

EDITORIAL

The question: HOW will we spend the billions???

Page after page of recent weekly news magazines and daily newspapers report that global powers talk of peace. Observation, however, reveals governments to be bent on conflict. Have we not had enough of war?

Large and small, countries of influence carry on counter-productive campaigns, handle their internal affairs with little regard for human dignity, and assume postures that threaten to destroy life on this planet. And modern governments have that capacity.

In the Caribbean Basin and Central America, teeming millions scabble for bare existence; more millions in Africa, Asia, and South America subsist at poverty levels North Americans cannot imagine. Burgeoning populations on most of the world's continents threaten to overwhelm our own still comparatively sparsely-settled one.

Only in recent months has growing Marxism among peoples of the Caribbean and Latin America been viewed with alarm in this country; only in recent months has it been brought to the attention of most Americans that political shifts toward the left have been spreading in gradual, but clearly perceivable, steps. The movement has been growing over a long stretch of years without drawing the slightest response from the United States; and yet, the most cursory study of history reveals Marxist doctrines appeal to the oppressed because Communism promises equal distribution of wealth. Poor men always covet a slice of the rich man's pie; where the rich live in visible luxury and the poor wallow in indescribable squalor, and someone comes along with a plan that appears to give the masses a better standard of living, the masses are easily persuaded to rebellion.

Outside of North America, Europe, and Australia, most of the world's people are desperately poor. For centuries they have accepted their lot for they were offered no alternative but certain death.

With shocking suddenness our own government is now spotlighting the plight, along with the threats implied, of enormous populations of people living on our southern doorstep. Still ignored are similar hordes in Africa, Southeast Asia, India, the Near East, and South America. Our government's posture with regard to the vast majority of people living in the Caribbean and Central America is designed to create in us fear of our southern neighbors, to instill resentment toward those who grow restive and angry because they live in misery, ignorance, and filth, and to cause, among

North Americans, a willingness to defend our borders from possible invasion by a flood of humanity determined to carve for itself a slice of the high standard of living we take for granted.

Our government supports suppressive forces in the under-developed Caribbean and Central American nations. Without showing the slightest concern for the reasons guerilla forces are growing stronger in Latin America, the United States proposes to supply weapons to the suppressive governments who are in danger of being overthrown by Marxist-inspired forces. The inevitable result can only be bloody battles between the opposing force, battles in which civilian populations, already suffering poverty and disease, will be the ultimate victims. And we as taxpayers, we who have our own roots imbedded in rebellion against oppression, are expected to finance the effort to control with guns the will of these other human beings to better their lot.

Where do we stand? What is the posture of the American people? Can we live with our consciences if we acquiesce to strategies clearly designed to destroy, militarily, millions of other human beings?

And if not, what are our choices? Just as clearly, if we continue to ignore the conditions under which these millions live, we shall be overrun by sheer numbers. They multiply rapidly; while little boys are taught to handle guns, little girls are producing babies as rapidly as Nature permits. Is our only recourse to decimate them through mass murder? Is it too late to take humanitarian steps to relieve the burdens and the pressures of sheer numbers?

In the United States at this time we propose to spend

about two hundred and fifty billion dollars next year for defense. Defense means instruments of death. If ever half that amount of money were spent to relieve the miserable lives of our southern neighbors, an enormous difference in their living standards could be achieved. Our own perceived need for defense could be greatly reduced.

It may be argued that such humanitarian action will only hasten the day when the narrow isthmus that separates us from South America will provide a path over which will pour more millions from that continent to overwhelm us. And, conversely, it may be argued that given assistance, education, an opportunity for survival and upward mobility in a stable society, those millions could content themselves in their native lands. Those countries could provide this one with new markets for our industrial production. Their peoples could control their population growth and cease to threaten our space on earth.

If the United States were seen as benevolent and a source of aid to enable these beleaguered nations, so near to us, to achieve a better standard of living for their peoples, would we have reasons for fear? Or would we have growing commerce, expanding markets, and a stronger unity in the Western hemisphere?

Following World War II, the United States set out to rebuild the devastated countries of Europe and the Far East. With massive amounts of aid, material, and money, the destruction of war was replaced by the reconstruction of

peace. The effort was made in our own self-interest: to provide us with markets for our goods, as much as to ease suffering among friend and foe; the results in terms of world trade and worldwide esteem for this country were well worth the price. No economic depression followed World War II such as that which descended upon most of the global powers after the first World War. Instead, we embarked upon the greatest boom the world has ever known. Everyone was better off because not only did we open new markets and rebuild democratic societies, we established our reputation as a friendly nation to oppressed peoples throughout the world.

There are ten million Americans in our country today who are unemployed. Modern nations appear to be teetering on the brink of economic depression. Population pressures in poorer countries are mounting dangerously. Look back half-a-century to Japan. Prior to WWII, that country faced similar population problems. In the past forty years, the trend has been reversed, and Japan has become an industrialized nation, able to compete in the present world society and hold its own. With some of those defense dollars and a goodly portion of our unemployed back at work, we could become a catalyst for giving new hope and opportunity to millions of suffering people in the Caribbean and Central America.

The question is not whether we will spend billions of our dollars; the question is how we will spend those dollars. Shall we spend them for weapons to wipe millions of people from the face of the earth? Or shall we spend them to enable those millions to live healthy, productive, decent lives?

If we choose the second option, we can go forward with good feelings about ourselves. If we choose the first, we must live with the hatred our actions will engender as well as with our own personal feelings of guilt. If we opt for the latter, we should not anticipate gratitude, because our own self-interest is our motivation, and we must recognize that from the start. Our next move determines whether we make friends or enemies of the countries that share our hemisphere.

The decision appears to be one of administration and government. We, not some faceless entity in Washington, are the government.

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