

The Regrouping of Doves in Moscow, Hanoi, Saigon & Washington

Also:
Why They Will Never Get Off The Ground



DURING EACH OF THE LAST FOUR JANUARIES, attempts have been made to open negotiations for a peaceful settlement of the war in Vietnam. Every time, however, these attempts have been frustrated by a new stage in the steady U.S. escalation of the conflict.

In 1965, for example, just as Premier Kosygin was reportedly making efforts to mediate in Hanoi between the United States and the Democratic Republic of Vietnam (DRV), the first regular bombing of North Vietnam took place. And during the following January the communists' public concessions, in the form of reduced military activity and an easing of the terms for negotiations, were answered by the U.S. with the largest ground operations of the war to that date. This sequence was repeated in January 1967.

Inasmuch as these past reductions in hostilities by the communists were treated by U.S. generals as "proof of enemy weakness," it should not surprise anyone that this year the National Liberation Front (NLF) and the DRV have chosen to exploit the dry season militarily.* At the least, this would strengthen their bargaining position.

Again, however, Hanoi has made a public concession to American requirements for reaching a political settlement. On

*The communists' dramatic success in bringing the war to the cities of South Vietnam indicates the extent to which the balance of forces in the Vietnam war has been altered, for in the past the U.S. has used the optimal military conditions afforded by the dry season for launching its largest offensives.

December 29, 1967, Foreign Minister Trinh stated that a cessation of the bombing of North Vietnam *will* (rather than *could*) be followed by "conversations with the U.S. on relevant problems."

This would seem to be exactly the "authoritative message from Hanoi" for which Ambassador Goldberg appealed in the U.N. last September 21: "No such third party—including those governments which are among Hanoi's closest friends—has conveyed to us any authoritative message from Hanoi that there would in fact be negotiations if the bombing were stopped. We have sought such a message from Hanoi without success" (New York Times, Sept. 22, 1967, p. 16). It would also seem designed to meet the President's promise (in his San Antonio speech of September 29 and interview of December 19) that "We will stop bombing immediately provided you will have prompt and productive discussions" (N.Y. Times, Dec. 20, 1967, p. 16). Thus the President no longer linked a stop in the bombing to a prior assurance that North Vietnamese infiltration into South Vietnam had already ceased. On September 29 he merely stated: "We of course assume that while discussions proceed, North Vietnam would not take advantage of the bombing cessation or limitation."

This concession, inserted to meet growing demands in the U.S. Senate for a bombing pause, seemed to leave only one area for possible further exploration—the exact nature of "prompt and productive" discussions. On January 16, 1968, the chief North Vietnamese representative in Western Europe, Mai Van Bo, stated that talks would begin "after a suitable time." East Europeans have estimated that talks could begin in from three to four weeks.

Trinh's statement, like his similar concession of January 28, 1967, came as no surprise, but was part of a complex development indicating worldwide—both communist and non-communist—interests in a negotiated settlement. The most powerful of these has been that of the Soviet Union, which last fall reportedly suggested privately to some U.S. senators that it would actually reduce its military support of North Vietnam if the bombing were stopped (N.Y. Times, Oct. 3, 1967, p. 2). A disputed report from Vientiane on January 4 suggested that "North Vietnam has asked the governments of Laos, Cambodia and Burma if their capitals are available for preliminary peace talks"; meanwhile, officials in Jakarta claimed that in December North Vietnam told Indonesia it would "*promptly* enter into peace talks with the United States after an unconditional bombing cessation," and asked Jakarta to mediate (N.Y. Times, Jan. 5, 1968, p. 3. My emphasis).

