The Rediscovery of Poverty

Perhaps the most remarkable aspect of the State of the Union address was that Mr. Johnson not only spoke about poverty, but spoke at length, emphatically, and with the apparent intention of actually meaning to alleviate it. The second most important aspect, and gearing into the first, was the suggestion that the money was there for such a program, that it could be hacked out of the military program, and that Mr. Johnson proposed to swing the pickax. All this was said with a Rooseveltian resolution, sincerity and directness that exhilarated some listeners as much as it frightened others — those others who feel that poverty should be neither seen nor heard.

To be sure, it was a highly political speech. But it was also good policy, and good policy is the best politics — if one has any confidence in democracy.

The money may not balance out as Mr. Johnson envisioned in the speech. We shall have to see the budget. But that is not the point. It is a turn-around in emphasis and orientation. Welcome, also, was the absence of cold-war rhetoric. Except for the slap at Cuba and a few references to the necessity of strength, it was mild — surprisingly mild, considering that a President who has designs on military spending must balance his fell intentions with some verbal homage to the military.

What is amazing is that it took fifteen years to get out from under the incubus of the cold war and to show a decent concern for the victims of industrialism. Now — it is as true as it is hackneyed — words must be followed by deeds. That is not up to the President alone, but he has supplied the words, and they are good.

God Bless Our Allies!

Not infrequently, our friends make sense when we don't. Sir Anthony Eden helped deter us from a nuclear strike in Indo-China in 1954. General de Gaulle has recently shown us a way out of the Asian war into which we subsequently plunged, not knowing what we intended to accomplish, or by what means. And there is Cuba, with which Spain, whose government is scarcely noted for wisdom in international affairs, has maintained communication by ship and air, in defiance of our protests. Now—a bolt from the blue as far as the ordinary American is concerned—comes the British deal with Castro for 450 buses! Nor are the British alone. It turns out that they had to bid against bus companies in France, West Germany, Spain, Japan and Czechoslovakia. The Spaniards would also like to build 100 ships for Cuba, and will probably do so, for all our objections.

The British attitude in the bus deal is quite pointed — they lack even the grace to sound apologetic. An "unofficial" British source in Washington (it wasn't the Ambassador, that is) put it succinctly: "The United States has a surplus of wheat, we have a surplus of buses." Fifty interurban buses are involved, price not disclosed. Four hundred city buses will cost $11.2 million, and spare parts a million more. Then Castro has an option to buy 1,000 more buses between 1965 and 1968, at a cost estimated at $20 million. In short, the Cuban bus market, which we have abandoned, is being taken over by the British. As Senator Kenneth Keating says, they "want to skim off the cream of profit for themselves." Precisely: they believe in free enterprise. They sold buses to Batista, now they sell them to Castro.

The most ominous feature of the deal, from the State Department standpoint, is that the British are giving Cuba five years to pay. Castro's credit is good, they say: Cuban sugar sales to Britain soared from $14 million in 1961 to $36 million in 1963. They evidently regard as futile our efforts to bring Castro down. Another factor, no doubt, is that Sir Alec Douglas-Home has no intention of handing the coming election to the Laborites by default.

Uncle Sam does not present a pleasant picture before the world in this light. We refuse to allow even powdered milk to be sent to Cuba for hurricane relief. We will stop at nothing to topple Castro — and he doesn't topple. Vindictiveness is bad enough when it is successful; when it fails, it becomes ludicrous as well as mean. In our vendetta against Marxism-Leninism in Cuba, we have succeeded only in tying Castro closer to the Russians and to our allies in NATO. British interests, it will be remembered, were also expropriated by Castro, but the English rolled with the punch and are likely to get their money back sooner than we will. Big Tim Sullivan's aphorism, "If you can't lick 'em, join 'em," is in point here. We don't need to join the Cubans, but we could join our allies and get ourselves out of this quagmire. Then, perhaps, the Russians would get out of Cuba.

The New Miracles

Pope Paul VI's unprecedented pilgrimage to the Holy Land — the first Pope to visit the Holy Land, the first Pope to leave Italy since 1809, the first Pope to be air-borne — gripped the popular imagination, as Milton Bracker pointed out in a report to *The New York Times*, like no other "gesture of the Vatican in at least 900 years." The pilgrimage, we are told, was the Pope's conception. From first to last, it reflects the workings of an extraordinary historical imagination. In a sense, the journey crowded into three days a memorable restirring and evocation of the most haunting and poignant memories, associations and allusions. And it probably had some very important benefits. Arab-Israel relations are no worse for the Pope's trip and the deep cleavage within Catholicism will be eased. It should also strengthen the Vati-

can's position at the next session of the Ecumenical Council. It certainly ushered in the New Year on an impressive and eloquent plea for peace.

