

THIS GLORIOUS QUEST  
(Speech before the Canada Club, January 13, 1969)

Introduction: In Gibbon's Rise and Fall of the Roman Empire there is painted a clear picture of a great civilization crumbling at its foundations. It was not the first empire to fall into a frightening threatening pattern of excessive military adventures, strangling taxation, increased corruption, idleness and immorality - and, finally, a loss of national purpose. Before it came Egypt and Greece. Several others have followed.

And now it seems the threat of national disintegration has come to the Western Hemisphere. The parallels are unmistakably there, Vietnam, a 10% surtax and a 7% bank loan interest rate, inflation, civil disobedience and race conflict, malfeasance in office in high places, and a collective lethargy and pessimism that achieves pathologic proportions. The spirit of adventure and excitement is waning. Our young people with no legitimate challenge to personal fulfillment within an overstuffed economy, search frantically for purpose and meaning - and find mostly deep disillusionment and narcotized nothingness.

Are we powerless spectators of our own inevitable decline and fall?  
Are unseen forces of repetitious history leading us inexorably down to economic, political, military and moral ruin? Is it foolhardy to dream of a Camelot and hope that that Utopia can be personally preserved?

What have other empires lacked that dictated their doom? What can we do today to see our countries through transitions - transitions not from plenty to nothingness, but from glory to glory?

I am convinced that there is available to us now a source of enthusiasm, a sense of purpose and a profound knowing that will result in a perpetuation of the good and appropriate aspects of our lives today. If we can find

together the answers to the riddles of history then we can embark on a truly glorious quest. Our adventure can challenge the excitement of space exploration. The grandeur of our new world can rival the brilliance of the greatest galaxy.

I.

Are things really so bad? Aren't you being overly melodramatic? What factors today make you fear an impending Roman tragedy?

There is in our world today a revolution taking place that is the most important in history. It is the revolution of rising expectations. People, sick, poor, illiterate and hopeless, are taking the prerogative of the last resort, using force, risking dying with a bullet in their chest rather than see their children die with hookworm in their intestines.

Chen Wing Cheong is unemployed. His wife is an amah for a Hong Kong bank manager. Two of his children are still in Red China. His opium addiction only numbs his growing hunger and torment. Chen is ripe for revolution.

Tran Van Lu had his farm burned by the Viet Cong last week. Two months ago his last remaining son was recruited for war by Saigon officers. His wife has severe malaria and is treated by a sorcerer with water buffalo dung smeared over her body. He has no real hope for adequate medical care, seeds, sons or tomorrow. Tran is ripe for revolution.

Pedro Ramos, his wife and his seven children live in Tijuana, Mexico. He makes less than \$15.00 per week. His wife is pregnant and unable to work. He now considers letting his daughter become a prostitute. Pedro is ripe for revolution.

Josh Combs lives with his anemic, illiterate wife and five malnourished

worm-infested children in a rat-infested shack in Appalachia, USA. The coal is gone and so is his job and the "big company". The railroad spur tracks were taken up three months ago and with them the last hope for something. He and his family survive on food stamps when he can afford to buy them. Josh is ripe for revolution.

10,000 children died in the past twenty-four hours, according to UNICEF, not with tuberculosis, cholera, or plague, but with starvation. I will never forget the first picture of a starving child I saw. It was on the front page of our local paper in the hills of Eastern Kentucky where I was born and raised. A four year old Chinese girl sat crying beside her mother's body who had just been killed by an exploding Japanese bomb. (This was in 1939-40 during the Chinese-Japanese war) Tears streamed down her face. As pathetic as was the picture, the thing that most attracted my attention was her peculiarly distended abdomen. She looked like I felt when the fried chicken was extra good. But the caption read that she, like thousands of Chinese children then, was starving to death. It didn't make sense. I took the paper into the kitchen where my mother was preparing the evening meal. "mom, look at this. This little girl looks like she's stuffed full of food but it says here she's starving to death". Mother couldn't explain it either. For years I wondered ---

Then, in my first year of medical school I took a class called "Physiology". We spent a week at Emory University studying malnutrition states. One of these days we discussed Kwashiorkor's syndrome. It must be the most God-forsaken clinical entity known to the medical profession. Hollow-eyed, emaciated, pale and pot-bellied, it is the classical picture of the starving child.

