

To Heal a Wounded Time: Triumph of the Good and Holy  
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At the Harvard Club in New York City on May 5, 1976, Ellis Rivkin delivered the following paper as the ninth in the series of annual lectures sponsored by the John Courtney Murray Forum and America Press. Dr. Rivkin is the Adolph S. Ochs Professor of Jewish History at Hebrew Union College, Cincinnati, Ohio. He is an authority on the Pharisees and the author of *The Shaping of Jewish History. A Radical New Interpretation* (Scribner, 1971).

Ours is a wounded time. It is a time of *growing* insecurity, growing uncertainty, growing despair. It is a time of creeping corrosion. Vintage values are souring, and root beliefs are drying up. Western civilization appears to be withering on the vine as whispers from the high and mighty assure us that our time, too, has come, that the bells which are tolling are tolling for us.

The brute facts more than justify so ominous a judgment. The air we breathe, the water we drink, the food we eat are polluted and contaminated. Our cities fester, and nourish fear and trembling. Our leaders appear to be blind guides, stumbling from irresolution to irresolution, from indecision to indecision, from blur to blur. The family is in disarray; divorces are fruitful and multiply; children are tossed about; women hie off in quest of themselves as men contemplate the shambles of male hegemony. There seems to be no right or wrong; no left or right; no yes or no, as tried and true identities are shattered and eternal verities mocked. It is as though, to quote the Talmud, there were no law and no judge.

And if we turn from these disordered shores and look abroad, we search in vain for consolation. Ireland is tempest-tossed; Italy seeks salvation from a reformed Communist Party; uncertainty hangs over Portugal; and an unclear destiny hovers over Spain. Greece and Turkey warily spar for an advantageous settlement over Cyprus. The European Common Market is stalled on the road to political union. The pound sterling—once the proud tower of international finance and the hallmark of stability—lies pummeled and prostrate as her Majesty's ministers strain to pull inflation down and production up. And as dishevelment and disarray spread throughout the West, the Soviet Union tightens its grip over its eastern minions, intensifies its repression of dissident intellectuals, disheartened Jews, and distressed minorities.

And then there are the tumults of Asia, Africa, the Middle East and Latin America which leave us baffled. All is so unclear; all so bewildering. Lebanon is rent asunder; Israel knows no tranquility. We are assured that the United States is a towering superpower, yet we see her on the defensive in Africa and Southeast Asia. We are led to believe that the United States is the enemy of Communism and yet we see her bailing the Soviet Union out of her agricultural distress and stoking Soviet industrial development with advanced American technology.<sup>1</sup> And we are exposed to the bizarre charade of a right-wing candidate for President scolding Mr. Ford for neglecting Communist China in his pursuit of detente with Communist Russia. That Richard M. Nixon should turn out to be the boon companion of Mao—what more do we need to convince ourselves that we

are living in a disordered world, where up is down, and down up; yes is no, and no yes; where yesterday is tomorrow, and tomorrow yesterday; where there seems to be no law, no judge.

This is a wounded time indeed. Of that we are all certain. But whence the wound? What manner of wound is it? Are we suffering from a mortal wound, presaging that the end is near—a wound which will not heal? Is the pathology of our time the pathology of holocaust, the pathology of triumphant evil? It could be for we know only too well that the distressed, disordered, and distorted soul of people nurtures such pathology, brings it to full bloom, and revels in its harvest. Six million Jews bore witness to this gruesome truth: there are no limits to the demonic, no boundaries to evil, no barriers to destructiveness.

Or is the wound painful but mendable; hurtful but passing; distressing but responsive to healing? What is our differential diagnosis to be?

Let us look first at a genuine carcinoma of the spirit, the Holocaust, and seek out its root cause. Although riveting our attention on the terminal stages of such a cancer is rich in its revelations of the abysmal depths of human depravity, such riveting does little to illuminate how such a monstrous process is spun off. Simply because people can be utterly evil, does it necessarily follow that they must be? If this were so, should not holocausts be the norm? Yet we know that there was no holocaust in Germany before World War I, no holocaust following World War I and no holocaust during the twilight years of the Weimar Republic. There was, to be sure, plenty of evil churning about; plenty of sadistic violence expressing itself; plenty of hate masking as righteous vengeance. But there was no Hitler in power; there was no legalized dehumanization, there was no holocaust. Germans, like troubled human beings everywhere, were befuddled, confused, disoriented, angry—hence highly vulnerable to demagoguery, vengeful passions, thoughtless reprisals, and sadistic interludes. But there were limits; there were barriers, there were boundaries to their sadistic demonic urges.

