year-old schoolteacher in Cantho. So lightly did he press on his pencil that I cannot now see the tiny accents over the words: *viet nhon bat hieu co*. It was his way of reminding me of how the Vietnamese have loathed and fought foreign domination—one thousand years of Chinese rule, nearly a century under the French, and a decade of American "assistance and advice," as he put it. The Vietnamese appreciate irony. It is these last years that have sickened the schoolteacher and made him a man of great sadness. He did not speak his mind to the boys in his mathematics class because Vietnamese men go to jail for such opinions.

In Cambridge, where I have been living since my return from Vietnam in June, I read the morning newspapers and remember that classroom and wonder how many of those students were drafted and died at Quangtri or Dongha, on Route 1 or on Route 13, in Binhduong or at Cuchi. The teacher feared for them during the long hours he taught them geometry, as he had feared for ten classes before them.

"It is not the past that haunts me now. It is the future that makes me tremble," he said. We spoke in French.

In the graveyard called South Vietnam, where officially the population is said to be seventeen million but is surely much less by now, you do not ask a Vietnamese about the future. They do not need to go into an even deeper darkness.

New York Times correspondent Gloria Emerson won the George Polk Award for Outstanding Foreign Reporting in 1971 for her portrayal of the effects of the war on the lives of South Vietnamese people. Currently on leave from the Times, she is a Fellow of the Institute of Politics at Harvard University's John F. Kennedy School of Government.

1966 | 1967