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## Momentum for Madness

THE hawk vs. dove question on Vietnam is not the real question. The real question is whether the American people, in light of their history, can stand behind the decisions and actions being taken in their name. The question is whether momentum is being generated that is carrying us toward madness rather than toward peace and stability in Vietnam.

A little more than a month ago, the *Wall Street Journal* reported that the U.S. military was advising the President to ignore Hanoi's feelers for peace talks. The military interpreted these feelers as evidence of stark weakness, and urged the President to spurn any peace bids and instead step up the pace of the war. Whether the peace feelers collapsed because the President took that advice or because the feelers were lacking in substance we have no way of knowing. What is clear is that the efforts for negotiations did fall through and that Hanoi has since let loose its biggest assault of the war, an assault that has also touched off widespread uprisings.

Now, some of the same sources that only two months ago were saying we shouldn't negotiate because Hanoi was too weak are saying we shouldn't negotiate because Hanoi is too strong. So there will never be a good time to negotiate, even though the President of the United States has said that negotiations remain our basic objective. And so the killing of Americans and Vietnamese will go on, and the terrible question that will continue to burn into American souls is whether the war is being prolonged to any degree because there is no imaginative or workable idea for ending it.

Next, consider the kind of alien nonsense expressed a few days ago by American officials in Hue, as quoted by *The New York Times*. The Vietnamese mayor of Hue had announced there would be summary executions of Communist agents. A United Press International dispatch quoted one U.S. official as having spoken approvingly of "public executions of Vietcong and hopefully some of the infrastructure."

The precise meaning of "infrastructure" was not explained. There is at least an intimation in the term of a rather comprehensive affair, certainly one lacking in the niceties of evidence and due process of law. Is a member of the "infrastructure" someone who might be annoyingly critical or personally distasteful? There is an unholy smell of the guessing game in this business, the kind that can create historical stench.

The *Times* also reported that the U.S. State Department said it had no knowledge of American approval of the executions; but what is most striking about the news from Vietnam these days is the extent to which the State Department and the White House learn about military actions or policies after and not before the fact. Last year the State Department claimed to know nothing about the first bombing of Hanoi, an action that coincided with exploratory conversations on negotiations—an action, incidentally, that put an immediate end to those conversations. And two years ago, the President was surprised to discover that poison gas was being used by American forces without specific White House knowledge or authorization.

On an even more ominous level: Who authorized the present heavy bombing

of South Vietnam cities? What kind of thinking is it that believes we can liberate a people by dosing them with dynamite and fire? We assert that our purpose in Vietnam is to save the Vietnamese from the Vietcong. But if we attack and kill Vietcong and non-Vietcong alike—the inevitable concomitant of our search-and-destroy policy and the bombing—then we are making a farce out of our proclamations.

EACH increase in the slaughter only enlarges the stage for yet more slaughter. The most prophetic voice in the whole tragedy may turn out to be that of Lyndon B. Johnson, Democratic party candidate for the Presidency in 1964. It was Mr. Johnson who foresaw at that time the folly of the bombing. It was Mr. Johnson who foresaw the absurdity of trying to pursue military victory. It was Mr. Johnson who saw that the traditional use of force would only produce counterforce and would require the commitment of increasing numbers of American soldiers without changing the course of the war. It was Mr. Johnson who spoke of the primary need for a nonmilitary program that would give promise of social justice for the Vietnamese people and that was the best argument against the Vietcong. And it was Mr. Johnson who said that the only way to end the war was at the negotiating table.

Everything that has happened in the past four years has served only to underscore the correctness of Mr. Johnson's original analysis. Is it possible that the same combination of forces inside the Government that President Dwight D. Eisenhower warned against in his farewell address was also responsible for the defeat of President Johnson's announced policies? Why, for example, would the State Department assert that there have been no serious indications by Hanoi of a willingness to get into negotiations, or even to explore their possibility, when it is a fact that several such opportunities *did* exist? To what extent does State Department thinking reflect the views of former Secretary of State Dean Acheson, who declared recently that "negotiations would be a pain in the neck?"

The course of events in Vietnam is serving mainly to prove that the Government of the United States is getting away from the American people, and, for all we know, from many of their elected officials. Our policies and actions in Vietnam are inconsistent with American history; they bear the mark of adventurism and loose handling of force. The American people have not been misinformed so much as they have been manipulated.

The most telling comment on the war so far came from James B. Reston of *The New York Times* when he said that we are beginning to resemble the flies who captured the flypaper. —N.C.



in the South until the federal courts began, about 1940, to hear cases on Constitutional rights, many of which had been untested since the Tilden-Hayes steal in 1876-77, in which Southerners enabled Hayes to be President in exchange for an end to Reconstruction. States rights were restored with this agreement. It included the state determination of Negro rights—the U.S. Constitution notwithstanding.

Disfranchisement of the Negro and his exclusion from jobs by the newly rising labor unions, especially that of the railroads and larger craft unions, came on quickly. A combination of laws, amendments of state constitutions, and party regulations bypassed the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Amendments. These included such devices as the poll tax (also deliberately designed to restrict the franchise of poor whites), property ownership as a suffrage qualification, the white primary (which limited voters in the Democratic primary to white persons), and various "rules." These "rules" required a voter to "read, understand, and explain" to "the satisfaction of the registrar" a section of the Constitution. Rare was the Negro applicant—and rarer still was one who could "satisfy" the registrar.