Last fall, the National Liberation Front also showed a

renewed interest in diplomatic activity. Reports of its attempts to send observers to the U.N. remain unclear; but Washington sources have confirmed that an NLF Central Committee member arrested by the Saigon police had, according to a previous plan, "been trying to reach American officials" in the U.S. Embassy (N.Y. Times, Dec. 7, 1967). This mysterious incident dramatized the growing split in Saigon over the negotiations issue: the Saigon police are controlled by General Loan of the military Ky faction, which has been increasingly fearful of secret moves to facilitate talks, not only by elements in the U.S. Embassy, but even by President Thieu. The New York Times reported that on January 5 the pro-Ky generals of the former military junta met with Thieu and accused him ". . . of yielding to pressure from Washington by secretly agreeing to talks that would include members of the Vietcong despite his public statements to the contrary" (N.Y. Times, Jan. 11, 1968).

[JOHNSON'S BUREAUCRATIC PLURALISM:
LETTING DOVES TALK WHILE HAWKS BOMB]

INDEED, IT MAY BE SAID that the forces for a negotiated settlement, inside America as well as outside, are probably stronger than they have ever before been. It would seem one could thus expect a favorable response from Washington to Foreign Minister Trinh's statement. Unfortunately, however, we have already seen evidence that this, like similar statements in the past, will go unanswered.

Firstly, even if there is growing civilian support for a bombing pause, the United States military is united against it. Perhaps the most reliable exponent of military thinking in recent months has been U.S. News and World Report; and it reported that President Johnson, between November 13 and 17, had promised the Joint Chiefs of Staff that bombing would be stepped up, with "no prolonged pause unless Hanoi decides it is ready to reciprocate" (Nov. 27, 1967, p. 50). (This crucial word "reciprocate" has been consistently used to summarize those rigid conditions for cessation which Johnson had ostensibly abandoned in his San Antonio speech.) This would follow the pattern of previous "peace initiatives" by the United States in which Johnson's concessions to dove-ish rhetoric have been balanced, and in the end frustrated, by substantive concessions to hawkish militarism. This has always been his special brand of bureaucratic pluralism: to let the doves talk while the hawks bomb. Thus it is plausible to believe U.S. News's statement that Johnson has already vetoed an unconditional bombing cessation, even while making public verbal concessions towards one.

There is a much more concrete and substantial reason for believing this is so. As in the case of previous New Year's peace initiatives, this one has already been answered by a significant selective escalation of the bombing. From January 2 to January 5, 1968, U.S. planes flew unprecedentedly intensive raids against previously restricted targets: a bridge near the Chinese border (which reportedly had not been bombed since 1966) and also a Soviet ship in Haiphong harbor.

A year ago, in commenting in *The Nation* (Jan. 16, 1967) on similar raids against Hanoi in violation of a covert diplomatic understanding between the U.S. and the Soviet Union, I was unwilling to lend credence to Hanoi's version of those raids; however, this story was later corroborated by independent Western observers. This year both Hanoi and Moscow

claimed that the bombing of the Soviet ship (which Washington has since called "accidental") was in fact a careful maneuver executed by four U.S. planes flying in formation; they left a ring of delayed-action bombs surrounding the ship in such a way as to maximize both damage and casualties. A Chinese ship in Campha harbor was also bombed.

It is clear that, in the wake of an important political statement in Hanoi, the political consequences of such selective bombings are vastly more significant than the military ones. Today, when so few targets remain on the President's restricted list, it is no longer clear whose authorization is needed for such escalations, nor is it clear that they represent a break with the bombing policies of the past. From 1965 to 1967, however, the politically sensitive targets of the Hanoi-Haiphong areas required the special authorization of the President: "Washington Department of State sources" admitted in 1965 that "the North Vietnamese had always held . . . that the bombing of the Hanoi-Haiphong area would close the door on the possibility of a negotiated peace" (St. Louis Post-Dispatch, Dec. 29, 1965).

From December 1965 to April 1967, selective bombings in these areas were used sparingly, and such escalations can be discerned at four critical stages: December 15, 1965; April 17, 1966; June 29, 1966; December 2, 5, 13 and 14, 1966. *Every one of these selective escalations came shortly after a major secret initiative to achieve a negotiated settlement of the war.* Furthermore, for the period in question, I do not know of a single such initiative that was not soon followed by this special kind of escalation.