Before Hitler came to power, the demonic was fenced in. Likewise since the collapse of the Nazi system, evil has been kept admirably within bounds. The West Germans have been about as good or as bad as other “westerners” most of the time. Their energies have been applied to performing economic miracles for French and British emulation. Just as prior to 1929, the German people were disturbed, disoriented, and vulnerable, but they had not as yet crossed the border separating “normality” from “pathology,” so, after World War II, they quickly unshackled themselves from evil when the United States and its allies “punished” the Germans with hope, opportunity, and the glimpse of the redemptive power of the Good.

The issue for us, then, is to find that line which the Germans crossed and determine how that line can be so tightened and be made so secure that human beings will never again be able to cross it out. If, instead of focusing on the pathology, we focus on that point of critical transmutation when normal spiritual cells become malignant ones, then perhaps we can not only keep the demonic at bay, but render it helpless.

The line which the Germans crossed is so clear and sharp that one wonders why it has been so consistently overlooked. Not that it has gone totally unnoticed. Students of the Holocaust are aware of it. But for them it is just another line, not *the* line. Scholars of the Holocaust are caught up with the spreading pathology *after* the line was crossed and not with the fact that there could not have been such a pathology if the Germans had not

crossed *the* line. And this line of decisive demarcation was the plunge of the German economic system into chaos. Before this plunge, Hitler's ravings fed on the unhealed wounds of a society battered by Versailles, disordered by a feverish inflation, and disheveled by the jetsam and flotsam of human wreckage, but they did not as yet cascade over the dams and dikes of the Weimar Republic. So long as the German economy was sustained, however fitfully, by the economic recovery of 1924-29, the vast majority of Germans paid no heed to Hitler's rankings. But once the plunge began, the choice narrowed down to which evil—Hitler on the Right or Stalin on the Left—could do the most good, which unfreedom prove the more liberating, which loss of humaneness turn out to be the most redemptive. What is stunning is the fact that once the line was crossed, evil seemed to be the only viable choice. The Germans in ever larger numbers turned to either the totalitarianism of the right or to the totalitarianism of the left, so that by the summer of 1932, the center had become a chasm between left and right, not a bridge. When unemployment reached the catastrophic heights of 30 percent; when, in a world of disintegrating economic systems there seemed to be no way out; and when there was apparently no redemptive power in the good, the Germans looked either to Hitlerism or to Stalinism to save them. And Stalinism was not a lesser evil. Stalin had already snatched from Hitler the opportunity of being the first leader to vanquish his own people, debase them into proles, strip them of their human dignity, and starve them into loyalty. Either the road to the right or the road to the left was a road to holocaust.

What follows from these facts is a simple generalization: Evil is held within bounds so long as the economic foundations of a society are secure enough to ward off corrosive despair and hopeless helplessness. Contrariwise, when the economic foundations of society collapse to such a degree that people see no hope for survival in the good, they are driven to choose evil in the hope that it will enable them to survive. The nub is despair, hopelessness, desperation. Whatever triggers these distressing feelings in people is the root of our problem. The historical experience of the Jews makes this clear enough.

But we cannot end our analysis here. Germany's plunge into economic collapse was indeed the critical happening which pushed the German people over the line. But the economic collapse itself was rooted in the decay of the capitalist system of Western Europe. In retrospect, this decay had already set in when the guns of August blasted to rubble the state system which had held Europe in equilibrium since the Congress of Vienna in 1815. World War I, in a rampage of demonic destructiveness, displayed the evil lurking within the principle of nation-state sovereignty. Since each nation-state had an absolute right to protect, expand, or enlarge its interests, the only barrier to the acting-out on this principle was that erected by another sovereign nation-state, or a coalition of sovereign nation-states. War was always regarded as a legitimate instrument whenever war seemed to be the only effective way for protecting, expanding, or enhancing what the decisive elites perceived to be vital national interests.

This principle had not been born at the Congress of Vienna. It was a principle already so hoary with age and respectability in Thucydides' day, that he enshrined it as a veritable law of nature. And so this principle has seemed to be. Long before the dawn of the modern European nation-states, monarchs had sallied forth against monarchs to protect, expand, and enhance their dynastic interests. In the age of mercantilism the British, the Dutch, the Spanish, indeed all of Europe, were perennially engaged in wars to alter boundaries and terms of trade which would be advantageous to that sovereign state

which bested the others. When, therefore, in 1914 each sovereign state declared war, one by one, the absolute right to do so was held to be sacrosanct.