Do you know why a child that doesn't eat enough develops a peculiarly distended abdomen? A child that doesn't get enough food to eat soon begins

to do a very interesting thing. It begins to feed on its own body! For example, I learned that the first source of stored food material for such emergencies is in the liver in the form of glycogen, or glucose, or sugar. But you can imagine that a skinny, pale child born of a malnourished mother in a dirt-floored, rat-infested hovel has precious little sugar for such a stressful predicament. Frighteningly quickly, the body automatically turns to the second source of stored food material. This, I learned, is in the form of adipose, or fat, that which many of us have in some abundance. What little fat is in their bodies is quickly broken down biochemically, converted into a sugar-like material and sent hurriedly to the general body metabolism. This keeps the vital centers alive, the brain, the heart and the liver itself.

When this is gone, in desperation the body turns its attention to the final deposit of food. It is the protein warehouse, the muscle tissue. Slowly but surely the muscles of the arms, the legs, even the muscles that hold the eyes in their proper place, the muscles of the chest wall, and the muscles of the anterior abdominal wall are broken down, converted into sugar and sent to keep the child alive until the very end.

So, at the terminal stages of this dreaded condition there is literally nothing more than the tissue paper thin lining of the abdominal cavity we call the peritoneum and the skin of the abdominal wall itself to hold all of the bulging intestinal contents in place.

The next time you see pictured a pot-bellied, hollow-eyed, emaciated Ibo, Montagnard or Indian child, do not be misled. That child is not stuffed full of food. It has stayed alive only because it has devoured most of its own body.

This is what the Vietnam War is all about, fathers and mothers of pot-bellie

children who, although they work thirteen or fourteen hours in the rice fields can still not grow enough food to last through the non-growing season. If I had to live like that, as the father of our children who I dearly love, and if I did my very best and still had to look daily into their hollow eyes, and if somebody offered me a gun and told me excitedly about a vigorous movement, a drive to drive out the neocolonialists, I think I might be fighting today with a Viet Cong Platoon.

And as for peace in Vietnam. Please do not make the mistake in thinking that there will be peace in Vietnam when a negotiated settlement in Paris is reached, or even when the fighting stops. Peace, real peace, is not simply the absence of killing. Genuine peace comes only when a man can work and produce enough to care for his own. With this as a better definition of "peace" I can say that we in the United States have many people who know no peace. I can imagine that you have some in Canada.

## II.

Last year my country's government spent nearly \$30,000,000,000 in Vietnam. We could have made the Vietnamese the third richest nation in the world if we had given the same amount to each of its people, \$2,000 for every man, woman and child. It cost us \$263,000 to kill each enemy soldier. Clearly we didn't get our money's worth.

Some say we are winning the war. It is a moot question. But even if we are winning the war, we are losing the people. We spent only \$320,000,000 to help the people solve the very same problems that gave rise to this Second Indochina War. We failed in large part because we treated the Pacification program like a red-headed, freckle-faced stepchild. We put most all of our emphasis on "search and destroy" missions, on bombings and heavy weapons deployment. Someone convinced the Washington administration that Vietnam's problems could best be met with force.

It's as though physicians were treating a "patient" who had been examined superficially and a diagnosis of "cancer" given. A decision was made to treat the patient with cobalt radiation and radical surgery. About this time some other doctors examined the same patient and discovered the bloody sputum and chest- x-ray shadows readily indicated tuberculosis. The treatment of choice, not so dramatic or expensive, daily, painstaking doses of intramuscular streptomycin, oral PAS and isoniazid.