[A HISTORY LESSON: THE DEATH OF OPERATION MARIGOLD]

FOR EXAMPLE, THE FIRST STEP in a series of peace moves begun in the spring of 1966, was a secret initiative by a third party who had visited Hanoi: in this case the Polish ICC representative Lewandowski. On June 6, 1966, Lewandowski called on Ambassador Lodge in Saigon with news of a renewed Hanoi interest in peace efforts. Encouraged by Lodge's show of interest, he first returned to Hanoi, and then met with Lodge and the Italian ambassador on June 9 and 12.

The initiative launched by Lewandowski was so promising that it was destined to acquire an American code name: Operation Marigold. It was such a high-level operation that each U.S. initiative in it required clearance by the President, during a year when each bombing of the Hanoi-Haiphong area also required his special authorization. The following is a list of all the known stages in the fated blooming of Marigold together with all the known escalations in this sensitive area:

Peace Initiative, June 6, 9, 12: Lewandowski meets Lodge.

Bombing, June 29: Oil depots outside Hanoi and Haiphong are bombed for first time.

Peace Initiative, July 1-December 1: No activity on Operation Marigold, "for unexplained reasons."

Bombing, July 1-December 2: No U.S. air activity reported near Hanoi or Haiphong.

Peace Initiative, December 1: Lewandowski returns to Lodge with ten-point version of his understanding of how to end the war. Lodge cables Washington, December 2. Lodge, authorized by Washington, tells Lewandowski "that broadly speaking" the ten points are "not inconsistent with the United States view" but "parts needed to be defined and discussed

between the U.S. and North Vietnam." Lewandowski on same day proposes meeting in Warsaw on December 6.

Bombing, December 2, 5: Closest raids to Hanoi since June 29; strike targets previously on forbidden list.

Peace Initiative, December 6: North Vietnamese do not attend rendezvous with Americans in Warsaw. Americans request rescheduling of talks. Polish Foreign Minister Rappacki warns U.S. Ambassador Gronouski that any further raids will kill chances for meeting. Talks provisionally rescheduled for December 15.

Bombing, December 13, 14: New U.S. raids bomb many targets in central Hanoi, including Peking Embassy. (On December 15, Peking Radio condemns bombings as "part and parcel" of the U.S.-USSR "big 'peace talk' plot.")

On December 15 the North Vietnamese again failed to appear in Warsaw, and Operation Marigold, thanks to the renewed bombings, was not again revived. The bombings of Hanoi also ceased until the strategic air escalations of next April. (Haiphong was, however, bombed once more: on March 11, 1967, after U Thant's return on March 7 with a new message after contacts with North Vietnamese in Rangoon.) There is no record of other secret initiatives in this period.

[THE "PEACE" POLICIES OF LBJ: NO NEGOTIATION BUT SURRENDER]

IF THESE RAIDS WERE in fact authorized by the President as regulations demanded, they would suggest that he was only interested in negotiations with an opponent who had crawled to the conference table under the very circumstances that the opponent had previously ruled out. In other words, the raids suggest Johnson was interested in no negotiation other than that of surrender.

The other alternative—that he did *not* authorize the raids—is no less alarming: it would suggest that our military is no longer under civilian control.

Whatever else may remain hidden from the public record on these initiatives and bombings, there is no doubt that these strange "coincidences" were responsible for the failure of Operation Marigold. There is also no doubt that the subsequent events of early 1967 read like a caricature of 1966, until the selective escalation had again been followed by a strategic one. First Ambassador Goldberg announced at New Year's that "We are ready to order a prior end to all bombing of North Vietnam the moment there is an assurance, private or otherwise, that there would be [i.e. after the order] a reciprocal response toward peace from North Vietnam. . . . We continue to believe that peace can come to Vietnam in one of two ways: through deeds, such as a mutual cessation or reduction of hostilities, or through discussions" (N.Y. Times, Jan. 1, 1967, p. 2).