Sacrosanct it may have been, but its consequences were monstrous. Between 1815 and 1914, Europe had been transformed. England, France, Holland, Belgium and Germany had become highly industrialized states intensely rivaling each other. By the turn of the twentieth century, this rivalry had become world-wide as France and Britain jostled for imperialist primacy, and as Germany sought her own place in the sun. These rivalries were further exacerbated as France, England, and Germany vied for predominance in the Balkans, and in the disintegrating Ottoman Empire. And looming ominously as a power to be reckoned with was Tsarist Russia which, though not itself as yet a capitalist state, was nonetheless very much involved in the affairs of Europe, the Middle East and Asia. Since all these sovereign states and their satellites acknowledged the principle of national sovereignty as absolute, their leaders nourished nationalism as the highest of human values. To die for one's country on the field of battle was to die a martyr's death; to urge sons to sacrifice their lives, a mother's highest duty; to dissolve one's critical thinking into the watchword "My country right or wrong," a person's most precious gift. The consequences were lethal: millions butchered each other and ripped European civilization to shreds. And when the smoke had drifted away, Bolshevism had become the scavenger of the east and of Russia, and the Treaty of Versailles the harbinger of the doom of the West.

The Bolshevik Revolution was an anomaly. It was the first revolution since the revolt of the Netherlands in the sixteenth century, which ended up not with a capitalist, but with an anti-capitalist state. It thrust into power a political elite whose exclusive aim was to gain, hold, and expand power for its own sake. Although the Bolshevik leaders spun out dreams of stuffed granaries, and prosperous tranquility, their thrust was towards ruthless dictatorship and unmitigated exploitation. So frightened were these leaders by Marx's dictum that the rise of an entrepreneurial class spells the doom of political, dynastic, and ecclesiastical elites, that they overcompensated by snuffing out every wisp of the capitalist spirit. Again and again, they have recommitted themselves to economic stagnation, inefficiency without parallel, and marginal and sub-marginal living standards, lest their grip on power for its own sake be relaxed. Indeed, so terrified has this Bolshevik leadership been of any creative spark that it holds the scientist in thrall, the artist in fetters, and the poet and novelist in fear and trembling.

World War I seeded its malignant cells in Russia and spawned the Bolshevik Revolution. It seeded cells no less cancerous in Central Europe with the Treaty of Versailles. This Treaty was monstrous. It was a hive of evil. It ploughed and furrowed the soil for Hitlerism and World War II. It was a vengeful peace, free of compassion and of foresight. It recondemned Europe to nation-statism by reaffirming the principle of absolute sovereignty, and by demonstrating its efficacy as an instrument of vengeance in the hands of the victors. There was no move to dissolve this principle by merging the nation-states of Europe into a common market or into a political union. There was no perception that pummeling the victim was to enrage him. The prescription for Germany's productivity was impoverishment; the antidote to its expansive drive, castration; the barrier to its creativity, stagnation and despair. Instead of a peace settlement which would augment the wealth of Europe and the world, the Treaty of Versailles was a massive effort to render such augmentation impossible.

The fundamental causes of the Holocaust are thus deep, reaching back to the very dawn of the modern age. They are rooted in the principle of the absolute sovereignty of the nation-state. It was this principle which blunted the drive of the capitalistic spirit for a trans-national world community. The pristine capitalistic ideology, grounded in inalienable universal rights decreed by nature and nature's God, was transmuted into the ideology of the sovereign nation-state. National right vanquished natural right—and chained European capitalism to the restricted markets of the nation-state and to the imperialism spurred by such restrictions. The outcome was a world divided against itself spawning World War I, the Bolshevik Revolution, the Treaty of Versailles, Hitlerism, and the Holocaust.

The Holocaust was the final stage of a wound that would not heal because it could not heal. And it could not heal because it was a malignancy seeded by the sovereign nation-state and brought to full fruition by a catastrophic economic collapse which stripped the good of its last defenses.

What of our wound today? Is this wound likewise a malignancy? Are the distressing symptoms all about us early warning signals which we shrug off only to our mortal hurt? Or is our wound painful but on the mend? What if the convulsions of our time are the writhings of two principles striving for hegemony: one, hoary with age, which proclaims that the sovereign nation-state is absolutely sovereign, and the other, a fledgling principle, which affirms that absolute sovereignty belongs to God alone, and that this sovereignty underwrites a trans-national, trans-racial, transsexual, trans-class human community of limited, interacting non-sovereign nationalities.

