

jhs



ABBEY OF GETHSEMANI

TRAPPIST, KENTUCKY

March 9, 1965

Dear Bob:

Thanks for your letter and the two most interesting enclosures. I will pass over the Voegelin article for the moment, which is perhaps too clear. Such a schematic presentation is bound to oversimplify, and one does detect hostility to Christianity. Also I don't think it is necessary to assume pathology when More supposes certain ideal conditions for an imaginary Utopia. But the main point of the article is certainly interesting and important, and there is no question of the "gnostic" trend. The most significant evidence of it is, to my mind, in the vogue of Teilhard de ~~Sakri~~ Chardin, if V's categories hold.

I do want to say something about your memo to Admiral Burke. Naturally I am absolutely against a war in Vietnam on ethical principles. But putting that aside, I tend mainly to question your diagnosis of the situation on p. 9. My impression (and I certainly speak as one less wise because I cannot possibly keep up with the events) is that the main trouble with American policy out there is that well meaning men have been taking a deceptively simple view of what is going on. I believe, from what I have heard about it, that your assumptions amount to a disastrous oversimplification. Since in point of fact the confusion and ambiguity of the Viet Nam mess are now enormous, I wonder what hope there is of ever really convincing the Vietnamese that this would be a real "war of liberation". On the one hand they seem to want us out of there as much as anything else, and they are weary of the whole mess, and they have lost all confidence in the people we have been working with, I mean the type of leader we have supported there, so that my impression is that the people as a whole are just about fed up with us, as well as with everybody else. I do not say this is good or hopeful or that it means that we should simply walk out and leave them, but I hardly think you have in Vietnam the favorable climate for a really inspired kind of war of liberation which, ideally, could be a "just war". But in the situation we have now I think we have a combination of blindness, error and impatient wilfulness which are adding up to more and more senseless and futile gestures.

My whole sympathy is with the clearly expressed statements of the Pope against war out there and for negotiation. Naturally, the Chinese are not angels and neither are the Soviets, but we can assume that they are rational, and that they will at least communicate with us ~~and~~ and with those concerned. Supposing there is a war, in the end there will have to be some kind of agreement anyway. Of course, we cherish the hope that we can get ourselves in such a favorable position that they will have to listen to us. This is a dream, Bob. The facts of the moment are not pleasant, but they are facts we are able to face and make sense out of, I should think. I see no prospect whatever of a war in Vietnam making any sense out of the mess there, quite the contrary. And I also think that the war itself would be one of the bloodiest, dirtiest, filthiest

query

agree

what kind
sure negoti-
but for what

guerrilla war
was my
proposal

pieces of savagery man has yet perpetrated -- with no prospect whatever ~~that~~ that any consideration would be given to the rights of non-combatants and all that sort of thing. Therefore to my mind your scenario looks good on paper but its logic is deceptive, and I think things would be vastly different from the clear, simple prospect which you outline.

That is my opinion on the memo. I just don't think war is the rational way to handle this, and the Pope has said the same over and over again in the past months.

However I am certainly grateful that you had enough confidence in my opinion to send the memo to me. I have spoken frankly, because I thought that was what you wanted. I know you can discount my limitations. I shall keep the whole thing in my prayers. I appreciated the interesting handwritten letter you sent a few days ago.

God bless you, Bob. May you see clearly what is best, and may His protection overshadow all of you in Washington.

Cordial good wishes always, in the Lord,

Tom

Jan 30, 1968

Thanks for your letter and the two most interesting enclosures. I will pass over the Vietnam thing for the moment, which is a very clear, but a schematic presentation is bound to be overly simple, and one does detect hostility to Communism. Also I don't think it is necessary to assume pathology when there suppose certain ideal conditions for an imaginary Utopia. But the main point of the article is certainly interesting and important, and there is no question of the "hostile" trend. The most significant evidence of this, to my mind, is the volume of letters to the Editor, in the categories held. I do want to say something about your opinion to Admiral Burke. Naturally I am absolutely against a war in Vietnam on ethical principles. But putting that aside, I tend mainly to question your diagnosis of the situation on the U.S. intervention (and I certainly speak for the less wise because I cannot possibly keep up with the events) is that the main trouble with American policy out there is that well meaning men have been taking a geographically single view of what is going on. I believe, from what I have heard about it, that your diagnosis amounts to a disastrous oversimplification. Since in point of fact the situation and complexity of the Vietnam war are now enormous, I wonder what hope there is of ever really convincing the Vietnamese that this would be a real "war of liberation". On the one hand they seem to want us out of there as much as anything else, and they are weary of the whole mess, and they have lost all confidence in the people we have been working with. I mean the type of leader we have supported there, so that my impression is that the people as a whole are just doubtful or hostile or that it is just everybody else. I do not say this is good or hopeful or that it means that we should simply walk out and leave them, but I hardly think you have in Vietnam the favorable climate for a really inspired kind of war of liberation which, ideally, could be a just war. But in the situation we have now I think we have a combination of blindness, error and impatient willingness which are adding up to more and more senseless and futile gestures. My whole sympathy is with the clearly expressed statements of the Pope against war out there and for negotiation. Naturally, the Chinese are not angels and neither are the Soviets, but we can assume that they are rational, and that they will at least communicate with us on and with those concerned. Supposing there is a war, in the end there will have to be some kind of agreement anyway. Of course, we cherish the hope that we can get ourselves in such a favorable position that they will have to listen to us. This is a dream, Bob. The facts of the moment are not pleasant, but they are facts and we have to face and make sense out of, I should think. I see no prospect whatever of a war in Vietnam making any sense out of the mess there, quite the contrary. And I also think that the worst itself would be one of the most difficult, difficult