Again there was a flurry of international activities involving U Thant, the Russians and the Pope. Again there was a marked de-escalation of the ground war, as General Wheeler himself testified: "The number, size and duration of enemy attacks has fallen off. . . . Of late . . . they've not been seeking combat. In other words, our people have been the ones who have been going out and finding them and starting an engagement" (U.S. News and World Report, Feb. 27, 1967, pp. 39, 42).

And again the American inquiry was answered: on January 28 Foreign Minister Trinh suggested publicly that "there could be discussions between the DRV and the United States," but

only after an unconditional cessation of the bombing of North Vietnam. In other words, the other side had once more offered both verbal and military "signs" of the kind that the United States had asked for. And once more this was attributed to enemy weakness. The Trinh statement was answered on February 15 by Johnson's refusal to stop bombing in exchange for talks, until he was "assured that infiltration into land and sea has stopped" (i.e. *before* the order to stop bombing); and this letter was followed by a major strategic escalation in February and March.

[THE HAWKS AS POLICY MAKERS, 1954-1968]

THUS, IN THE PAST, the chances of peace have been frustrated by selective and then strategic escalations of the war, and the two together have had the effect of defining, by deeds more loudly than words, a U.S. rejection of meaningful peace objectives. For America—which originally refused to agree to the final Geneva Declaration of 1954, and has since spent so many billions in the frustration of the Geneva Agreements—escalation has remained the consistent response to a "peace scare."

The underlying reason for this is not hard to find. It is clear that the NLF, if finally negotiated with, must secure something like the political settlement its members were promised in 1954. As Neil Sheehan of the New York Times has reported: "The Communist Party is the one truly national organization that permeates both North and South Vietnam; it is the only group not dependent on foreign bayonets for survival." Saigon officials still feel, as one admitted a year ago, that they "are not strong enough to compete with the Communists on a purely political basis."

Not only war, but escalation, has been necessary to preserve the so-called Saigon "Republic." Since 1961 the Pentagon has been looking for that elusive "light at the end of the tunnel," and today their prospects are as somber as ever. In January 1968 the initiative in the ground war has passed wholly to the communists, who have for the first time launched general attacks against cities and forced the U.S. bombing of Saigon itself. In past Januaries the United States has used the brief dry season for massive "search-and-destroy" sweeps such as Operations Masher (1966) and Cedar Falls (1967); this year it is desperately shuffling troops in anticipation of a possible "Dien Bien Phu" in the Khe Sanh area.

As the determination of the Viet Cong forces becomes more and more apparent, so does that of our hawks for a wider war. In 1964 they wished to win in the North the war that was being lost in the South; today, with their list of bombing targets almost exhausted, they are talking of a ground war in Laos or Cambodia. The Pueblo incident has already supplied the occasion for the partial mobilization of reserves they have been demanding. Only a comparable escalation by the American anti-war movement can prevent the most recent calls for an end to the bombing—and a Geneva solution—from being drowned again in the noise of a still wider war.

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Belles-Lettres



Books:

FAKING IT

by Louis Goldberg

IN READING MATTHEW ARNOLD as a child genius, I experienced that same Shock of Recognition Melville described so well to Hawthorne in an oft-quoted letter: "For genius, all over the world, stands hand in hand, and one shock of recognition runs the whole circle round." This, of course, was written in a day when the great works of the imagination did not occupy—as they do in the contemporary '60s—three columns of type in a monthly journal of opinion. I was, indeed, on the threshold of a new era, and, while lesser geniuses were cramming their heads with contemporary fiction, I realized that the novel was dead, and with Arnold as my model, began training myself in the only honorable profession open to me under the circumstances—book reviewing.