“In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth,” and on the sixth day God created an individual person—male and female—fashioned after God's image and in God's likeness to exercise dominion over all of creation. God did not create England but not Italy; Russia but not China; Israel but not Egypt. And God created an individual: not white, not black; not German, not American; not rich, not poor; but a singular person, male and female. God alone is sovereign; and God is committed to the unique individual, and not to the sovereign nation-state. It was human failure, not God's design, that shattered the primordial unity of the first person and spattered human beings into turf-seeking, turf-holding, and turf-expanding enclaves of contentiousness.

Yet the awareness of God's sovereignty and God's hope was not totally repressed. The prophets of Israel saw to that. They never had any illusions that there could be any other sovereignty. Even when their people Israel was stretched taut between Egypt and Assyria, an Isaiah could call out in the name of the Lord:

“On that day, Israel shall be a third one alongside Egypt and Assyria, a blessing in the midst of the earth, whom the Lord of hosts has blessed saying, ‘Blessed is my people Egypt, the work of my hand, Assyria, and my inheritance, O Israel’” (Is. 19:24-25).

And when the exiled people were helpless suppliants, tugging at the heart of Cyrus for a renewed life in their land, the grand prophet of the exile would not barter one shred of Yahweh's sovereignty: “Who has measured the waters in the hollow of his hand, and stretched out the heavens with his span, and comprehended the dust of the earth in a measure, and weighted the mountains in scales, and the hills in the balance? Who hath meted out the spirit of the Lord? Or who was His counselor that he might instruct Him? . . . Behold, the nations are as a drop of a bucket, and are counted out as the small dust of

the balance; behold, the islands are as a mote in weight.... He bringeth princes to nothing; He maketh the judges of the earth as a thing of naught.... (Is. 40:12-14, 15, 23).

The prophets were utterly unpersuaded by the brutal facts. They were utterly unmoved by empirical reasoning. The fact that empires acted as though they enjoyed absolute sovereignty, and the fact that devastated Judah and scattered Israel seemingly confirmed the principle which Thucydides was to elevate into a law of nature: “The strong do what they can, and the weak suffer what they must”—such facts did not loosen for them God’s sovereignty, but somehow illuminated it. And by acting as though the prophets, and not the facts, bespoke the truth, the people of Israel, not the sovereignties of Assyria, or Babylonia, or Persia persevered. The *belief* that God alone was the absolute sovereign proved to have higher survival value than the overwhelming empirical evidence that mocked such a belief.

The Jewish people, as people, have thus been living witness to the power of the transnational principle. Except for very brief periods, the Jews were a non-sovereign people. Most of their history has been played out in diaspora communities spread throughout much of the world. Their terrestrial destiny was rarely in their own hands. They were welcomed by sovereigns and they were expelled by sovereigns. They were discriminated against by principalities, and they were emancipated by principalities. And even when the Balfour Declaration glowed with the promise of a restored nation, its fulfillment was emasculated by the twistings and turnings of British imperial policy.

The Holocaust was thus a desperate effort to finish off, through the extermination of the Jews, the principle that God alone is absolutely sovereign. Its flames were to signal to all of humankind that the sovereign nation-state has an absolute right to determine who shall live and who shall die; who is human, who is not; what is left and what is right; what is high and what is low, what is true and what is false. And the Jews were chosen because they were a transnational people, a people who could survive only so long as there was an ultimate Sovereign who did not bend to the facts and did not acknowledge that the nation-state would reign forever and ever. While the German people could find seeming refuge in the unbridled nationalism and the arrogant racism preached by Hitler and his minions, the Jews had no such choice. They had only a *natural* right, not a *national* right to live; for *natural* right derives from God, *national* right from human beings.

Fortunately, Hitler’s strenuous effort failed, but the principle of nation-state sovereignty was not vanquished. The war had been won by a coalition of sovereign nation-states, whose interests were neither homogeneous nor structurally compatible. None of the European nation-states were ready to forego their sovereign rights when World War II came to an end. Only the United States having developed on the American continent a unique form of capitalism, envisioned a Europe without boundaries, and an Asia, Middle East and Africa liberated for self-sustained economic growth and development. There thus emerged alongside the Cold War a covert war waged between the supranational principle, as espoused by the United States, and the nation-state principle as espoused preeminently by Europe with Great Britain in the van. It is this ongoing struggle, now reaching the critical stage, which is exposing us to so much pain and anguish.

