

Correspondence

The End of the Cold War

To the Editors: To read John Lukacs' "The End of the Cold War" (*Worldview*, February) is to be transported without warning back into the old anti-Roosevelt arguments that occupied so much of our time after World War II, when the "revisionists" of *that* period kept shouting "If only we had listened to Churchill!" I would have hoped that this kind of nonsense was well behind us.

If we take Churchill at his word, then his W.W. II strategy was as silly as ours in Vietnam. Churchill argued that he did not seek a "massive" invasion of the Balkans, only the introduction of small units that would encourage the captive peoples to rise up and overthrow the Nazis. This was Dulles-style liberation rhetoric; in action, it would have resembled the idea of the "Camelot Kids," that a few people wearing green berets could be our missionaries to Southeast Asia.

If we do not take Churchill at his word, and assume that large-scale invasion of the Balkans would have been sensible, we are left to contemplate what it would have been like plowing through the Alps in the winter of 1944. Military staffs in both Britain and U.S. were aghast at the thought, and they incessantly warned Churchill that whatever he might *want* to happen, he might get bogged down in the Balkans, hence should not undertake it unless he was prepared to face the consequences. Would that civilian leadership in the U.S. in the sixties had been open to such warnings.

If, on the other hand, Lukacs has it in mind that our advance in Western Europe should have gone farther to the east, he has forgotten what so many of us have liked to forget.

The Russo-German war in the east was four times the size of the one in the west, so the Soviets more or less "bought" their position in Europe in terms of energy and lives. Simply stated, the West had no such option, and it remains folly to argue as if it had. To argue that the Soviets would have had to "retreat before such a giant power" (U.S.-U.K.) is to betray one's total ignorance. In this connection, the evidence has been persuasive for years that Churchill was the prime mover in World War II for the level of destruction that occurred. One can argue cogently that "unconditional surrender" and "mass bombing" were British inventions, even if we perfected them.

Indeed, Lukacs' overall theme has within it a striking contradiction. If the cold war represents agreement between the U.S. and USSR on "spheres of influence," does he really think the Soviets would have been content to stay fenced in all these years behind walls Lukacs would have designed? I, for one, don't like to contemplate a power balance in which one nation-state, the USSR, armed with nuclear weapons and confined to its heartland, might feel that it had to expand. Since I am a WASP, I suppose I should feel flattered by Lukacs' notion of the potential of "English-speaking peoples." I hope we are never so absurd again as to try to realize such potential.

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The Berrigan Doctrine

To the Editors: Two men in our time have raised in a radical manner the fundamental question of just what theology is. The first was Dietrich Bonhoeffer who, as early as the writing of *Act and Being*, assumed a radically Kantian position

with respect to the problem of knowledge, including theological knowledge. All knowledge, Bonhoeffer insisted, falls exclusively within the scope of the human mind; thoughts so derived are the sole responsibility of man, who cannot derive from thought the knowledge of God. From this it follows that, whatever faith is, it is not knowledge of God (theology) in the form of human thought about God. That is to say, all such thoughts about God are purely human, hence always tentative in nature (Bonhoeffer used the word "speculative"), and cannot in any way constitute faith. That is the critical, or negative, side of the new reformation: Whereas Luther insisted that there was no way from the "works" of deed to God, Bonhoeffer insisted that there was no way from the "works" of thought to God. A man has no other choice than to rely upon his own mind—as weak a reed as that may be—and this is precisely what it means to have come of age.

Now it is Daniel Berrigan who takes up this mantle. As he told Robert Coles: "It seems to me that a figure like Bernanos's curé took for granted human malice and suffering and violence and spite; and yet, especially toward the end there, toward his death, he knew that even if everything did not measure up to his hopes, still those hopes were grounded in something inviolable, something that lives on and on, because it is God-inspired. Undoubtedly we are talking here about a 'something,' a kind of hope, which is hard to describe. To the majority of good people, especially it seems to me in the movement, the sum of the facts before us adds up to whatever hope there is. But that is not what I am talking about." Nearly three decades earlier Dietrich Bonhoeffer wrote exactly the same thing: ". . . we are able to wait for the success of our cause in quietness and confidence. It may be, however, that the responsible, thinking people of earlier generations who stood at a turning-point of history felt just as we do, for the very rea-

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son that Something new was being born which was not discernible in the alternatives of the present." Both men simply groped toward "something" because they understood, as Daniel Berrigan told his questioner, that the world cannot be comprehended in terms of Platonic forms. Back to Kant but not behind him.