My development, in a sense, was quite the opposite of Norman Podhoretz's (*Making It*. Random House. 365 pp. \$6.95). Norman, as a young man, was enamored with poetry and mistakenly, if bravely, considered it a viable path to residence in the pantheon of immortals gleaming upon Mt. Parnassus. Later, as a student at Columbia, he was discouraged in his poetic effusions by a famous teacher of creative writing, my friend Lionel Trilling. When Norman came to me with his dreams in his hands like the pieces of a broken doll, I quoted Benjamin Franklin to him: "I approved for my part of amusing oneself with poetry now and then, so far as to improve one's language, but no farther." I then advised him to take up a serious occupation such as book reviewing. As Norman was a bright boy I had no trouble at all convincing him that poetry was as dead as the novel and the only sure way to

\$25,000 a year and greatness was to edit a major monthly.

"Norman," I said, "if only America had a Westminster Abbey, and we could be buried there along with the great novelists and poets and book reviewers. I can see the names now: Emerson, Melville, Hawthorne, Hemingway, Fitzgerald, Faulkner, Wolfe, Kazin, Podhoretz and Goldberg."

Matriculating at Columbia was one of the most satisfying experiences of my life, for which I am deeply grateful to Mrs. S. (thank you, Mrs. S!), who was like the teacher in A. J. Cronin's popular *Shannon's Way*. I continued to write A+ papers throughout my career at Columbia, much to the chagrin of my fellow students who masked their mediocrity in a factitious code of genteel manners, which they claimed did not permit them to earn grades above the gentleman's "A." My only regret, in retrospect, is that I did not attend Johns Hopkins University instead. There, I have since been led to understand, they award the grade of "H." One soon tires of "A+."

As you might expect, I won a fellowship to Cambridge University, where F. R. Leavis published my first "A+" paper of the season in the world's foremost guardian of literary taste, the *Hypercritical Review*. Quite an honor for a young man of nineteen.

I returned to America two years later, accepted by Harvard once again, expecting this time to do graduate work towards a Ph.D. But, like Jean-Paul Sartre, I suppose, who achieved far greater distinction by turning down the Nobel Prize than would have been his had he accepted it, I once again did not go to Harvard. This time I decided not to go because destiny called, in the form of an invitation to write for *Argumentative*.

Recognition came in small doses at first: an invitation to referee College Bowl; a chance to challenge Carl Van

Doren on the "\$64,000 Question"; a few probes from New York publishers interested in signing me up, like a college draft choice, for my first book. Soon the *New Yorker*, which until then I had always regarded as a vain, lazy, pompous, self-indulgent literary butterfly, a Beau Brummell of the intellect, so to speak, began breaking down my door with requests for book reviews. Suddenly my opinion of the magazine changed, and I began to hold it in high esteem. Also, as I began to assume more and more responsibility at *Argumentative*, I mapped out a series of articles which brought me to the attention of the Establishment. The New York intellectuals had just lost a fine essayist at short-stop. They sent Mary McCarthy around to scout me. She said, "I like the way you handle yourself, Lou, how would you like a spot on our team?" Does a college ball player look down his nose at the Yankees? More or less ignorant of what I was doing, I accepted her offer. It didn't take me long to learn, however, that the intellectual intrasquad games were the toughest.

At about this time I mapped out the series of articles which justified the early promise on which so much of my career was fabricated. I conceived and executed 12 articles, which I published in monthly installments, discussing and in a sense dismissing the work of Stanley Elkin, Philip Roth, Herbert Gold and Bernard Malamud. In these articles I set out to prove that post-Civil War American literature had reached its zenith, so to speak, not in the Jewish novels of the '60s, but in the reviews of them.

These articles were the talk of the New York Literary Universe for a full year and assured me the respectful attention of posterity. I'll have to admit, however, that I was no longer to be satisfied by respect. Quite frankly, I wanted adulation. I had finally decided that it was