This titanic struggle, in retrospect, had its beginnings in the breakaway revolution of the American colonists. This revolution was not just another revolution, however much it

resembled the revolt of the Netherlands, the Puritan Revolt, and the French Revolution. It was a revolution which broke away, not from a traditional, pre-capitalistic, dynastic regime, but from a parasitic, counter-developmental, imperialistic system, which was to become paradigmatic for the emerging nation-state system of Europe. The British system was, to be sure, a capitalistic system, but it was a system which generated policies favorable to precocious capitalistic development at home, but obstructive to capitalist development in the colonies. The goal was to hoard the emergent technologies, not to transfer them. The colonists were to plant and harvest tobacco, cotton, and whatever other raw materials the goodly land might produce cheaply, but they were not to build foundries, or factories, or expand their merchant marine. Whereas Britain was to be primed for further innovation, the colonies were to be restricted to replication.

The American Revolution was a rejection of this role. It was a liberation from the shackles of enforced underdevelopment. It was simultaneously the occasion for striking out with a novel concept: enclaves and groupings of peoples can effectively sustain their interests and preserve their distinctiveness through the pooling of their sovereign rights and need not congeal themselves into sovereign nation-states. The Founding Fathers underwrote this concept by affirming as self-evident that all individuals are endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights. The Creator, not man, is the absolute source of sovereignty. Sovereignty does not inhere within the nation-state; it does not even inhere within the people; it inheres within the Creator. The Creator endows the individual with certain inalienable rights, therefore the individual has a right to rise up in rebellion against those who would disendow what the Creator has endowed. And this choice of the word "Creator" was deliberate. It was the God who was prior to human beings; the God who was prior to peoples and nations and dynasts; it was the God who was prior to any specific revelation. It was, in a word, the Creator as por-trayed in the first chapter of Genesis. The American system is thus rooted in *natural* not *national* right. It is grounded in the *natural* rights of individuals, and not the divine right of kings; in the natural right of the person, not in the coercive right of class or party. And what must be underscored is that, for the Founding Fathers, these natural rights were sacrosanct, even when violated, ravaged, and rendered inoperative.

This unique and noble experiment proved to be a smashing success. A vast sub-continent was settled with every variant of humankind without the need for a single additional nation-state. Ultimately, even regions sharing no border with the continental United States were drawn within the federal system. The violent uprising of the Southern states proclaiming the supremacy of national over natural rights was decisively put down. The millions of immigrants from every niche and cranny of Europe were absorbed without stripping them of their ethnic and traditional identities and without successive waves of revolution. Even the tumultuous upheavings of industrialization, with its raw exploitation, raucous chaos, and rambunctious corruption were surmounted without the manning of barricades and the storming of the Stock Exchange. The commitment to this principle withstood the corrosion of events, the high heat of frenzied rhetoric, and the ominous clashes of interest against interest, group against group, and class against class. Below and above the din, a hard fact had crystallized: a subcontinent, teeming with variety and difference, could be organized, sustained, and made prosperous without the need for a single additional sovereign nation-state.

The federal principle had another nourishing effect. It allowed for another unique breakthrough. Because the American system did not breed nation-states, it opened up markets for business enterprise on so vast a scale that it forged anew a stage of economic development, a stage which no European country was able to reach until after World War II. This stage was characterized by the mass production of expensive end-products, such as the automobile—products which require a wide market and a rising living standard. Only the United States had both the wide markets and the rising standards of living. This wide market had been prepared by the federal system which encouraged the free flow of capital, labor, talent, and commodities throughout the length and breadth of the land. The high standard of living was, in turn, assured by the incredible productivity of American agriculture which transformed the tradition-bound peasant of Europe into the innovating, high technology farmer of the United States, and by the rise of real wages which followed on the heightened productivity of workers in the new capital intensive industries. It was this break-through to a new stage of economic development which, by binding profits to the heightened productivity of the farmer and the worker, and to the rising standard of living which went in tandem, made economic imperialism unprofitable for the innovating sectors of the American economy. Whereas for the British system profits were generated out of replication and underdevelopment, for the American system they were generated out of innovation and development. Whereas the British system hoarded technology so that the imperial center might enjoy a monopoly for its industrial exports, and low prices for its food, and other raw material imports, the American system was more and more pressed to transfer technology so as to heighten the productivity and raise the standard of living of the economically underdeveloped.



The American Revolution was thus no ordinary revolution. It was a revolution to spur economic development, not block it; to establish the primacy of natural right, not national right; and to demonstrate that, in principle, there need be no sovereign nation-states at all, only semiautonomous enclaves and groupings. The American Revolution consequently remains unfinished, since it embodies a principle which perpetually challenges its contrary: development vs. stagnation; natural right vs. national right; an integrated world of diversity, prosperity and peace vs. a world of disjointed fragments, deepening impoverishment, and wars without end—until the end.