These reflections are occasioned by Richard Neuhaus's review-essay of the Coles-Berrigan conversation, *The Geography of Faith* (*Worldview*, February), in which Neuhaus criticizes Daniel Berrigan for relying too much upon the judgment and vindication of "the movement" and not enough upon God. What he really means by Berrigan's failure to rely upon God he reveals when he complains that Berrigan does not make clear "the connection between the particularities of Christian belief and social responsibility." Neuhaus wants to employ Christian belief as a road map, and, of course, that is precisely what Bonhoeffer felt and Berrigan feels to be impossible. Faith, for them, is simply living naked next to history, and because such faith is a matter of specific historical responsibility (political decisions) the movement becomes the only available means by which Daniel Berrigan can live close to history—just as the Confessing Church and the German Resistance were the political milieu in which Dietrich Bonhoeffer chose to stay close to history. Meanwhile, the "something" is invisible and beyond.

Theology as interpretation is obedience as pure risk.

Charles E. Kinzie

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To the Editors: Richard Neuhaus's assessment of the Robert Coles-Daniel Berrigan conversations in the Feb-

ruary *Worldview* deserves the widest possible attention—not least because of the Christian moderation of its style and tone. These qualities in it alone make it a rebuke to the "heroic" immoderation that is so characteristic of the Berrigan position, but perhaps more important they make Mr. Neuhaus's essay a splendid procedural model. Throughout the sixties it was the (often innocent) practice of the movement to silence potential adversaries by inducing them to accept often highly questionable statements rather than to separate themselves from so much asserted virtue. The result has been bad for everyone, including the movement itself, which all along needed a rhetorically scrupulous opposition to keep it from corrupting itself.

How nicely Mr. Neuhaus turns Dostoyevski's "Legend of the Grand Inquisitor" against the movement (it's supposed to work the other way), and how revealingly he brings to bear on it the Montanist heresy! In Neuhaus's context, both help to underline an anti-democratic potential in the movement. Its kind of intransigent heroism ("legitimated by personal sacrifice," as Mr. Neuhaus puts it) makes it dangerously easy to see the democratic process as hopelessly corrupt.

John P. Sisk

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Richard Neuhaus responds:

I am grateful for Mr. Sisk's remarks, and of course agree that there is a continuing need for those who call the country to judgment to keep themselves under an even more rigorous judgment by the biblical command to "speak the truth in love." I am impressed and encouraged by the generally favorable response to "The Berrigan Doctrine of Heroism" by people identified with "the movement."

In response to Mr. Kinzie: I had

hoped the article made clear my abiding respect for the person and witness of Daniel Berrigan. Mr. Kinzie's fulsome appreciation of Berrigan, however, is not enhanced by his forced comparisons with Dietrich Bonhoeffer or by his near equation of Nazi Germany and the current state of American politics and life. I would only cite Bonhoeffer's close friend, Eberhard Bethge, and another biographer, Mary Bosanquet, in cautioning Mr. Kinzie against seizing upon some of the more vague and tentative of Bonhoeffer's personal reflections. Bonhoeffer wished to challenge both the reductionism (Mr. Kinzie's "something") of liberal theology and the "positivism of revelation" advanced by Karl Barth and the Confessing Church against reductionism (as represented by Rudolf Bultmann). He writes from prison: "I am of the view that the full content, including the mythological concepts, must be maintained." His source of personal confidence is equally unequivocal: "You must never doubt that I am traveling my appointed road with gratitude and cheerfulness. My past life is replete with God's goodness, and my sins are covered with the forgiving love of Christ crucified" (see *Letters and Papers from Prison*, pp. 199, 245, 249, and elsewhere).

Finally, the article explicitly states my confidence that Daniel Berrigan's reliance is upon God and the ministry of His victorious love in Christ. I do not think I suggested that Christian belief should be a "road map." I do argue that Berrigan's witness would be more persuasive within the Christian community if "he related his course more explicitly to the particularities of the biblical tradition." To those (not Mr. Kinzie) who responded that Berrigan is a poet and not a pedantic theologian or professional ethicist, I can only suggest that their ready toleration of careless thinking and factual inaccuracy is demeaning both to Berrigan and the vocation of poet.