

variations in judging what actually constitutes cruel and inhuman treatment.

Perhaps it is well for Americans to remember that, as people "advanced" in educational and religious development, they found it possible to rationalize area bombing and then atomic bombing and that they need to show some restraint in condemning the qualities of warfare in the developing countries. It is also fatuous to assume that one nation can reform another by moral exhortation. Perhaps the most that can be expected in some cases is an appeal to national or revolutionary self-interest in not antagonizing the populace or outside opinion—which is to say, to put the problem not solely in moral or legal terms but to put it in an effective political context.

It is a cardinal principle of political realists, as well as of traditional moral philosophy, that there must be a balance between commitments and resources, between power and obligation. An issue of the profoundest import is thus raised for political ethics: how much of a risk of failure can a government tolerate? Can it ever justify a policy which seems to have little if any prospect of success? . . .

At the level of guerrilla warfare, the Vietcong had very nearly triumphed in the spring of 1965—a near-triumph in proportion to the spiritual and political weakness of the Saigon regime. Massive escalation of United States commitments provided a

temporary reprieve, a belated opportunity to meet the revolutionary requirements of an outraged and disinherited South Vietnamese people who have never been given an effective voice in the government which was supposed to represent them. But the United States cannot indefinitely compensate for political failure with military force which may make ultimate failure more, rather than less, likely. South Vietnam is not ours to "win" or "lose," but we may contribute to its losing itself by an extravagant notion of what we must do to save it. Similarly, our intervention in Santo Domingo, anti-Communist though it was in its inspiration, was a bonanza to Communists themselves, both on that island and throughout Latin America.

There is a fateful new paradox in American power in the nuclear age. As our military capabilities have gained at a dizzying pace, our *political* capabilities have declined and will perhaps continue to do so. The same is true for the Soviet Union. As our power to destroy has multiplied, our capacity to create a world in our own image has diminished. It is more true now than ever before that military power cannot simply be converted into political power—that indeed, by an ironic development which is dramatized most vividly in the Third World itself, the moralist's natural skepticism about military force has become at last the ally of political prudence.

worldview

volume 9, no. 11 / November 1966

WORLDVIEW is published monthly (except for a combined July-August issue) by the Council on Religion and International Affairs
Subscription: \$4.00 per year.

Address: 170 East 64th Street, New York, New York 10021

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341

CONTENTS

New Prospects, Old Problems	1
<i>Editorial</i>	
In the Magazines	2
The Catholic Left in Britain	4
<i>Brian Wicker</i>	
Dismantling the Barricades:	
The Example of Italy.....	8
<i>K. R. Nilsson</i>	
"The New Student Movement".....	13
<i>Correspondence</i>	
Moral Dilemmas in Revolutionary Warfare.....	14
<i>Other Voices</i>	

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