The clash of these principles intensified when World War II drew to a close. At that time, not a single nation-state of Europe envisioned a Europe without boundaries. Not a single nation-state had any intention of loosening its grip over underdeveloped areas under its hegemony—not Holland, not Belgium, not France, not Britain. Had the nation-states of Europe been allowed a free hand, they would have resacralized national sovereignty through another vengeful Treaty of Versailles. But they were not given a free hand. The United States was firmly opposed to Versailles revisited. The United States was for an integrated, not a fragmented Europe. And in pursuit of this goal, the United States “punished” Germany and Japan by stripping them of effective sovereignty and by goading them into the performance of economic miracles. American policy blocked evil by giving it no fertile soil for growth and development. It disarmed evil by doing good. It kept evil in check, not by preachment, but by letting loose the forces for economic



reconstruction, economic enterprise, and economic opportunity. The outcome was a shocking blow to the principle of nation-state sovereignty; for the two nations, Germany and Japan, which had been barred from possessing nuclear weapons far outstripped both nuclear-armed England and France in economic productivity.

The United States was no less persistent in seeking to do for its allies what it had insisted on doing for its enemies. Whereas Great Britain advocated a Europe of independent, sovereign nation-states, the United States threw its full support behind the Treaty of Rome and the construction of the European Common Market. United States decision-makers reasoned that if nation-state wars were to be abolished in Europe, it was essential that the concept of Europe arouse deeper loyalty than the concept of France, or Germany. But such a deeper loyalty was possible only if the production of coal and iron and steel were a joint venture; only if trade flowed freely over national borders; only if the sinews of economic activity bound the peoples of Europe together tightly into common bonds of transnational interest. The barrier to evil was the pulling down of barriers; the antidote to destructive wars was to render them unattractive; the cure for carcinoma of the spirit was to deprive pathology of nutrients. France and Germany will never go to war again because there is a common market binding them and not a Maginot Line separating them.

The United States likewise took another vital step to dry up the sources of evil. Unlike the nation-states of Europe, the United States did not envision a post-war world half-slave and half-free. Its leaders were fully aware of the poor profit-showing of imperialism. “Wealth!” President Franklin D. Roosevelt had confided to his son Elliot at the time of the Casablanca Conference: “Imperialists don’t realize what they can do, what they can create. They’ve robbed this continent [Africa] of billions, and all because they were too short-sighted to understand that their billions were pennies *compared with the possibilities!* Possibilities that include a better life for the people who inhabit this land....” (Elliot Roosevelt, *As He Saw It* [New York, 1946], p. 86, italics mine). There was an alternative to imperialism, and that alternative was the upgrading of the productivity of labor with its concomitant elevation of living standards. Developmental economics, unlike imperialistic economics, raises real wages and real profits simultaneously. And as proof that such an alternative was viable, the United States could point to its own unequalled achievement of having broken through to a stage of economic development that no European nation-state imperialist nation had been able to do. A capitalist world divided against itself could not stand; nor could it be half-imperialist and half-developmental. American decision-makers were determined that in this global civil war developmental capitalism would vanquish nation-state imperialist capitalism. The *grip* of evil—the degradation and the spoliation of human beings—could be loosened only by a surge of constructive economic development. President Harry S. Truman’s Point IV was thus the first breach of the battlements of imperialism.

It is indeed regrettable that the anti-imperialistic thrust of the American system has been so effectively obscured. It is no less regrettable that time does not allow me to share with you the evidence which has persuaded me that the appearances of American foreign policy frequently have little relationship to its realities. Living in the dark shadows of nuclear options, statesmen have been compelled to devise evermore effective means for obscuring their real designs from the multitudes, lest an enraged public opinion allow no withdrawal from the brink. The struggle is muted but it goes on below the level of

awareness without surcease. For the most powerful obstacle to the dismantling of economic and political imperialism has been, and indeed still is, the stake which Great Britain has in sustaining as long as possible the patterns of underdevelopment which have been, and still are, the major sources of whatever dwindling wealth she has. The battle between the pound and the dollar has been a far more fundamental battle than that between the dollar and the ruble, even though we have been led to think otherwise. And since, in this struggle, Britain's vital national interests are involved, and since Britain is an awesome nuclear power, the danger of slippage into a nuclear war is so all-present that it is waged covertly. But that this struggle has been intense is evident enough in the memoirs of British and American statesmen and in that one blatant instance of direct confrontation when the United States joined with the Soviet Union to block Britain from regaining control over the Suez Canal, the jugular of her Empire and the symbol of her strategic prowess.<sup>2</sup>