The pilgrimage was a modern miracle of a sort, made possible by jet aircraft and, more particularly, by the range and speed of modern mass communications. The jet flight made it possible to encompass in three crowded days a pilgrimage that would have taken a seeming eternity for some of Paul VI's predecessors. Modern communications gave millions an instantaneous view of the pilgrimage as it unfolded. Pope Paul, we may hope, will make other jet pilgrimages — to this country and perhaps to Central and South America. What better means than a visit by His Holiness to focus world attention on some of the problems of South America's millions? Jet travel and modern electronic media have made mincemeat of Stalin's famous crack, "How many divisions has the Pope?" The answer is that he has many more divisions than any Pope ever had — if he knows how to reach them.

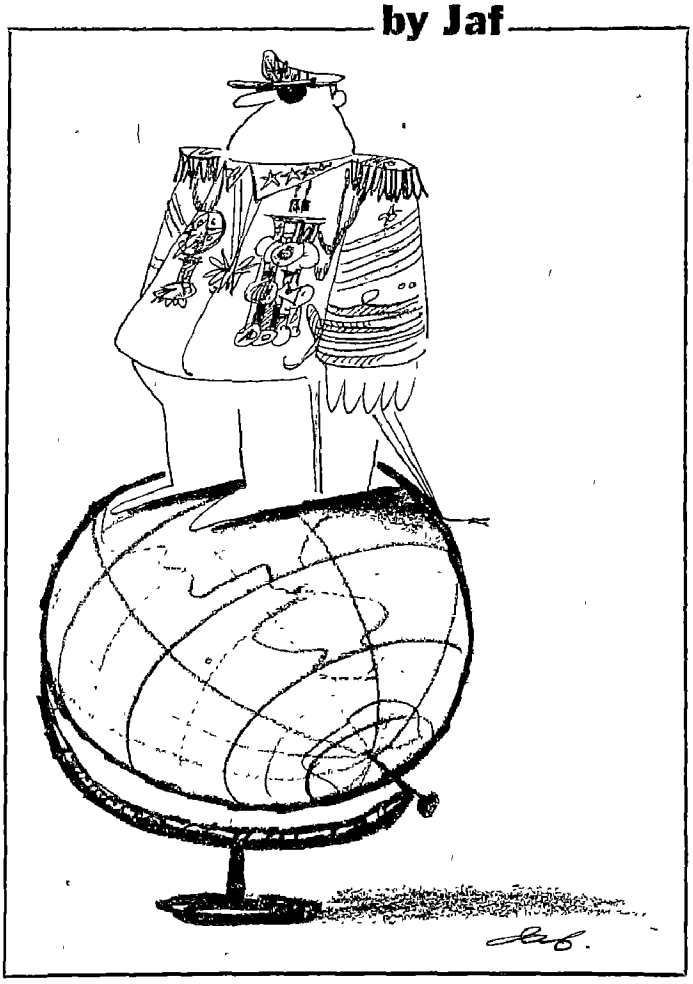
The Big Kazoo

Barry Goldwater's good traits are more personal than political — and one can see why his friends must be fond of him. He is convivial; he flies a jet airplane, which few reserve officers of his age and grade would be likely to attempt; he has "color," a sitting-on-top-of-the-world quality which is attractive on TV. Gall, also, is attractive, up to a point, and Barry has plenty of that. When, back in November, *The Nation* predicted that he would run for both the Presidency and the Senate, some readers thought we were doing him an injustice. Hadn't he told *Newsweek* he would do nothing of the kind — that he had raised too much hell with Lyndon Johnson for the selfsame thing? He is doing it, nevertheless — and with a smile.

But since Goldwater wants to be President, his attractive private personality is no more relevant than Governor Rockefeller's marital relationships. When Barry talks politics, it is hard not to believe that your ears are playing tricks. Much of what he says ceased to be credible shortly after 1880. He must be kidding, you think, yet the first requisite of a Presidential aspirant is to be serious, and Barry is that.

For instance, he says that he would force the Soviet Union to agree to free elections in the satellite countries, which thereupon would revert to capitalism. How is this to be brought about? It's very simple: Khrushchev would do "a lot of things" to keep Washington from severing diplomatic relations, and Barry would hold that over his head. Khrushchev would also be forced by the dire threat of de-recognition to "publicly retract" his famous statement that communism would "bury" capitalism in the United States. Here the means may be more commensurate with the end, for Khrushchev has already made a retraction which apparently escaped Barry's notice. Khrushchev explained that it was just a Russian expression and all he meant was that communism would prevail over capitalism, peacefully of course.

by Jaf



If elected, Barry would renounce the nuclear test-ban treaty "if it appeared to be to our advantage to test in the atmosphere." Since Barry is a Major General in the Air Force Reserve, he is probably convinced that it would be to our advantage, so there goes the one concrete step that has been taken toward a *détente*. As for the dagger sticking into our side ninety miles off Florida, our future President has a ready solution. He would train and supply Cuban exiles (doesn't he know we have been doing that?) and, unlike President Kennedy, he would give them American air cover when they invaded. The pity is that, as President, Barry could not lead a wing of bombers.

