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Readers are reminded that worldview welcomes correspondence. Letters may be specific comments on articles in recent issues of general discussion, but readers are requested to limit their letters to 500 words.

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OF PRISONERS AND PRESIDENTS

What is the general American attitude to war? What should it be? For long-time readers of *worldview*, quite familiar questions. But the context in which they are placed is constantly changing, and a new context helps clarify the importance—an absolute necessity—of answering these questions thoughtfully and thoroughly.

The sentencing of First Lieutenant William L. Calley, Jr. at the end of last month posed many hard questions for the country. Many of them were elaborated by editorial writers and columnists almost as soon as the verdict was known. The *answers* will take longer to come in, and they will be shaped in large part by the reactions of the American people to the Calley trial. We wish here to focus only on a single aspect of the trial—Lieutenant Calley's views on war.

In an interview granted during the course of the trial but published only after the verdict was rendered, Lieutenant Calley said: "I am hopeful that My Lai will bring the meaning of war to the surface, not only to our nation but to all nations. My recommendation is that this nation cannot afford to involve itself in war." Neither an inconsiderable nor an unrespectable sentiment. But the Lieutenant then went on to say that, even if convicted, "I still feel strongly about the Army." And he added: The United States "needs a strong Army. From what I've seen of the world and communism, we definitely need an Army."

The contradiction between these two statements of Lieutenant Calley could probably be passed over or explained. Unfortunately, what the Lieutenant has done is probably to express very well sentiments, however contradictory they may be, that are felt by many, if not most, citizens of this country. In fact, for those with even a short memory, there must have been something eerie about reading these sentiments expressed by Lieutenant Calley and recalling what President Nixon had said not many weeks earlier in an interview with C. L. Sulzberger of *The New York Times*. In that interview, President Nixon said: "I seriously doubt if we will ever have another war. This is probably the very last one." But he also went on to say: "I am a strong Navy man myself. I believe in a strong, conventional Navy which helps us to play a peacekeeping role in such areas, for example, as Latin America."

In both sets of quotations there is a rejection of war as a desirable or necessary enterprise, and at the same time a call for heavy reliance upon U.S. military force. We can add to them one more expression that seems to fit in the same gen-

eral framework. Writing to the "letters" column of the *National Catholic Reporter*, a priest expressed great pleasure at the recent Supreme Court decision that rejected selective conscientious objection as a legally valid alternative to the potential draftee. For, according to the reasoning of this priest, the Supreme Court has reduced the option from three (all wars, some wars, no wars) to two (all or nothing), and made the decision for the Catholic much easier. The reasoning offered by this priest is simplicity itself: "One principle of Catholic moral theology has always been that if something *per se* evil is inexorably associated with something else good or indifferent, the whole (e.g., moral act) must be considered evil and rejected. . . . Because of the premises upon which the Supreme Court has built its decision—and because of the doubt one can legitimately cast upon the validity of any war engaged in by a government which supports the 'all or nothing' pragmatic approach to such a fundamental moral question—it seems to me that any Catholic may (indeed, perhaps *must*) opt for the conclusion to object to *all* war (engaged in by the U.S.A.). . . ."

What all of these sets of quotations do, these attitudes expressed by Lieutenant Calley, President Nixon, and a Catholic priest, is to foreclose the possibility of a justified war, the actions of which can be morally judged and morally accepted. The revulsion brought about by My Lai and the other various war crimes to which we are increasingly being exposed does push more people, at least temporarily, toward a pacifism, however qualified. It is not surprising that this should be so, but we must ask ourselves what alternatives we are prepared to sustain.

In his book published in the middle of the last decade, *The Crisis of Political Imagination*, Glenn Tinder states one alternative that recommends itself. "It would be absurd," he says, "to suggest that a renewal of political imagination would insure peace; indeed, one test of the maturity of a political mind is its ability to realize calmly that there is nothing which will ensure peace absolutely." And he goes on to say what the testimony in the Calley trial did much to support:

"We have lost the religiously grounded sense of personality as triumphal even over sin and death which is the fundamental ground of liberty-democracy, and social justice. A renewed political imagination would be one well-reminded of the

meaning of Western ideals. It would thus be an imagination founded, not only on a proper sense of the limitations of the philosophy opposing it, but also on a sense of its own final purposes. This kind of philosophical self-possession, on the part of Western statesmen and peoples, would contribute more than a blind fear of war to attaining a spiritually significant peace." It would contribute because "societies living with some inward assurance, and in an awareness of that which gives dignity to personal existence, would be unlikely either to stumble into war by their own inattention or to plunge into it to gain relief from their own frustrations."

To say that war, under some conditions, may be justified, is not to hallow it; it is to say that acts such as those committed at My Lai cannot be justified, nor could a war in which such events would form a major pattern. My Lai poses a problem to more than the Army, to more than our own government. We are called upon to redefine ourselves as a people and those values to which we would lay claim. J.F.

COMING in *worldview*

"In the government's public discussions of NATO, the critical moral point has been the cloaking of an essentially military purpose (deterrence) with language about democracy and the rule of law. As baldly put by President Nixon on the Organization's twentieth anniversary: 'It is precisely because it has always been more than a military alliance that its strength has been greater than the strength of arms. This alliance represents a moral force.' He went on to speak of 'concern for the quality of life' and of 'elemental ideals . . . of decency and justice and liberty. . . .'"

"These goals cloak or conceal rather than describe the acknowledged central purpose of NATO; they are unclear and would seem deliberately so. . . ." Paul Deats, Jr. on "The Moral Element in NATO"

. . . AND

Wilson Carey McWilliams on Ward Just's *Military Men*

Max Stackhouse on Seymour Melman's *Pentagon Capitalism*

William Pfaff on Barbara Tuchman's *Stillwell and the American Experience in China*

Paul Blackstock on "Intelligence, Espionage and the Invasion of Privacy"