Since the anti-imperialist commitment of the United States can only be discerned in the wake of its "facadal" defeats—the American economic presence in Asia, the Middle East and Africa has grown, not diminished, with each failure of the United States' declarative policy—I must restrict myself to the logic inherent within developmental capitalism. If we draw up a profile of the American capitalist system—its transnational banks, its cosmocorporations, its high technology industries, its precocious managerial class—and ask ourselves what kind of world would be most profitable to them, it could hardly be a world of underdevelopment, maldevelopment, disdevelopment. It could only be a world drawn onto a spiral of development, a spiral energized by a continuously outward-reaching frontier.

Indeed, it is the emergence of this developmental frontier and the spiral of development which it generates that can give us the hope that the good and the holy will ultimately triumph. For the spiral of development is something new in the world. It is so new that few have perceived it, and even fewer have discerned its revolutionary implications. Certainly, its meaning for the triumph of the good and the holy has been only dimly glimpsed, if glimpsed at all.



Ironically enough, its genesis can be traced back to the Manhattan Project, even though, at the time, no one had any inkling that a new stage of economic development was being ushered in and that the infrastructure for the good and the holy were being built. Far from it! Those involved were concentrating solely on producing an atomic bomb before Hitler did. There was no thought given at the time to the fact that in translating a highly abstract, mathematical law of nature into technological processes, the bomb-builders were reversing the normal mode of technological advance. They were not, as in the past, building technology upon technology, technique upon technique, but they were deriving novel, concrete technologies from an utterly abstract formula. And this translation worked. A grand reversal had occurred: instead of from the concrete to the abstract, it was now from the abstract to the concrete. And in this reversal lay creative possibilities that bordered on the infinite. For what had occurred was, to speak theologically and metaphorically, the tapping of the Mind of God. Finite human minds had drawn upon the Infinite Mind. It was only because  $E = mc^2$  is true, is expressive of reality, that the bomb could be built. A dependable, nonmaterial, intangible

mathematical formula, a formula which Einstein had discovered but not created, had proved to be the source of technological innovation.

This breakthrough had momentous consequences. It radically altered the directional thrust of the American economic system by ushering in a new stage of economic development, the stage of higher and higher technology, the stage of a knowledge-based economy, the stage which is more and more being referred to as the post-industrial. For once the abstract, mathematical laws of nature can be depended upon to spawn innovative technologies in response to problems set by human beings, then, in principle, there is no limit to the creative possibilities open to humankind. The realms of impossibility shrink as we reach out for the moon, the planets, even the stars. Technological generations as, for example, in the computer industries, span months, not decades. Whereas, in the past, we were all dependent upon what nature had stored up for us, and were threatened by its depletion, we now are on the edge of creating all the resources that we need as our minds steadily unravel the divine formulae of creation. We are tapping an infinite Mind whose laws are proving to be true, dependable, and eternal.

The developmental spiral is the outcome of this spawning of innovative technologies from the abstract laws of nature. High technologies make way for higher technologies in endless succession. As a consequence, a society such as the United States, which is on the frontier of development, finds itself pressed to transfer the technologies which become functionally obsolescent on the frontier, to societies a level below the United States on the spiral of development, such as Japan and the European Common Market. These societies are impelled, in turn, to transfer to societies on the level below them the technologies which now, for them, have been displaced by higher technologies. These societies, in turn, transfer their former high technology to the societies on the level below them, until even the most wretched of the earth are drawn onto the spiral. And so long as the developmental frontier is sustained by the innovative technologies spawned by the abstract laws of nature, every level of the spiral is lifted upward, stage by stage, until there is no longer any absolute poverty or absolute degradation. Whereas in the past the advanced societies hoarded their technologies in their own self-interest, they must now transfer their functionally obsolescent technologies lest they do irreparable damage to their self-interest. In a word, however self-seeking and selfish their motives, they are compelled to extend the realm of the good. The spiral of development renders poverty obsolescent; makes exploitation profitless; and deprives imperialism of its incentives.

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Evil, as we have seen, has been nourished by twin roots: economic break-down and nation-state warfare. On rare occasions, evil has broken down all barriers and has rendered the good and the holy helpless. The most frightening breakthrough occurred when Hitler rose to power and gave free rein to the demonic. It occurred for two reasons: Firstly, because the Treaty of Versailles had reaffirmed the principle of the absolute sovereignty of the nation-state. The victorious nations had an absolute right to despoil their victims. And despoil them they did. And secondly, it had occurred because of the total collapse of the German economy. When this collapse occurred, the Germans crossed the line into the realm of absolute evil. And because that line was crossed within the span of our memories, and because it was crossed by men and women, such as we, we are

terrified by every symptom that reminds us that it could happen again. . Evil might yet launch a successful counter attack.