Therefore, there could have been no two-party development in the South until the white primary was ended by the U.S. Supreme Court in 1944, a mere twenty-four years ago. Nor was a "New South" possible until the U.S. Supreme Court school decision in 1954. It was the first of several necessary Constitutional decisions. There was, and is, much resentment and resistance by the states that were politically and economically freed by those decisions.

The unanimous school decree of 1954 was followed, in 1964, by Congressional enactment of a broad civil rights act. This act created a legal, Constitutional base that removed discrimination in public accommodations, in federally assisted programs, in job opportunity, and in voting. This latter Constitutional right was more firmly established by an important complementary act to the one of 1964—a voting rights measure.

There followed one of the typical paradoxes of the South (some of them have been almost unbearable in their violence and stupidity, as various members of many generations have learned). The court's rulings actually freed the Southern white man more than the black man. By accepting the legal direction to obey the Constitution and do what was morally right, the Southern white man was freed to advance his economy, to remove his political system from bondage, and to begin improving the quality of his education so that it would give Southern children equal opportunity—on the average—with children in the rest of the nation.

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The court's rulings should have produced a real year of jubilee. Nothing of the kind happened. Southern governors, Congressmen, mayors, legislators, ministers, and laymen fiercely demanded that they be allowed to remain in political bondage, to keep their children in inferior schools, and to be politically chained—all for the sake of a long-discredited, immoral, unconstitutional racial status quo.

Nevertheless, despite infamous and disgraceful delays, evasions, and dishonorable actions, progress was made. It was said that the schoolhouse doors would run red with blood before a single Negro child was admitted. It was cried from the rooftops of state capitols, from klan klaverns, White Citizens Councils, pulpits and civic-club podiums, from newspapers, TV, and radio that the South's answer was "Never!" But there were Southerners aplenty who said otherwise. There were a handful of churchmen who opposed emotional idiocy. There were newspaper, TV, and radio editors and executives who did not join the mobs.

SAD to say, it was the dollar that really was most effective in allowing progress to be made. It was expensive to go into court and defend discrimination. Too, restaurants, hotels, and motels found that opening their doors to the total public enriched them instead of destroying business. Retail customers did not mind being waited on by Negro clerks. The myths of the old segregated order proved to be as unsubstantial and un-

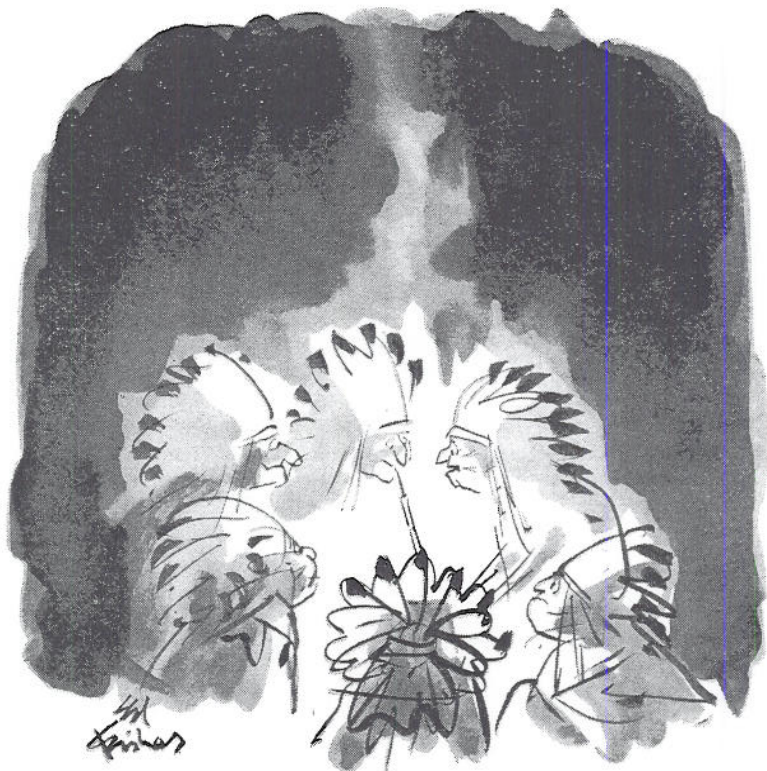
true as did the myths of the old magnolia South.

Hence, in 1968 it may be said that there is, on the whole, as much, and maybe more, of an overall acceptance of the civil rights laws in the South as in other regions. As would be expected, there are some paradoxes. Even some of the schools in rural county seats have desegregated and opened up the high school football and basketball teams to Negro youths. Some of them are the stars of their teams. It is nothing to see the crowds cheering themselves hoarse for these players. But once the game is done, the Negro boy is again separate and goes home to his section of town.

Let this not be too depressing. The Southerner is a great status-quo man, but once he has accepted—and cheered—a Negro boy, he will move on to a better attitude. The number of Southern school districts that refuse federal aid so as to hold on to segregation and low-quality education as long as possible is few. The winds blow—"things" go with them.

There is today a Negro member of the United States Supreme Court. Only the more rabid opposed confirmation of the able and experienced Thurgood Marshall. There are other Negroes in the federal judiciary. The list is too long to belabor. It can no longer be argued, however, that the present participation of the Negro in the American Government and in its elective processes is mere tokenism.

The big problem nevertheless remains. The civil rights laws did not, and do not,  
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"Our age-old dream of independence! . . . All we do is start speaking French, then with General de Gaulle. . . ."