He stands little chance of being nominated. Either he goes on like this and scares away even most "conservatives," or he begins to pussyfoot and turns into what he himself styles a semi-Democrat like Rockefeller. If, however, a depression should set in, or the Russians should lay claim to Maine, Barry could indeed be nominated. He would be sure of the votes of a few million Americans, some elderly, cranky and fear-ridden, some nostalgic for a glorious past which they have never seen except in the movies and on TV, and which, if they had to live under it, would look less rosy. In addition, he has Arizona and a few other states with more area than population. Since the power-wielders in the Republican Party have studied arithmetic, Barry's chances are pretty poor. He will, however, put on a show. It is a pity H. L. Mencken is dead; he appreciated political burlesque.

Open Season on HUAC

As each fall has its Halloween, so each winter has its fight over the House Un-American Activities Committee. Last winter, twenty Congressmen voted against the $360,000 HUAC appropriation. When the 1964 appropriation comes before the House, it is believed that there will be a substantial increase in anti-HUAC votes. The expectation is based upon two developments: Francis Walter is no longer chairman of the committee, and cold-war tensions have been lessened.

As chairman, not only of HUAC, but of the Immigration and Naturalization subcommittee (the home of private bills), the Democratic Caucus (where committee assignments are approved) and the Democratic Patronage Committee, Mr. Walter was a colleague few Congressmen cared to frustrate. The new HUAC chairman, Edwin E. Willis, holds no such collateral strings of power and accordingly enjoys little influence in the House.

From the beginning, the votes against HUAC have been a barometer of the cold war. With atmospheric nuclear tests banned, the "hot line" in working order and other agreements seemingly within reach, cold-war hysteria has been hushed, and the anti-HUAC vote can be expected to rise. But in the past, citizen groups opposing the committee have shown a tendency to become more complacent and less effective as their cause prospered. HUAC is not yet dead, or even dying, but outside pressure at a time when Congress is disposed to be just a little bold might hasten the process of decay.

The War Against the Rats

The poor of New York City, particularly the Negro and Puerto Rican poor, are engaged in a new kind of sit-down — they are sitting on their money.

For years, the tenants of the slum warrens in the world's richest city have been complaining to local bureaucrats about the conditions under which they were forced to live by greedy and heartless landlords: their rooms were not heated, their toilets did not flush, their hallways were piled with garbage, the plaster fell on their heads and the floors rotted beneath their feet. Above all, they fought an unremitting but futile war with vermin.

As long ago as 1947, Mayor Wagner, then Commissioner of New York's Buildings Department, made himself responsible for the "safety, comfort and very lives" of the city's tenants. But in 1964, not a day goes by without at least one of these tenants — usually an infant tenant — being bitten by a rat. Rat bites are not safe; they are not comfortable, and they are not conducive to healthy living. But in almost twenty years, Mayor Wagner has been unable to lick the rats — or the landlords.

Now the tenants are striking. What's more, they are striking in such number and with such organized determination that the city fathers sense a social avalanche, and are really alarmed. Not to pay your rent is, of course, illegal, but illegality on the threatened scale is not tolerable to orderly government. The ironic solution, therefore, is to give rent strikes a basis of legality — in the hope that the city poor will not discover other avenues of extra-legal defiance. Several judges have ruled that tenants in habitations certified to be below minimum standards may pay their rent, not to their landlords, but into a repair fund to be administered by the city. A law to that general effect is now being offered in Albany. Meanwhile, in Brooklyn, a judge has ruled that tenants living under such conditions have, according to his reading of legal precedent, been evicted and need not pay their rents to anyone.

For years, landlords have gone into court, paid nominal fines and continued to exploit their rotting properties. Now at last they must see that the jig is up. The courts, always slow to anger, are finally enraged; the tenants will not be moved, they cannot be forced to pay, they have attracted the attention of both politicians and the public, and clearly the rats will have to go.

Old Nightmare in New Guise

As the East-West cold war tails off, a new power tension is emerging on a North-South line. The underdeveloped world, lying mainly below the 40th parallel, poor, underfed and short of development capital, is beginning to take a second look at the cold-war *détente* it has encouraged. The thought was that if East-West tensions could be relaxed, the USSR and the West would be inclined to pour some of the funds saved by reduced arms spending into development projects. But as tensions have been relaxed, and arms spending somewhat reduced, the anticipated capital has not been forthcoming. On the contrary, it seems to be diminishing.

Chou En-lai's visit to Africa is, in part, related to China's effort to forge a have-not alliance with the continent's underdeveloped nations. If such an alliance were to emerge, it would represent in part a fusion of have-not status with racial status; class lines and color lines would fuse — with, of course, important exceptions. The flare-up of feeling in Moscow against African students (p. 64) is an indication that the Soviet Union shares some prejudices with other "have" nations. The indicated fusion need not take place; the danger and the ways of averting it are touched on elsewhere in this issue (p. 68). But one of history's most menacing nightmares has been that of a race war. We are fortunate that it is still only a nightmare, but the reappearance of the dream is itself a warning.

How this country deals with its so-called "color" problem, which increasingly resembles a problem of have-nots vs. haves, could have significant bearing on world alignments. Have-not status feeds color-consciousness; color-consciousness fans class feeling. Kept separate, these tensions give trouble enough; fused, they would become infinitely more dangerous, within nations or between nations.