But symptoms are frequently misleading. Pain can signal death, it can signal a minor disturbance. There are birth pangs and there are death pangs. And the pangs which we are now experiencing are, I would suggest, the pangs of birth. A world is dying and a world is being born. The age of the sovereign nation-state is making way for the age of the transnational human community. The age of imperialism is being superseded by the age of development. The age of economic constraint is giving way to the age of economic abundance. The age of quantity is being transmuted into the age of quality. The age of the sovereignty of matter is being vanquished by the age of the hegemony of the spirit. For, at long last, a spiral of development has begun to build a solid infrastructure for the good and the holy. Is there any wonder, then, that with such worlds in collision, we quake with terror and recoil with pain?

To live in a time such as ours is to be afflicted. The old order may be tottering, but it has not collapsed. The new order may glow with promise, but it cannot redeem us yet. But we can hope, and we can have faith, for that is what our prophets taught. They never despaired. They were certain that there must come a day when nations would live in harmony, when the lion would lie down with the lamb, when equity and justice would reign, and when God's image would be seen dearly in the visage of every person. The prophets were certain because they had faith that God had not condemned humankind to despair and defeat, nor had God abandoned his creation to the forces of evil. And they proclaimed this faith in the face of the facts, and despite the facts.

"We are more fortunate. The spiral of development is real. It is liberating. We have tapped the mind of God and are now free to create whatever kind of world we should like to have. Shall we not now tap the heart of God and cross over *the* line, never crossed by human beings before, into the realm of the unbounded good? For if human beings once crossed the line into the realm of utter evil when their world collapsed, do we not have grounds for hoping that they may yet cross the line into the realm of the utter good when they have built a world for themselves out of the mind and heart of God? On that day our wound will be healed, for on that day the good and the holy will be triumphant.

#### NOTES

<sup>1</sup> "The irony of the present situation is that the agricultural failure of the leading: Communist country—the Soviet Union—can impose real economic burdens on the leading capitalist country. the United States. Most of the erratic movements of U.S. exports in recent years have been the result of Russian crop failures. In 1972, for example, a 13-million-ton decline in Soviet wheat production led to a 9.5-million-ton increase in Soviet wheat imports from the United States. *This means that in the end American consumers paid for Russian production deficiencies.*" Lewis Beman, "A New Case for that Old Ever-normal Granary," *Fortune* (April, 1976). p. 174 (italics mine). For the *absolute* dependence on the Soviet Union on western technology since the Bolshevik Revolution, see the superbly documented three-volume study by Anthony C. Sutton. *Western Technology and Soviet Economic Development* (Palo Alto, CA: University of Stanford Press, 1968-73).

<sup>2</sup> The anti-imperialist role of the United States was fully appreciated by British statesmen, however blurred it may have appeared to less sophisticated observers. It is a leitmotif of Harold Macmillan's multi-volumed memoirs. The intensity of British resentment may be gauged by Selwyn Lloyd's outburst against Dean Acheson's West Point speech of December 2, 1962: "No American statesman who wants to emphasize the decline in Britain's imperial power can honestly deny that his own country has done much to make the

process of transformation faster than was wise or safe... Whatever Washington may have intended, there is the knowledge in Britain that in Iran, in Egypt, in the Middle East, in Africa and Asia, and, on *some* issues, in the United Nations, American influence has on a number of occasions been cast against Britain. ... no American should denigrate Britain on the score of having lost an empire without accenting some of the responsibility.... The United States seems to many to want to have it both ways. It is all right for the United States to take *savage* action against our shipping, to reject the idea of interdependence over weapon production, to try to deny entry into the United States market of our aircraft, to encourage American businessmen in economic imperialism and to have them compete against their allies, not always with complete scrupulousness... On the topic of United States leadership, I will be frank. For a long time the United States' role in the world outside was regarded by the Americans as that of the great champion of theoretical liberal principles. The supporters of any subversive or insurrectionary movement anywhere in the world were given freedom of the American press and platform. How the Kremlin must have been delighted to see the United States' friends and allies undermined in this way! (Selwyn Lloyd, "England's Place in the Sun," *Saturday Evening Post*. March 2. 1963, pp. 6-8. Italics mine.)