We in Project Concern, working in the remote mountains of the Central Highlands, have built a 40 bed hospital in an abandoned Special Forces Camp. At Daripao, 150 miles NE of Saigon, we have developed a six-month Village medical Assistance training program and a network of 12 village health stations. We have an international, multiracial and inter-religious staff from 11 countries. We spend less than \$8,000 per mo. on our entire work there and every cent from private sources. A second 40-bed hospital twenty-five miles away is now under construction in a refugee village of 50,000 people with no existing medical care whatsoever.

Sorcerers there continue to cut the umbilical cords of newborn babies with sharp pieces of dirty bamboo ~~sticks~~ sticks - and a few days later the babies, as a result, frequently die with tetanus of the newborn.

We are a small program in one tiny area of one of 44 provinces. But in 4½ years we have examined the patient very carefully. We now believe that with enough doctors, teachers, agriculturalists, civil engineers and sanitationists we could rapidly build Vietnam into a self-sufficient economically sound nation. We believe that with enough "nation-builders" recruited from all over the world, we could offer Vietnam an alternative to collectivism and imperialism. With security provided by western troops on a strictly defensive position, I am now convinced we can wage peace as eagerly and effectively as we have waged war.

III.

Felix Green writing in The Other Side of the Wall says that we don't get excited anymore, that we westerners stand on the sidelines and scoff at the enthusiastic and dedicated communists who build, study and dream of enough.

Our counterparts are on fire, the fire of revolution and world domination. When I see the relative lethargy, the unconcern and smug satisfaction of our people, I wonder whose way will prove superior, who better understands mankind and his particular needs. I am still convinced that we of the western democracies have something intelligible, practical and timely to say to the poor and disadvantaged of the world. But it must be now, it must be enthusiastic, and it must be directed to their real needs. What can we do?

1) Every American and Canadian family that can afford to do so should adopt or sponsor a child or family somewhere in the "have not" areas of the world. This costs from \$50 to \$150 for a year and usually allows for exchanges of pictures and letters. Such organizations as Project Concern, Foster Parents Plan, Christian Children Foundation and Save the Children Fund has such programs. Nation wide campaigns should be initiated now to involve personally as many individuals and families as possible.

2) A moratorium should be declared on all new church construction. The National Liberation Front no longer considers the Christian Church as a worthy adversary. The role of the Protestant Church in Vietnam, relative to its potential, is infinitesimally small. There must be an immediate recognition of the emergency which exists, a readjustment of priorities and a church-wide campaign to send millions of dollars and thousands of dedicated peace workers into the troubled areas of the world.

3) Political pressure should be brought to bear on responsible governments through existing and lawful channels by individual citizens and organizations. We must persuade elected officials in high places that there is an alternative to war. We must encourage a much greater investment in government, civilian programs not unlike Project Concern, the Peace Corps, the Agency for International Development. I am not advocating a withdrawal of American and other Allied troops from Vietnam. I am suggesting the advantages of a strictly defensive posture, using our military might there primarily to provide security in the rural areas for technicians who can then more effectively and rapidly help these people become self-sufficient in various technical fields.

Conclusion:

The missing ingredient in other successful world powers is compassion and empathy. As a result the world's poor eventually exerted such forces as to pull the mightiest down. If we now decide to utilize some of our great and abundant resources to help them to achieve enough, then ours can be a truly glorious quest.

The world has become too small for anything less than brotherhood. Life has become too precious for anything less than peace. Human relations have become too critical for anything less than love.

The only way to belong to life is to meet it on its own terms, as it really is. The realities need do nothing more or less than inspire us. If you want to really come alive, find someone who needs you, who really needs just you. Perhaps until we do so, we do not really know what it is to be alive. Perhaps when we do so Canada and the United States will someday participate in an exciting and continuing Kingdom Come on Earth.