
TURNING THE TIME OVER TO . . .

Garth N. Jones

IF IT WERE ONLY THAT SIMPLE

I APPRECIATE THE Eugene England article "On Saving the Constitution. . ." (SUNSTONE 12:3). I believe I understand one of his concerns that Mormon conservative thought and behavior in Utah has gone too far astray. To remain viable, however, his opinion needs to be more forcefully tested and contested.

After reading and re-reading England's essay, I became uncomfortable with his admonishments. I accept their "tenor"; I cannot accept their "simplicity." Especially his admonition on, although he did not use these words, the conduct of "just war" (see pp. 29-30). However, he used a quote from Church President David O. McKay which indicated to me he believed in this notion: "Nor is was justified in an attempt to enforce a new order of government . . . however better the government . . . may be" (p. 29). I trust I understood England's basic premise—In Vietnam, Grenada, and Nicaragua, England asserts, the United States "violated that prophetic principle" (p. 29).

After reading his assertion, I immediately thought of terrible visions of Nazi concentration camps. Those persons incarcerated in the worst of hells cried out for change in government order. Although I did not hear their cries in Poland or Germany, I have heard their cries elsewhere. In nearly four decades of professional life I have been an active participant in trying to rectify sick societies with sick leaders. In mental anguish I have turned to the Book of Mormon for help and solace to justify my actions: There can be justification for killing and for war, satanic and evil as these may be. As noted essayist Albert Camus said, "Violence is at the same time unavoidable and unjustifiable."

I can add to England's list of countries, the places where I have witnessed human trag-

edies and participated in attempts to rectify them by establishing new orders, with varying successes and failures: Ponape, Indonesia, South Korea, and Afghanistan.

In 1951 I was a 26-year-old colonial administrator (we do not like this designation but it is appropriate) on the Island of Ponape in the Eastern Caroline Islands, the former Japanese League of Nations Mandated Territories occupied by the U.S. military conquest. For the first time I saw the evidences of Japanese tyranny and atrocity. American, British, Australian, and New Zealand missionaries were particularly singled out in harsh and brutal ways.

Six years later I was a foreign service officer in Indonesia with the U.S. International Cooperation Administration (now called Agency for International Development) to assist the Indonesian Ministry of Home Affairs in strengthening its provincial and local governments. Since the ambassador had confidence in me, I operated as a free agent for five years working closely with Indonesian associates in an effort to establish a new order of government affairs. This "new order group" accepted the reality of Camus's statement. Over two thousand young local government civil servants were instructed that the maintenance of law and order was the primary requisite for socio-economic progress. In times of turmoil they were prepared to kill, or to be killed. The purpose was to turn the tables on Mao Tse-Tung's strategy for conduct of the people's war. In October 1965 these young men, along with their cohorts who were mostly high school and university students, thwarted the communist coup. They became proficient in urban and rural guerrilla warfare. Along with non-communist units of the military, they tracked down communist leaders and shot them by the hundreds, their followers by the thousands, and imprisoned tens of thousands. Eventually, the scourge of communism was wiped out. They established

an *Ordre Baru* (New Order) which over the last 20-odd years has met with considerable socio-economic progress. Nevertheless, I am a fatalist. The nation's major problem is that there are too many people reproducing at too high a rate. I am afraid that the English economist Thomas Malthus was right: in not too many years in the nation's future there will again erupt "time gone amuck."

My experience in South Korea is limited to spending two short tours of duty in 1958 and 1959 assisting the government to establish a new order for its civil service. South Korea was almost a Christian nation. Its principal leaders were Christians educated in Christian schools. Later I learned that for fifty or more years American Protestant missionaries, mainly Presbyterian and Methodist, had provided intellectual zeal and fortitude for the Korean's quest for liberation from Japanese rule. They believed in liberty and freedom within the American ideal of constitutional law and order, and they were willing to confront the Japanese government on this vital issue. For this cause they suffered imprisonment, torture, and death.

Vietnam! I never spent much time in Vietnam, just short tours of duty between 1957 and 1969. In early August 1969, I was sitting on top of a tall apartment building in Saigon with a dear friend watching the nightly fireworks—helicopter gun ships were sliding across the sky with powerful light beams directed toward the ground periodically issuing bursts of fire.

My friend was anxious for me to transfer from my current assignment in Pakistan to become part of his Vietnam operation on rural development. He stressed that he needed my Indonesian experience on pacification of troubled areas. That morning I reviewed the statistical data on the number and rate of village headmen being killed by the Viet Cong. I realized that Vietnam was a lost cause. Unlike the courageous Indonesian students who were seriously involved in the establishment of a New Order, I could not read into these statistics the same human will. Widespread evidences of immoral behavior was also distressing. I was not prepared to see foreign service officers frequenting houses of ill-repute nor the dissolution of American marriages in large numbers. The use of drugs was rampant. What happened to traditional American moral strengths?

This decision was not easy. I was a hawk on Vietnam but I could not accept the heavy U.S. military involvement; 20-year-old American kids were being killed while 20-year-old Vietnamese escaped the ordeal. I reached the

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distressful conclusion that those who will not fight for their freedom do not deserve their freedom.

