

clique . . . the most disgusting murderers in the latter half of this century," has spoken of the resistance movements growing inside Cambodia, and has broadcast calls by defectors for an uprising by the Khmer people. No one can tell how many people have been killed on each side in the fighting (Phnom Penh radio has urged that each Cambodian kill 30 Vietnamese), but Ponchaud believes that the number of deaths within Cambodia alone may be over 2 million. He has heard, he says, of villages in which a third, a half, or even nine-tenths of the population has died.

IT IS THIS SORT OF ASSERTION, based on refugee testimony, that particularly disturbs Chomsky. Certainly it is true that death tolls in Democratic Kampuchea have been cast around with abandon in the West. Since there is no way of knowing just what the prewar population was, nor the number of those killed during the war, all figures deserve to be treated with great caution. But in the end, the exact totals are not the crucial factor—the nature of Nazism would not have been different had Hitler slain one million Jews. What matters is whether murder is being used as an instrument of government—either to extinguish a class or to assert control. In my opinion, the evidence is overwhelming that this is so in Democratic Kampuchea. The refugees who have fled, over a three-year period, to Thailand and to Vietnam, from almost all parts of the country, consistently describe similar experiences at the hands of their rulers. As party purges increased last year, Khmer Rouge officials themselves began to flee; they confirmed the earlier accounts.

Ponchaud, a Jesuit priest who lived 10 years in Cambodia, had welcomed the prospect of Khmer Rouge victory as the only hope of lifting Cambodia out of its misery. But after he began to study the victorious regime, "I was forced to conclude, against my will, that the Khmer revolution is irrefutably the bloodiest of our century." Chomsky has pointed out some inconsistencies and mistakes in Ponchaud's work, but they are of a minor nature and do not in any way affect that judgment. Ponchaud himself suggests, "We cannot make use of the deaths of millions of Khmers to defend our theories or projects for society." In fact, of course, it can be and is being done.

NEVER AGAIN: Learning from America's Foreign Policy Failures, by Earl C. Ravenal. Temple University Press, 176 pp., \$10.00.

Nie wieder Krieg?

FELIX MORLEY

EARL C. RAVENAL HAS recently come to the fore as one of the most discerning, temperate, and, above all, illuminating critics of current American foreign policy. His position, at the Washington School of Advanced International Studies at Johns Hopkins University, is advantageous for the highly important line of study he has chosen to pursue. Professor Ravenal's latest work, which is "about how a nation learns from its foreign policy failures," will add to the stature of this outspoken young academician.

Nevertheless, its title, *Never Again*, aroused troubling memories for this reviewer. During the winter of 1921–1922, when runaway inflation was making the Germans desperate, I spent several weeks in the home of a Berlin friend. The atmosphere of the country was then strongly pacifist, and the capital was plastered with posters proclaiming *Nie wieder Krieg*—"Never again war." I brought one of these home and, years later, hung it on the wall of my study as a reminder. On the day that Mussolini invaded Ethiopia, there was a strong wind, which blew the poster down.

In his text, however, Ravenal is far from maintaining that we shall never again get involved in distant wars. He is merely arguing, from a close case study of the Vietnam experience, that there is one course, and only one, with any assurance of immunity from war. It is not an easy course, since it implies, as he puts it, that "we must adjust our entire foreign policy orientation to the evolving constraints of the international system and our own do-

mestic system."

In an introductory analysis, the author divides American attitudes toward the Vietnam War into five "critiques," or categories, which together cover every viewpoint, expressed or imaginable. The Strategic Critique, the position preferred by Ravenal, is not concerned with a strategy improvised for a military situation but with one that is imposed by the nature of our government and the character of our people. Ravenal's impartial fivefold classification permits us to terminate the perpetual debate about details of foreign policy and to concentrate—dispassionately and analytically—on the lessons of Vietnam.

Nonintervention is the foreign policy that Ravenal believes to be the most rational one for the United States. While he finds ample justification for this conclusion in the somber Vietnam tragedy, he points out that its lessons are actually an "epitomization" of earlier experience.

There is no doubt, in the opinion of this reviewer, that the most enduring result of our intervention in the First World War was the establishment of Communism throughout the former Russian empire. The major consequence of our intervention in the second global conflict was the spread of Communist domination over half the world. It is a fair presumption that, regardless of the narrowly military results, another major war with American participation would finally destroy our fragile system of individual liberty and representative government. In the end, some type of primitive dictatorship would be essential to maintain any sort of order after the withering blasts of atomic warfare. It is of course possible that, given our dislike for disagreeable terminology, we would prefer to call our brand of communism something like "Affirmative Democracy."

SUCH IS THE SCENARIO that issues from reflections on recent experience. But since as a people we are not adept at reflection, Ravenal emphasizes the obstacles to hasty action written into the Constitution by the founding fathers. We enjoy a government of separated and balanced powers, divided not only between the executive, legislative, and judicial branches in Washington, but also between the established powers of the central government and those of its constituent states. Though much au-

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thority has been ceded by the states, we still possess a *federal* Constitution.

