

raise \$20,000 in contributions of \$250 or less in each of the 50 states qualifies for public contributions matching whatever else he raises to finance his effort. Parts of this law, in particular those parts that placed limits on how much candidates could spend, have since been struck down

by the United States Supreme Court, leaving Americans in 1976 with a set of rules governing election spending that are as difficult to understand as the election procedure itself.

But that is another story — another very long, and very complicated, story.

Canada's neighbour

America after *détente* ... towards an Atlantic orthodoxy

Bicentennial backtracking

By Georges Vigny

The United States of America, whose colossal stature is not an accident of fate — and even less of history —, is today a demonstration, probably without equal in the annals of the past, of democracy at two levels — domestic policy and foreign policy. These two levels have such a close causal relation that it is practically impossible to tell if one is the cause or the effect of the other.

It has been said that America's foreign policy is conditioned by the situation within the country. This is no doubt true, as is the opposite proposition: in this Bicentennial year, which is also that of the Presidential election, the campaign speeches of all candidates in the race, Republican or Democrat, provide ample proof that foreign policy is part of everyday life in America. It was not so long ago that a President of the United States, enmeshed in an election scandal partly of his own making, set out on a quest for the Golden Fleece in the Middle East.

Moreover, this involvement in the world scene, associated with the giant stature of a global power, means precisely that half of humanity is affected by the race to the White House. The "Middle American" from the Midwest who goes to

cast his ballot is really doing something far weightier, perhaps without fully realizing the true significance of his act — he is also electing a President, for a four-year term, for over half the earth.

But besides this interpenetration of the two levels of American democracy, one particular characteristic of what we shall call "American-style internationalism" should be indicated: a divided political conscience, which permits the democratic values so staunchly defended at home to be ignored beyond the borders of the U.S. either by direct military intervention or by covert attempts to undermine other regimes. If American leadership is a golden apple, this contradiction is surely the worm inside it.

To hold its own (and the larger the scale, the greater the difficulty), such a power relies on a network of privileged relations, or a system of alliances, whose major challenge is not to be content with merely maintaining the status quo. "Leadership" necessarily implies "alienation". Without wishing to oversimplify (or ever caricature, as some might do), we can say that postwar history is the history of the power drive of the United States, as it followed first a strategy of "containment" and then a policy of *détente* — both designed if not to push back then at least to limit Soviet expansion.

Without adopting a Manichaean view of the world, we have to admit that, in such distant theatres as Southeast Asia, southern Africa, the Middle East and

*Foreign policy
is part of
everyday life
in America*

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