Yet I cannot find solace in this rationalization. I recall a story published in a 1970 Honolulu paper in which an Asian journalist scorns U.S. "unconcern." Mr. Malik who was once very critical of U.S. involvement in Vietnam said "I used to go along with the talk about the American arrogance of power . . . but I have discovered a totally new phenomenon that I like even less—the arrogance of conscience." He then goes on to comment about the United States willingness to abandon Vietnam to the evils of the times:

You Americans . . . don't understand that your presence makes for stability and gives hope to peoples who otherwise despair. . . . Now you are ready to sacrifice the hopes, and perhaps the lives of tens of millions—just to cleanse your consciences of imagined stains.

Malik foresaw the killing fields: the boat people, the refugee camps, the Cambodian massacres, the ruthless human exploitations. I sometimes wonder what happened to those remarkable Catholic resettlement villages in Vietnam inhabited by people of strong religious belief who carried their altars of worship from as far away as South China. For a brief period of time they had freedom to live and practice their religious faith.

In 1973 I learned the limitation of power as well as the limitation of knowledge. For one year I intensely struggled with the world population problem. I was with the United Nations in New York, living on densely populated Manhattan. For the first time I became truly fatalistic about the world's future. At a "think tank" meeting sponsored by a Rockefeller funded organization, The Population Council, I expressed my sentiments.

All we are doing are developing kill ratios. There is scarcely enough food in the world now. By the end of this century there will certainly be major food shortfalls. All we can see is environmental degradation as a consequence of population pressures. So I guess we should be more scientific about this mounting problem of overpopulation. We can design strategies where we can kill before impregnation, we can kill after impregnation, and we can kill after birth. If we do not accomplish this activity of killing in artificial ways, natural forces will, and they will not accomplish this activity in pleasant manners, as I have

seen in Central Java. There are districts there where over 50 percent of all newborns die within five years and the same percentage of mothers by age 40.

Soon after this meeting I accepted a position in distant Alaska where the land is virgin and the air is pure—no people-pollution problems here. For four years I resisted all pressures to become involved in troubled societies. In late 1977 I gave in and accepted a 30-day assignment to head a health survey team in the Caribbean region as part of the Regan administration's new economic assistance initiative.

For the first time I encountered Castro Cubans. It was not a pleasant experience. It was the Indonesian nightmare all over again. On my last day in Grenada, a delegation of government officials came to my hotel room at 2 A.M. urging U.S. involvement. The same experience occurred on nearly all the other islands. Those people were frightened! They did not want Castro's form of liberation.

I never returned to those islands nor have I been willing to accept any assignment to work in Central America. There are too many sick societies under too many sick leaders. There are too many people and too few resources. Above all there are too many bad people on both political sides—left and right. Whoever is in power the killing fields will continue.

I do not feel the same way about Afghanistan. The Afghan tribal peoples have displayed their traditional valor and courage. Their country is now in ruin. Villages occupied for over 2000 years are destroyed and empty. They have paid a cost some observers estimate at over one million casualties. At times the price of freedom comes high, and often those who pay it never experience it.

IN the Mormon context, England's guidelines on war are possibly correct. Belief as incorporated in the twelfth Article of Faith tends to make believing Mormons docile in political matters but also protects the existence of the Church in some countries. For example, unlike other American faiths, such as the Jehovah Witnesses and the Seventh Day Adventists who were systematically exterminated by the Nazis, Mormons survived this dreadful era. Nevertheless, in a political sense, I believe that as the most powerful nation in the world founded on principles of constitutional justice, U.S. leaders must take strong positions on fundamental rights, sometimes

to the point of interventions into the affairs of other regimes to establish better orders. As free people, we should never tolerate genocide. I endorse President Jimmy Carter's strong stand in human rights. I wish Eugene England had included Israel in his list of nations. This nation's violation of human rights is financed by the United States. Palestinians have just grievances against Israeli conquests of their lands. They, too, are entitled to human rights. The United States has a moral obligation to champion the cause of freedom and democratic government everywhere, ever mindful that it must also be vigilant in guarding its own cherished principles and practices at home.

I feel a special indebtedness to those American Protestant missionaries who labored in Asia for over a century, turning despotic regimes into more responsible governments. In preserving our domestic liberty and happiness, we in the United States and Mormons in particular could learn a great deal from these histories. Without a full measure of political liberty it is impossible to live a complete Mormon life. To me this is the great lesson of the Book of Mormon, as well as the great lesson of the American constitutional experience.

During the post-World War II period, Mormonism has been implanted in contrary societies. This implantation now constitutes a major moral dilemma facing the emergent international Church. Hundreds of thousands of disadvantaged peoples have joined this unique American church with high expectations for a new order of affairs. They, as with our Mormon forefathers of over 150 years ago, want the good life now. Consciously and unconsciously each missionary sent abroad has been a revolutionary agent, now numbered in the tens of thousands, who planted seeds for revolutionary change. They are best seen in the words of Secretary of State George Shultz: "If we are to achieve the kind of world we all hope to see—with peace, freedom, and economic progress—democracy has to continue to expand. Democracy is a vital, even a revolutionary force."

Our Church leaders cannot have it both ways, exporting democratic revolution in the form of its American experience and maintaining silence in the presence of repressive regimes. I become frightened about the future well-being of my Indonesian-Chinese brothers and sisters because democratic revolutions are difficult to maintain. Nevertheless, I must have faith that for them, as for me, a new order will emerge in the form of many Zions established around the world. ☩