In spite of, indeed partly because of, the overgrowth of government, most of our loyalties are still connected with the “grass roots” and are provincial rather than national in character. Currently, there is a strong revival of localism and reaction away from national vainglory. But the constant clash between our decentralized institutions and the centralizing policies followed during decades of war-making and preparations for war has produced something akin to national schizophrenia. In such a basic conflict, either the government’s grandiose policies or the nation’s inherited institutions must eventually give way. The theme of *Never Again* is that the institutions, though perhaps with some modification, will stand firm.

This accords with the general failure of our presidential pretensions during the past 60 years. It is now that length of time since Woodrow Wilson sought vainly to obtain Senate approval for American membership in the old League of Nations. He failed primarily because the League’s Covenant had been made an integral part of the Treaty of Versailles, the injustice and unworkability of which even then was apparent to the farsighted. When this draconian treaty led to German revolt against its impossible terms, there was again strong opposition to Franklin Roosevelt’s policy of renewed intervention. It was the glory of the “Old Right,” under the political leadership of men like Herbert Hoover, Robert A. Taft, and Robert E. Wood, to resist the trend toward an emotional interventionism and point out that the United States could only wreck its own indigenous institutions by jumping hysterically into every European or Asiatic quagmire. Such interventionism has been the predominant pattern of what is called liberal thinking, meaning the thinking of those who want to place unrestricted power in the hands of moralizing Presidents. Unfortunately, this messianic complex has also affected the thinking of many who call themselves “conservatives,” but who flirt with what is in reality national socialism in their desire to create an authoritarian society in America under the “right sort” of leader.

Ravenel emphasizes that he is writing realistically for the “Second-Best World” which has evolved from the convulsions of this century. He is no

optimist, believing that “the international system will probably continue to degenerate into a disorder more severe than we have known.” But his gloom makes him the more certain that “we should avoid conflict ourselves in a world that will continue to be limited-war prone, even if the world thereby becomes somewhat more anarchic.”

This hard-hitting little book will send shivers up quite a few backs. It will not be popular in our client states, such as Israel, which, as the author says, cannot afford to rely on smooth official assurances of American support such as South Vietnam once received. There are those who, following Solzhenitsyn’s views, will say that Ravenel exhibits that “failure of nerve” of which we are nowadays so frequently accused. But others, probably much more numerous, will be happy that this scholar, whose familiarity with American history and American institutions is much greater than Solzhenitsyn’s, has recalled for us the wise admonition in George Washington’s Farewell Address: “The great rule of conduct for us, in regard to foreign nations, is in extending our commercial relations to have with them as little *political* connection as possible.” □

The mystery of the disappearing black

NOEL PERRIN

WHEN RALPH ELLISON published *Invisible Man* in 1952, blacks were invisible because whites simply didn’t notice them. White newspapers and magazines—that is, practically all newspapers and magazines—especially didn’t

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notice them. One found few or no black marriages reported in the society pages. Except on the Booker T. Washington level, there were hardly any black obituaries. Hardly any black models in the advertisements. Just the occasional mention that this or that criminal was black.

In most ways this has changed. There are certainly more black figures in the advertising. There are many more articles about specifically black institutions and about the black experience at integrated institutions: the black student at Columbia, blacks in Congress, and so forth. And there are normally no references, in any respectable newspaper, to the racial identity of criminals.

But meanwhile a strange thing has happened. Along with the black criminal, *all* blacks have vanished from ordinary news stories. Most whites, too. I am reminded of that early scene in George Orwell’s *Coming Up for Air* where the hero examines a jar of marmalade his wife has bought, “and the label tells you, in the smallest print the law allows, that it contains ‘a certain proportion of neutral fruit juice.’” This phrasing tickles the hero’s fancy. He begins “in the rather irritating way I have sometimes, talking about neutral fruit-trees, wondering what they looked like and what countries they grew in, until finally Hilda got angry.”

Neutral human beings appear in large numbers in New York journalism.

Blacks, as it happens, are highly visible to me. Some of my close friends are black; I think especially of two of my black colleagues on the Dartmouth faculty, and of several undergraduates I’ve come to know well. When I visit New York, I notice blacks all over the place; and when I have adventures in the city, black people often figure in them. But I find that when I write about those adventures, giving black characters the roles they really had, the editors “invisibilize” them. Between my text and the printed page, the blackness fades away. I do not know whether the editors are scared of trouble, or whether they think of themselves as marvelous liberals, or what. I do know that they alter my world—and presumably the worlds of other writers as well—so that it is impossible for blacks to be casually present.

I first noticed the phenomenon two or three years ago, when I published an article in *New York* magazine. The