

*Inability
to create
ideological
alternative*

The global effectiveness of the Soviet Union and, in more particularized circumstances, of China, has been demonstrated by recent events in Southeast Asia, Africa and the Middle East. In contrast to this, the former "Western allies" of 20 years ago, despite the evolution of the EEC and the specific rebuildings of West Germany and Japan, and the attempts at independent power by France, are, in a time of economic and strategic uncertainty, most clearly reflected in the eroded self-confidence of the United States. There has been a great leap between the basic assurance in its democratic "mission" of the mid-1950s and the hesitating stance of today.

One of the clearest themes emerging from this time of retrospection and of questioning the United States role in the global balances of power is that, in the final years of the decline of the former imperial powers, the United States has been unable to create a sustained ideological alternative to Marxism amongst the impoverished and the idealistic of the emerging states.

This is not necessarily a moral failure; idealism has been a component of the various forms of aid and volunteer assistance programs, although the ultimate premise was pragmatic — to better the image of the United States amongst the recipient peoples. In addition, a genuine detestation of Communism and a spoken belief in the basically undefinable term "freedom" underlay the more idealistic parts of the foreign policies of the Eisenhower and Kennedy administrations. Indeed, the mixture of opportunism and idealism resulted in the often contrarily-juxtaposed anti-colonialist and anti-Communist policies that made United States policy so difficult for its principle allies through Suez and the whole John Foster Dulles era.

Growth of cynicism

In recent years, the United States has been regarded by many with an increasing cynicism as a result of the Watergate scandal, the support of dubious regimes, the international activities of the CIA, and the mishandling of the Indochina conflict. While these and other factors could be cited for the decline in the international stature of the United States, one of the major underlying reasons for the contraction of its influence has been the lack of an "American" libertarian ideology empathetic to the conditions and aspirations of many Third World peoples.

The alienation resulting from lack of such empathy has increasingly been reflected in the United Nations Assembly and Security Council, where resolutions

and motions specifically against the policy interests of the United States have received heavy support from Third World or "non-aligned" nations, as well as the major Communist powers. With this shift, the traditional non-Communist powers have found themselves forced into the veto stance that had once been the preserve of the Soviet Union.

While the military and economic power of the United States remains formidable, the problem of gaining an ideological empathy with a vast part of the world's populations is critical if it is to aid the formulation of regimes that have wide local support, integrity of administration, and a will to longevity in the face of Marxist or Communist expansionist pressures. For the Third World, contemporary reality is the spread of power, under Marxist ideologies, in Southeast Asia, mid- and southern Africa, and in certain specific areas of the Arab Middle East, North Africa, and some Indian states.

While in Europe Marxist ideals have held strong appeal for the urban proletariat and sections of the artistic-intellectual community, their appeal in the Third World extends to the intellectual-idealist and the peasant. There is, in Marxist theory, a clear justification and prescription for social change that has a ready appeal in corrupted or maladministered developing states. Whether such ideology has been the precursor of social-revolutionary change, or the credo of a revolutionary movement, or the dogma enforced by revolutionary *cadres*, it has often been more comprehensible and indigenously attractive than the semblances of "Americanism".

The attraction of Marxism lives in the cloak of strength and integrity it wraps around revolutionary movements. It gives a history of concrete examples of former revolutionary movements that succeeded from impoverished beginnings against nearly insurmountable odds. Included in this folklore are Mao's Long March and the first struggles of the Vietminh against the French reoccupation of Indochina after the Second World War.

Marxist revolutionary ideology gives a credo of faith that sustains its followers through adversity. Hardships of revolutionary struggle are accepted as a necessary part of the quality of the endeavour, an approach with many parallels to early Spartan Puritanism. The idealistic image of a near-ascetic character of conduct for the *cadres*, even if unachieved or harsh in practice, has a ready attraction for idealists trapped in corrupt regimes.

For the peasant, the strength of Marxist ideology lies in its identification