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A World Manifesto

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Gordon Harper, a sophomore from Neeah, Wisconsin, crystallizes our world dilemma.

A WORLD MANIFESTO

by GORDON HARPER

Sire, it is not a revolt,—it is a revolution.

—Duc de La Rochefoucauld-Liancourt

To Louis XVI, 1789

On American college campuses a few years ago it became a custom for disgruntled students to mutter threateningly in their best proletarian accent, "Comes the Revolution!" In their own humorous way these students seem to have accurately forecast the present. I would suggest we are today witnessing a world revolution which few of these same Americans know much about or understand. And it is imperative that we understand it if for no other reason than that our enlightened self-interest and welfare demand it. Alongside this revolution even the clash between Russian communism and democratic capitalism—which seems of such significance to us—becomes of lesser import.

Permit me to sharpen and focus on this revolution a bit. What lies behind the Peron—empowering revolt of the descamisados, "the shirtless ones" of Argentina? Consider the Chinese, who, under the Communists, have regained human dignity and pride in their cultural heritage for the first time in many years. Observe Algeria and South Africa, the first already involved in a violent uprising, the second awaiting but a spark to explore the entire social and political structure. These are not isolated happenings. A definite unity of purposes binds them in a single fabric. To understand what this unifying purpose is, we must think back for a moment over the history of the past two centuries.

No one with a knowledge of history can be unaware of the injustices, exploitation and oppression practiced upon subject peoples by Western powers during the past generations. That great wrongs have been committed few would deny. But of the extent and of the contemporaneousness of the oppression, we are largely ignorant.

Is it entirely without significance that two-thirds of the world's citizens will go to bed hungry tonight? And that of this number, one-third will die within a year unless they receive more food in the future than they had today? What kind of conditions are they in which a Persian can say, if only he could have one can of American dog food a week for his starving family he would be happy? Against this backdrop, hear the statement of one South American industrialist, "In this city we expect at least 50 per cent yearly net income on our investment, but will not be surprised if we get up to 200 per cent."

How difficult it is for us of the United States to envision the unbelievably bad conditions under which so large a number of our fellows live. We pay but token acknowledgement to the fact that such conditions even exist, feeling vaguely that somehow "things like that, you know, must be." Though very unfortunate, fate, divine will or nature apparently ordains them. And, happily for our security, until only recently this feeling of fatalism was shared by most of the peoples doing the suffering. There has been more or less acceptance of their lot for two reasons: an ignorance of any other type of life and a sense of the complete futility of trying to change extant structures.

This is no longer the case. Something has happened to the man with the hoe. He has become aware of his condition in comparison with the fortunate of mankind. As a result, he has come to believe his position is unbearable and that something can be done about it. It is this which makes the present situation completely unique. There have been such conditions before; never before has there been such a determination that such conditions shall not continue. We are facing a full-blown revolution, one with far-reaching political, social and economic implications. The land reforms of Vinoba Bhave and Mao Tse-tung in India and China, the pan-Islamism radiating from Cairo, the aloof Neutralism of Nehru and other Asian leaders, the enosis movement in Cyprus, and the pervading drive for industrialization and an increasing trade are only a few manifestations of this revolution in its many aspects. The reasons for this awakening change of attitude are several, and it is not my intention to speak of them here. I am trying only to say that the revolution is taking place and urge that at least we should recognize it and refrain from trying to block it.

But where stands the United States while this spirit of revolution is expanding across the earth? While the South African government puts into practice *apartheid*, complete segregation, and places total power in the hands of the few European whites the United States government promises to supply it with arms and military equipment. In the United Nations we are lined up with our "allies," trying to help them keep their colonies. We vote against consideration of the Algerian demand for independence because France does not want U. N. intervention, and thus we allow the French Republic the freedom to do whatever it will with eight million Algerians. Worst of all, the American public shows concern only for Communism and agrees with the simple TIME declaration that the "world is going either in America's or Russia's way." It would seem that now might be the time for the administration and for the American people to make what Mr. Dulles has called an "agonizing reappraisal" of the world and our place within it.
